

## A NOTE FROM FR. PHIL

On Christmas, Holy Family Parish will celebrate its golden anniversary. Evidently, 1970 was a momentous year. It was also the year I graduated from High School, and it is the year that George Harrison published his first solo album, *All Things Must Pass*.

I have come to admire the former Beatle: his gentleness, humor, quiet temperament and creativity. And of course, his search for God.

Like most of my young friends, I was caught up in Beatlemania. A couple of us decided to form a band that would lip-sync the Fab Four's songs. Because I was one of the co-founders, I got to be Paul. My best friend was John, his brother, Ringo and a bashful acquaintance was given the role of George. We wore Beatle wigs, played cardboard guitars and sang into microphones made out of toilet paper tubes, masking tape and golf balls. I think our world tour lasted an hour or so.

It was the influence of the Beatles that first enticed me to learn how to play a real guitar and even compose a few songs. They were also partly responsible for the long hair I sported for many years.

While I may have wanted to be Paul, I knew that I was more like George. Later, I learned that there is much to admire about the "Quiet Beatle." I thought his *Concert for Bangladesh* was a class act. I admired his unabashed spirituality and his quest for excellence. And, he was a superb lead guitarist.

Reflecting on the life and values of the man, there are a few lessons that can be gleaned from George Harrison this Advent.

First, George was known as the "Quiet Beatle." Silence is a dwindling resource in our contemporary world. Rock music blasts at NBA games, country music is played over loud speakers at self-serve gas stations, and the insipid music in elevators and on phones is there to soothe those who find waiting an aggravation. Meanwhile, there are sirens, ringing and beeping cell phones, and a myriad of voices vying for our attention. If one hopes to become more aware of the presence of God, then one needs to become more like George: quiet. The Scriptures remind us that silence is God's first language. It is in silence that God's Word can be heard.

George Harrison was self-effacing and had a keen wit. Christians could use a good dose of both. Not taking ourselves too seriously would help us see ourselves as we truly are: a curious mixture of both good and evil, strength and weakness, wisdom and folly. And we could abandon the falsity that the universe revolves around us.

The Beatle, while reflective and humble, did not suffer fools gladly. He knew his priorities and stuck to them. Advent is a good time to reflect on ours.

George was creative. A true artist and musician, he did not seek fame, but excellence. Most of us should be so ambitious. To seek excellence as a parent, or student, or farmer, or teacher, or first responder, or clerk, or employer, or friend would be a worthwhile goal for anyone.

The former Beatle was on a life-long search for God. His quest took him to India. Luckily, we do not have to travel that far. Our Catholic tradition includes a contemplative path; one marked by asceticism, meditation and devotion. We could learn something from George about dedication to a spiritual discipline.

Finally, George Harrison—at one time won the most famous and wealthiest people on earth—died. There is a lesson here. *All Things Must Pass* and that should not be forgotten this Advent as we await the coming of Jesus.