

February 15, 2017

Dear members of St. John the Apostle Parish:

Now that we have installed a new sound system (which has been truly well received), and with our new Music Director, Michael Langlois, also settled into his position, we will begin working to strengthen and expand our Music Program here in the parish; in the following ways:

- 1) I am hoping to see a contemporary group established,
- 2) a strengthening and expansion of our current formal choir group,
- 3) the establishment of a youth choir,
- 4) a strengthening of the Spanish Choir,
- 5) increase the number of cantors, etc.
- 6) promoting and encouraging various musicians from the parish to share their talents during our liturgical celebrations,

I have found, at my previous parishes, that the Breaking Bread Hymnal, or a similar hymnal series, is particularly well suited for such diversification of music styles, groups, etc., and will also allow for us to access newly published music from OCP as well....so we will have a good deal of flexibility as we move forward in all these areas during the course of the year.

As we continue to expand, and diversify, our music program and groups here in the Parish, we will begin to see the introduction of new hymns, chants, mass parts, etc., all while also striving to maintain a continuity with the beautiful music and hymns that are part of the living Tradition of the Church and Its Liturgy. We are not an either/or Church.... but a both/and Church...and our Music program and liturgies will reflect this beautiful blend of both old & new. We will endeavor to have the hymns used during our weekend liturgies be in accord with the spiritual and theological themes that emanate from the Scriptures of the Day, as well as from the current Liturgical Seasons and the particular Feast or Solemnity we may be celebrating!

Many may have already noticed that, since the arrival of our new Music Director and his assumption of the planning for the hymns, we are already experiencing a mix of older and familiar hymns...along with the introduction (or re-introduction) of newer hymns: this gradual mixture of old and new (and I find the usage of descriptions like: "traditional" or "contemporary" have more to do with the style in which any hymn, old or newer, can be sung (choir versus solo, organ versus other instruments, Latin versus English or Spanish, etc.), reflects the fact that there is room for much diversity in Liturgical Music: and I am looking for us, as a parish, to delve into this diversity...a little something for everybody! It may indeed be the case that some parishioners will prefer a more "traditional" style, and others may prefer a more "contemporary" style: and I believe these preferences can be accommodated by the different

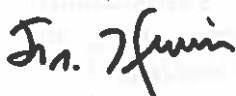
choirs, etc.,... even though the hymns will be, for the most part, the same at all the liturgies (again unified by the Liturgical Season, Scripture themes and the character of any particular Feast or Solemnity we may be celebrating)...we will still find and experience much diversity in approach and style.

Some have raised the question as to whether we, as a parish, will continue to sing the Marian Hymns/Antiphons (i.e.: Salve Regina, etc.) ...the practice having been established for these Marian Hymns/Antiphons to be the Meditation Hymn at every mass every weekend. These Marian antiphons/hymns are beautiful, but to use them as the only Meditation Hymn at all masses is a most uncommon and unusual practice. The use of Meditation Hymns (which is optional) is a very nice practice...and we will continue to exercise this legitimate option (on most weekends) ...but, in so doing, we will seek to utilize a wider variety of hymns (some choral, some congregational, some solo, etc.). We will also, when most appropriate (particularly so if the given the Feast or Solemnity is a Marian one), incorporate Marian Antiphons/Hymns into this rotation; but the Marian Hymns/Antiphons will no longer be the sole or exclusive Meditation Hymns at all our masses, each weekend, throughout the year. If the Church wanted them to be/become a regular part of the Eucharistic Liturgy in this way...it would be so directed....it has not been. The Liturgy has many areas in which there are legitimate options that can be exercised...and we must be open to this reality...all the while remembering that we participate in the Church's Liturgy...which is guided by the Church's Tradition and Instruction: and the Marian Antiphons...while indeed beautiful....are actually part of the Church's Tradition in a different liturgical context (namely the Liturgy of the Hours), and were not intended to be, again according to Church Tradition, or to necessarily become, normative to the Eucharistic Liturgy. Again, there are many beautiful hymns, antiphons, chants, etc., that can be used during a Liturgy, and we will strive to provide Meditation Hymns (and even periods of silence) which reflect the beauty of our faith and enhance our collective worship experience.

Over time, as we move forward with the growth and expansion of our Music Program, and welcome new, and varied hymns, Meditation Hymns/pieces, etc., it is my hope that the spiritual life of the parish, and each member of the parish, will be continue to be strengthened...and that our participation in all of our Liturgical celebrations will serve to draw all of us closer to the Lord...and strengthen us as the Body of Christ!

As I close this letter, I am reminded of the quote attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo, "He who sings...prays twice!": let us, with the help of St. Cecilia, the Patron Saint of Music/Musicians, strive to become that parish that "prays twice" at all our beautiful liturgical celebrations! Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and please know that you all remain in my daily prayers, and I ask for your continued prayers for me, and Fr. Killian, as we continue our ministry here at St. John the Apostle parish.

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Kevin