

CATHOLIC IDENTITY-SACRED MUSIC

The Catholic Church, from its beginning, has always supported and cultivated hymns and compositions for the worthy celebration of Holy Mass. It has recognized that music, while not strictly required at Mass, can enhance its celebration and lead to the spiritual enrichment of those attending. It is important, therefore, for each parish to do the same according to its abilities and resources. St. Augustin's is blessed to have a good music program. Ever since I arrived here I have been impressed with the good musical direction of Kent Fieldsend, the solid and beautiful singing of our choir and cantors and the skill of our accompanists. They have provided music ranging from the contemporary to the traditional, which has helped to lend a spirit of beauty, reverence and devotion for the celebration of Holy Mass. I am happy to have them as a resource.

While I am pleased with the musical program at St. Augustin, as pastor I am always looking for ways that we can improve things. One way that we can do this is to draw upon the rich, two-thousand year musical treasury of the Catholic Church. In doing so it will be important to discern what will work best with our Parish of St. Augustin, what we can comfortably and ably sing on our own or with the leadership of the choir or a cantor. However, it is not always required that the congregation sings, and it can be appropriate at times for just the choir or the cantor to do the singing at Mass when the musical pieces are more complex. The faithful still benefit from this since otherwise we would be deprived of many beautiful treasures from our musical heritage that they can't sing themselves.

As a first foray into tapping into our rich musical heritage we will begin next week to celebrate our Feast Day with two of the most basic pieces from the Catholic Liturgical Music library, the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus Dei*. These are the Latin versions of the Holy, Holy, Holy and the Lamb of God, respectively. As the official language of the Church this should be no surprise. Plus, this is also the language of a great portion of our musical patrimony. While the Mass is commonly celebrated in the English vernacular today it is not only permissible but also encouraged to know certain Mass parts in Latin. Though some may think this use of Latin to be foreign we are in fact not unfamiliar with it and are quite comfortable with it. At Christmas time we rejoice in the singing of *Adeste Fidelis* (O' Come All Ye Faithful) and sing the refrain *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (Glory to God in the Highest) in the hymn "Angels We Have Heard on High." Last Christmas many of us enjoyed the Christmas Concert at church with songs in Latin, French and German. In Mass we already sing the Greek *Kyrie* and the Hebrew *Alleluia* and *Amen*. As you leave the Church through the Adoration Chapel look over the doorway and see the Latin words *Ite Missa Est* (The Mass is ended, Go!).

As the official language of the Church, her liturgy and her history, Latin hymns and Mass parts are important to keep us connected to who we are and they have much beauty to offer. Still, English is the language of our lives, how we think, how we pray and how we express our emotions and it will remain the mainstay of our liturgical music. There is a rich and beautiful treasure trove of English Hymnody available for us to draw upon. I look forward to working with our music director Kent Fieldsend to enrich the celebration of Holy Mass at St. Augustin.



Fr. Pisut