

The Ascension Weekly

October 22, 2017

Ministry Spotlight: Traditional Choir

“My song is love unknown, my Savior’s love to me; love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be. O who am I, that for my sake, my Lord should take frail flesh and die?” So read the opening lyrics of one of the beautiful hymns that parishioners may be hearing this fall if they attend the 12:00 Noon Mass at Ascension. The parish’s Traditional Choir leads the congregation in song at the noon Mass, and it is one of two church choirs at Ascension (the other is the Folk Group which sings contemporary Church hymns at the 10:00 am Mass). The Traditional Choir strives to lead and support the active participation of the faithful in celebrating and singing the praises of God through the use of beautiful and time honored hymns from throughout our Church’s history, keeping in mind that “the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art” (Sacrosanctum Concilium 112).

The Traditional Choir is led by Ascension’s new music director, Stephanie Griffin, who took on this position in our parish in late August. She comes to us from Linthicum, Maryland, and is excited to be a part of this parish community. This is her first time as a music director, although she has been a member of church choirs for many years. In addition to leading the choir at the noon Mass, Stephanie is also the cantor at the 4:00 pm Vigil Mass on Saturdays. As she takes on this new role at our parish, Stephanie says that she looks forward to sharing with parishioners the beautiful hymns that come from “the rich treasury of sacred music in our Catholic tradition, much of which has been lost through time.” She also hopes that more parishioners may begin to consider joining this important parish ministry. As the parish website states, “We always welcome new voices, whether or not you have previous choir experience. Ability to read music is not necessary. All that is required is joy and enthusiasm for singing in praise of God.”

Charlie Aquilina, one of the current members of the parish choir, has been a member for twenty five years now. He says, “I’ve always been interested in music; I have been singing and playing instruments since the age of 12.” Charlie, who has also in the past been a member of the St. Pius church choir and the Bowie-Crofton Choral Society (now the Chesapeake Chorale), as well as in multiple organizations in Pennsylvania, reflects, “My inspiration for being a part of this ministry is St. Augustine, who said, ‘He who sings prays twice.’”

One of the recent changes that will be implemented by the Traditional Choir going forward is the new St. Michael’s Hymnal in the pews, as well as the new Ignatius Pew Missal, both of which were just recently acquired by the parish and which will be the source of the hymn selection going forward. In explaining the change in hymnals from what we had in the past, Greg Rozanski, our parish liturgy coordinator, explains, “The St. Michael’s Hymnal includes a wider variety of hymns, both old and new, and covers the whole breadth of hymnal tradition.”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once said, “The singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. It is the utter depth of love that produces the singing.” It is in this mindset that the Traditional Choir will be helping us raise our voices to God as we lift our minds to the sacred mysteries taking place before us in the Mass. In a recent article in *The Catholic Miscellany* about church music, Catholic priest and chant schola director Fr. Christopher Smith noted, “Sacred music accompanies the church’s rites to bring us beyond our own emotions and experiences to a transcendent experience of the divine... All liturgy is essentially a revelation of God to us. If the music at Mass...brings us to true prayer and helps us contemplate the beauty of God’s holiness and love, it can reveal God to us in amazing ways.”

The Traditional Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 pm in the St. Michael room of the Religious Ed. building. All are welcome to join us!