

Reflections from the Upper Room:

for the Pastoral Musician

Sunday, June 21, 2020

Reflections for the Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Thomas DeLessio, *Diocesan Coordinator for Liturgical Music and Director of Music & Organist, St. Francis Cathedral*

Is anyone listening? There's plenty of shouting and confusion, but is anyone listening? This sage father of four has wondered that of his children from time to time because of course, father knows best.



Our Heavenly Father certainly knows best! In today's Gospel: "Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." [Mt. 10:26-27] Did we hear the whisper? If not, there was a part of revelation we missed; something we were supposed to proclaim on the housetops that slipped by. Elijah looked for God on the mountain of Horeb. He saw first a great wind, then an earthquake, and a fire, but it was in listening to "a light silent sound" that God was revealed. [1 King 19-11-12] Good thing Elijah listened.

How was Mary's listening skill set? She listened to the Angel Gabriel, asked a few questions, pondered the answers, and then said "Yes". [Luke 1:26-38] Good thing Mary listened.

God hopes we will listen to Him. But in today's psalm, aren't we hoping God listens to us? "In your great kindness answer me with your constant help." [Ps 69:14]

You see, listening goes both ways. My children want me to listen. My wife Christine wants me to listen. I want them to listen. But at debatable intervals, I fail. Don't we all?

Everybody is screaming, but who is listening? It takes mere seconds to google a YouTube video supporting whatever position we hold, but there is disbelief with any video yielding an opposite result.

We need to move beyond yelling and simple hearing, and onto active listening. Children can teach adults, and adults can offer wisdom to the youth. Often the most important stuff is said in a whisper from the most timid. Truly listening is mutually exclusive from multi-tasking. Multi-tasking is really just modern super-fast toggling between tasks. Conversation with one or both people glancing at phones is not listening at all.

We can be good at offering our spoken prayers to God, but often not so good at sitting in stillness and listening to God. “Be still and know that I am God!” [Ps. 46:11]. Listen for God to speak through the music sample below, in the beautiful singing, but also in the silence where much of the music occurs; and listen while doing nothing else.

Selected Reflection Music

Agnus Dei, Op. 11

Composer: Samuel Barber

Dr. Joseph Flummerfelt conducting the Westminster Choir of Princeton, New Jersey, on his final concert before his retirement.

<https://youtu.be/UBdWhfeeH8g>

Contributor Introduction

Thom DeLessio is in his twentieth year as Diocesan Coordinator for Liturgical Music and Director of Music and Organist for St. Francis Cathedral. He directs Diocesan Choir, Cathedral Choir, Schola, and K-12 choirs. Thom teaches piano/organ, and is accompanist for Metuchen based Rise Up Chorus, and for several school choirs. Thom and his wife Christine have four children in their twenties.