

Reflections from the Upper Room:

for the Pastoral Musician

Sunday, May 17, 2020

Reflections for the Ascension of the Lord

By: Christopher M.C. Deibert, *Director of Music & Organist at St. Mary Church, South Amboy*



The Ascension of our Lord is mentioned in the New Testament 3 times: Mark has it with Christ first giving his disciples instructions to go into the world and make other disciples (think Natalie Sleeth from the 70s/80s) before ascending; Luke also has it with Christ blessing his disciples and then being taken up; and then we have a third account in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1) wherein we see Christ telling his apostles they are soon to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and that they are to be his witnesses to all the ends of the earth. After that, however, the last verse of the chapter, verse 11, is particularly intriguing. It is this verse from which the Entrance Antiphon (Introit) of the Mass is derived.

Viri Galilaei, quid admiramini aspicientes in caelum? Men of Galilee, why are you gazing in astonishment at the heavens? This is the question posed to the disciples by two “men in white” who appeared just after Christ’s ascension. Why indeed! Had they not just received a directive from their Lord about preaching the gospel to the four corners of the earth? “Go make of all disciples,” and be “witnesses to the ends of the earth!” But no. Instead, we see them standing around in sheer and utter bewilderment. How typical. Good thing none of them worked in Music Ministry.

As Music Ministers in the Roman Catholic Church, we are charged with this very same directive. Every time we select music for Mass, every time we prayerfully render a chant or sing a hymn, every time we lead our choirs or ensembles or assemblies at a liturgical event, our task to “go make of all disciples” and to be “witnesses to the ends of the earth” must be at the forefront of our vision and be the driving force behind all of our endeavors. Christ’s commands weren’t just for his disciples. They are commands to us in all that we do, particularly in our ministerial efforts.

In the craziness of this Covid-19 inflicted world, we are presented with new challenges on how to go about making new disciples and being witnesses of the Gospel. Being restricted from doing our jobs in the normal way as music ministers, we must now find new ways to follow Christ’s command to us. How can we reach out to our neighbors and those around us, in an appropriately physically-distanced way, so that they can see the love of Christ within us? How can we be witnesses to the ends of the earth, not being able to get to our churches/instruments/choirs/congregations?

Christ didn't say it would be easy for us. Nevertheless, as obedient servants, we must find new ways to be his witnesses, to make other new disciples. We must not let ourselves become lazy or complacent. Now, especially, we must not be caught gazing in bewilderment skyward. We must keep our eyes "on the prize," and seek always to be his faithful servants, ministering in whatever ways we are able. Now, more than ever, we must be faithful to the Gospel and be witnesses to those around us.

Selected Reflection Music

Viri Galilaíi INTROIT

Posted By: Corpus Christi Watershed

https://archive.ccwatershed.org/video/42151704/?return_url=/liturgy/

Contributor Introduction

Christopher M. C. Deibert is the Director of Music and Organist at Saint Mary Church, South Amboy, where he directs four liturgical choirs, conducts the Saint Mary Chamber Orchestra, and manages an active classical music concert series. He is also an active organ and harpsichord recitalist, and lecturer on sacred music and Gregorian chant. Deibert has been at Saint Mary's for 21+ years.

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