

The Music of Ordinary Time

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By Lucia A. Silecchia

It gets me every year.

On Holy Thursday, the ringing of the bells during the sung Gloria never fails to put a lump in my throat. I am not sure why. Yet, this year, as always, it moved me to hear the glory of the bells before the solemnity of Good Friday moved in.

It also moved me to hear the haunting solemn chant of a lone *a capella* cantor during the Good Friday service.

Yet again, when the joyful strains of “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” rang out on Easter morning, it captured in voice, organ and trumpet the glory of Christ’s Resurrection in a way that mere words could not.

The common thread, of course, is that our music has such an important part in our worship and in the ways in which we give glory to God through all the seasons of the year.

It is at Easter and the carol-filled Christmas season that I appreciate this the most. Yet, it is through the whole year that music forms the backdrop of so many of our religious celebrations.

At First Communion Masses being celebrated throughout the spring, children’s voices will be lifted in the words of songs that try to capture for their young hearts the mystery they are about to share.

At weddings, couples carefully choose hymns that, hopefully, express not merely their love – sacred as that is – but their devotion to the God who loved them first.

I can still remember rehearsing for my Confirmation in my school’s cafeteria and wonder if those same songs will be sung by young adults today as they prepare for the same sacrament to fill their own hearts and souls.

At funeral Masses, sacred hymns comfort the living and ask God’s mercy for those who have passed away. In advance of my own parents’ funerals, I remember the love with which parish staff helped me to select the hymns that would best express my deepest hope in the midst of my deepest grief.

It is also on those days we call “ordinary” that the music of our liturgies and celebrations can capture so much that lies in our hearts.

How often do the words of a familiar song bring back comforting memories of a childhood faith?

How often does a song remind us of a loved one for whom it was a favorite hymn?

How often does a melody – and the words that accompany it – ring through our minds long after we have heard it sung or played?

How often does a hymn sung by a talented singer move us to reflect on the glory of a God who bestowed such a gift? How often does a hymn sung loudly and decidedly off-key by a young child or an enthusiastic adult move us to reflect on the glory of a God who inspired such devotion?

In the Easter season and throughout the spring, there will be many special celebrations that will often be filled with music.

After that, when summer and autumn roll around, there will be the days called “ordinary” when music will still fill our churches, our hearts, and our souls until the hymns of Advent and Christmas return.

Throughout the year, my deepest gratitude goes to those who, in the tradition of St. Cecilia, use the talents God gave them to give glory to Him – and help us all to do the same.

May God bless you in this season of Easter Joy – and in all the days of ordinary time.

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