



**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
PASTORAL
MUSICIANS
ARCHDIOCESE
OF KANSAS CITY
IN KANSAS AND
KANSAS CITY/
ST JOSEPH**

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**MARK YOUR
CALENDARS**

Feb 13 Board Meeting
Holy Family, KCMO
12:30

Mar 7 Open Meeting
Good Shepherd,
Smithville, Leading the
Assembly: Keyboard or
Guitar, 9:00

Mar 25, Chanting the
Exsultet, Golddome
Cathedral, 6:30 pm,

Apr 25 Choral
Workshop, St Joseph,
Shawnee
8:30-12 Noon

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NPM News

Volume II, Issue III

February 1, 2020

LOCAL NPM 3-YEAR VISION PLAN

Fifteen members of our two local NPM Chapters spent Jan 16 at the beautiful Precious Blood Renewal Center, praying and planning for the next three years. Denise Simone led the group through the development of six guiding principles of our evolving vision on which to focus our energies:

1. Ongoing Formation
2. Increase Active Chapter Involvement
3. Broad, Dynamic, Interactive Communication
4. Welcoming Hospitality
5. Intergenerational, Multi-Cultural, Inclusive Involvement and
6. Active Diocesan Collaboration.

Chapter Directors Maureen Henderson (KS) and Danny Baker (MO) led the group during the afternoon in mapping out meeting dates, activities and workshop topics through 2023, based on our identified principles. The new structure will be Quarterly Open Meetings with various topics and two larger workshops each year. Saturday, March 7 will be an Open Breakfast Meeting focusing on how to lead the assembly well while playing the keyboard or guitar. The next larger and longer workshop will be on Saturday, April 25 and be focused on choirs and choir members. Friday, June 5 will be a social event with BBQ and fun—a great networking opportunity.

Have an idea for a workshop, meeting or location? Please let us know. Find contact information for your chapter director in the sidebar, or for another board member go to the website. Please also volunteer to host one, as this will be a boost to your music ministry and allow people in various locations of the area to have easy access to training. The board will provide a lot of the support so hosting is not that difficult, while your parish supports NPM as well as our community.

Editor's Note: This issue of our NPM Newsletter puts a focus on practice. Practice was the topic of Fr. Paul Turner's excellent keynote address at the September Day of Spirituality and Skills. His three recommendations, in summary, are:

1. Practice slow, slower, slower, then leave and come back; practice every single day and play in all styles.
2. Spend as much or more time praying as you practice your instrument(s); and
3. Network with your fellow musicians.

Prayer and practice form the indispensable core of our preparation to serve through liturgical music. Articles in this issue on effective rehearsal techniques for keyboard, voice and choir will hopefully provide you with new ideas, or remind you of things you had forgotten!

Keyboard: How to Make the Most of Limited Practice Time by Dr. Kevin Vogt

It's been over 30 years since I was a college music student complaining that I didn't have enough time to practice. I remember my organ teacher telling me that I better make the most of that time, because I would never have that much time for practice again. He was right.

The truth was, I didn't know how to practice, and practicing made me feel miserable because I was constantly confronted with my limitations. So, I just didn't practice, and my deep dark secret is that practicing is still difficult for me today. I still associate it with feeling inadequate, feeling like a fraud. But

I love to play, and when I'm in the "zone," I can really play! But as I'm getting older, my skills are slipping, and I'm face-to-face with my old nemesis, practicing.

Here's a secret: Mastery comes from leisure. I'm not talking about taking it easy; that's laziness.

(continued page 3)

THE VALUABLE CHOIR REHEARSAL—John Rudzinski

Ed Note: John Rudzinski spent years conducting, teaching and singing under some of the finest conductors. He has summarized some of the techniques that he has learned over the years leading volunteer choral ensembles.

1. Plan Music Well in Advance. Music should be planned far enough in advance to allow sufficient time to prepare—and time to adjust your plan or your rehearsal schedule to meet the needs of your choir members and musicians.
2. Draw up a Rehearsal Plan. Have a list of the names of the music you plan to rehearse. A copy goes to the choir librarian if it is not yourself, and another copy goes to the accompanist. Also, be aware of approximately how much time you'll need to give to each selection of music.
3. Warm-Ups. VOWEL unity is very important in developing the blend and warmth of sound in a choir. Take the time to define the sound differences between long and short vowels with vocalises. Then, go to a difficult spot in a new piece. Here you will find a key change, a new theme, or a challenging transition passage. Invite ALL members to sing each others' voice part. When executing this exercise use a plosive consonant with the easiest of vowel sounds, "O"(ohhh) or "U"(ooo), rather than text! This exercise is a bit more challenging, but very effective.
4. Practice the Weekend's Anthem. The choir, having previously practiced this anthem for several weeks, will feel at ease in singing it and you will be able to work on diction, dynamics, rhythmic clarity, and phrasing to perfect it, rather than just trying to learn pitches.
5. Evaluate Your Choir. Decide when to relax the atmosphere with a bit of humor or a personal story. Also, always be aware of when to have the choir stand or sit depending on the physical ability of its members and the nature of the music you are rehearsing.
6. Look Ahead. Review the music for the upcoming weeks. Check on psalm responses as well as any problem areas in the Mass parts or hymns.
7. Listen to the Newest Song. Use a recording or have the accompanist play it through. This gives the singers the finished sound that they need to achieve.
8. Time for Prayer (and Maybe Snacks?). Although many directors begin their rehearsal with prayer; I prefer to leave prayer until the end. Many times, the need for prayer by a member of the choir can be very distracting for the rest of the evening. Ending rehearsal five minutes ahead of time, in order to pray, has worked very well for me. I even send them forth praying for the needs just spoken. For example, waiting at stoplights at an intercession provides the opportunity to lift up the choir's needs in prayer. And, who doesn't like snacks? Eating snacks together helps to build "community" among your choir members.

A Fun Challenge for Your Choir: *(continued on page 4 Fun Choir Challenge)*

CANTOR CORNER

The singing voice is all biological with no replacement parts. Like an athlete, the singer can train and build the range, volume, clarity and endurance of their vocal instrument. Lessons and practice on the front end, as a youth and young adult, will yield a lifetime of enhanced enjoyment. Practice is important throughout one's life as the myriad muscles and ligaments used for singing respond to exercise just as those used in running or any other athletic activity. Anyone who has started an exercise program after being sedentary for more than a couple of weeks knows how quickly and extensively strength and endurance are lost. In a related way, keeping the vocal instrument in good shape may be even more critical as one ages. Some ideas to start are:

1. Sing every day.
2. Start with deep breaths and exercises to wake up the diaphragm and abdominal muscles while opening the throat.
3. Connect the resultant breath pressure with the vocal folds by sighing, then singing a light glissando throughout the range, then some musical patterns in the middle of the range.
4. Open the soft palate and sing through your nose to clear it and nearby sinuses of congestion—then sniff and swallow (throat-clearing and coughing are very damaging to the vocal folds).
5. Vocalize throughout the range, from highest to lowest.
6. Sing patterns in the softest, yet most intense tone possible.
7. Practice singing from very soft to as loud as the tone and vibrato are still consistent. If you hear a wobble or the pitch or vowel changes, it is too loud.
8. Stretch and relax the tongue, then sing songs or vocalises which use the tongue in various ways while concentrating on quick, efficient use of "the lips, the teeth, and the tip of the tongue."
9. Sing a song prayer with expression, concentrating on technique and phrasing, then sing it again as a prayer.
10. Drink lots of water, get 7-9 hours of quality sleep a night, exercise the rest of your body regularly and avoid taking any sort of medicine as much as possible.

Keyboard Practice Tips continued

Leisure is a heightened experience that is valuable for its own sake, not dependent on a secondary end. We can't escape deadlines and the tyranny of the next event, but I suggest giving them as little power as we can. I'm going to propose something radical, a two-part program for practice corresponding to the first two quadrants of Stephen Covey's Time Management Matrix:

Quadrant One: Important, Urgent. You know that next Mass you must play for? Practice as little as possible for it. Don't waste time practicing things you already know just so that you can feel better (or avoid tackling the problem piece that's looming). Just practice the piece that you don't know or that is most challenging—and then only the part that is giving you trouble.

Quadrant Two: Important, Not Urgent. Devote most of your time to a piece of music that is a longer-term project, something that presents a musical and technical challenge—not for the sake of that challenge, but to give you the chance to practice leisure. This is how you'll achieve mastery and find joy!

Important, urgent practice is most efficiently tackled breaking a problem down into the small units. Define and isolate the passage you are going to practice. Make sure you have worked out the fingering (and pedaling)—on every note! That means write it in! No exceptions. Writing in all the fingerings will ensure that you use the same fingers with each repetition. Play one hand or one voice at a time slowly, at least as slowly as you must to play it perfectly the first time! If you learn it wrong, it will take several times longer to unlearn the wrong way than it takes to learn it the right way. If you encounter a problem spot, break it down to practicing two beats at a time, then expanding before and after the problem spot. If you don't have time to polish things off and gradually increase the tempo before Sunday, resist the temptation to waste time testing yourself. Diligent daily slow practice will do more for you than a month of plowing! (Next Issue: How to Achieve Mastery and Find Joy in Practicing)

Rehearsal: A Practice of Stewardship by Bob Sandford

Our music ministers meet one hour before Mass to rehearse. You may think it's about "getting it right." It's something like that, but this expression can be misleading. Taken to an extreme, it could sour into the perfectionist's impossible goal—a form of self-inflicted torment.

As a form of stewardship, rehearsal is a practice of love, not violence. As stewards, we strive to allow God's blessings to flow through us. The holy desire to serve—a music minister's calling—is born and reborn when the Spirit sing or plays in us and through us.

We rehearse to prepare the way for the Lord. We work on notes, words, phrasing, dynamics and as many of the nuances we can manage so when the time comes we can pray without hindrance; so we can express what God awakens in our hearts. This is the spiritual value of our stewardship.

To the Christian, this likely sounds familiar. It is a spiritual practice. It is guided by the desire to be true out of love. What is better than, when the right moment arises and the Spirit prompts, to allow what God awakens in our hearts to flow out into the world?

***"How shall I make a return to the Lord,
for all the good He has done for me?" Ps 116:12***

To Bow or To Genuflect? That Is the Question! By Fr Paul Turner

ED NOTE: The question of proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle and to the sanctuary and altar during Mass often needs correction, clarification or simply instruction. Fr. Paul Turner from the KC/St Joseph Office of Worship and nationally-known expert on all liturgical matters provides the following instruction.

The rules for bows and genuflections are found in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* paragraphs 274-275. A genuflection is made to a tabernacle. A low bow is made to the altar.

If the tabernacle is not located in the sanctuary, then the ministers who process do not genuflect at the beginning and end of Mass. If the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, then the ministers who process do genuflect toward it at the beginning and end of Mass.

The deacon or reader holding the book of the Gospels for the entrance procession makes no reverence, but proceeds directly to the altar and places the book there. If that person leaves the sanctuary during the procession, it would be fitting to make the same reverence that the other ministers in procession make (a genuflection to a tabernacle located in the sanctuary, or a bow to the altar if the tabernacle is elsewhere—Mass has not yet begun at this point).

No other genuflections are made to the tabernacle during the course of the Mass. For that one hour, all reverences go to the altar instead. This symbolism is important, because it emphasizes the significant role that the altar plays during the sacrifice of the Mass.

The Ceremonial of Bishops says in paragraph 72 that a deep bow (a bow of the body, not just the head) is made by all who enter the sanctuary, leave it, or pass before the altar. Therefore, the following should make a deep bow to the altar during the Mass: readers and psalmists entering or leaving the sanctuary, ushers before taking up the collection, and communion ministers entering and leaving the sanctuary.

A sacristan making multiple passes before the altar and tabernacle before or after Mass may reasonably be excused from making multiple reverences. Outside the liturgy, a reverence at the beginning and end of one's work would be praiseworthy.

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today?

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Farewell Sr. Claudette Schiratti by B. Leyden

Sr. Claudette Schiratti was one of the first Catholic musicians I met after moving to this area in 1999. I had agreed to serve on her planning committee for the then annual Day of Spirituality and Skills. She organized it as part of her job at the Kansas City/St Joseph Diocesan Worship Office. Sr. Claudette led her committee in such a way as to encourage creativity and collaboration. Her example of mutual support and respect encouraged me as I settled into yet another new situation and was a hallmark of her entire time—38 years—serving liturgy here in the Kansas City area and our two dioceses. As a member of the Sisters of Mercy she obviously learned how to encourage community while maintaining the highest level of musicianship and bringing out the best in her students, choirs and fellow church musicians. Many of us were taught, built up and encouraged by her. We definitely miss her and need to honor her service by following her eminent example. Music training too often tends to encourage competition, but liturgical music requires Sr. Claudette-style cooperation and community.

During her 38 years in this area, Sr. Claudette found it a privilege to serve St. Charles, St. Patrick's (both in KCMO and KCK), Christ the King (MO), Good Shepherd in Shawnee, KS and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception as well as the Diocesan Worship Office. In her Diocesan role, she enjoyed visiting parishes and deaneries and observing the dedication of parish musicians as well as coordinating diocesan events with the choir and the music commission. After retiring from the Office of Worship in 2010, she spent the next nine years serving as substitute organist/pianist on weekends all over the metropolitan area for churches of all denominations.

Sr. Claudette said that turning 80 was a wake-up call and that it was time to return to her hometown of Omaha, NE, where there are more Sisters of Mercy, family and long-time friends. She moved into one of the 40 apartments that the sisters own on the grounds of the College of St. Mary. Naturally, Sr. Claudette plans to continue serving as substitute organist/pianist. At the time of her departure, our local NPM chapters gave her a parting gift, a sculpture from local artist Cathy Broski's "Strong Women" series, as a token of our love and appreciation. She thanked us with the following:

"Thank you for the thoughtful remembrance gift as I move to Omaha, NE. I will cherish it. I will miss all of you and the wonderful activity there. Continue the collaboration that has evolved with the creation of two NPM Chapters working together, encourage the next generation of music ministers, take care of yourselves as ministers, remember to include the salt-of-the-earth ministers in the rural areas, and continue to encourage the people of God through your dedicated music ministry. With love and peace toward all of you.

Sr. Claudette Schiratti, RSM"

Godspeed and thank YOU, Sr. Claudette.

Fun Choir Challenge cont.

Seating Arrangement Changes.

After the choral hymn is learned, invite the choir to be seated in a square formation with the director standing in the center of the group. Sopranos sit on the east side of the room, Basses sit on the west side of the room, Tenors sit on the south side of the room and Altos sit on the north side of the room. Using this method strengthens the listening ability of the choir to the other vocal parts as well as offering a fun challenge to the choir when singing.

John Rudzinski



Sr. Claudette at a farewell reception at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception