



# PILGRIMAGE TO OUR PAST

*Celebrating 225 Years of Parishioners for Others*

May 2019

## Choral Music at Holy Trinity

*All the records, as far back as they can be found, tell us that the choir and chancel music furnished in Holy Trinity Church was always of a high order.*

—Lawrence Kelly, S.J., *History of Holy Trinity Parish*, 1945

### Early Days

In the 1800s, it appears that Holy Trinity generally had two choirs: senior and junior, most likely men and boys from the parish. On special occasions, they were supplemented by quartets and choirs from Georgetown College and the Seminary at Woodstock. We cannot say with assurance at which Masses these choirs sang, but it is likely that there was an effort to have music at the more formal Masses, at a minimum.

The music program increased in complexity toward the end of the 19th century. In the fall of 1891, Pastor John Murphy, S.J. organized a new choir of young people (possibly including girls, since the choir was trained by a woman). This group, directed by organist Armand Gumprecht and supplemented by a professional soprano soloist, is reported to have sung the Mass at 5am on Christmas Day that same year—a tough assignment!

A few years later, a Holy Trinity choir gave a concert of Rosini's *Stabat Mater*, using the proceeds from ticket sales (or perhaps goodwill offerings) toward the installation of electric lighting and steam heating in the church. By 1899, as the century drew to a close, a mixed choir provided music for various liturgical celebrations on the occasion of Holy Trinity's Golden Jubilee.

In 1902, the church hired George H. Wells as organist, along with a professional soprano soloist. However, the music program changed considerably in 1903 when Pope Pius X issued a *Motu Proprio* decree on the character of sacred music, which placed a primary emphasis on Gregorian Chant. Wells accordingly organized and trained a choir formed exclusively of men and boys to sing at High Mass. In time, there may have been some chafing at this policy. By 1910, a female former chorister from Holy Trinity had organized a choir for young women to sing on special occasions.

By 1917, the Holy Trinity Monthly Bulletin (Vol. 1, No. 1) mentions the existence of both a "Choir of Men and Boys" and a "Junior Choir of Young Ladies." The men and boys' choir was to sing Midnight Mass, and the young ladies were to sing at a 10am Mass on Christmas Day, plus at the 7am Mass on the First Friday of every month.

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*Catherine Sarsfield, May Queen 1954*

## Parishioner Reflections

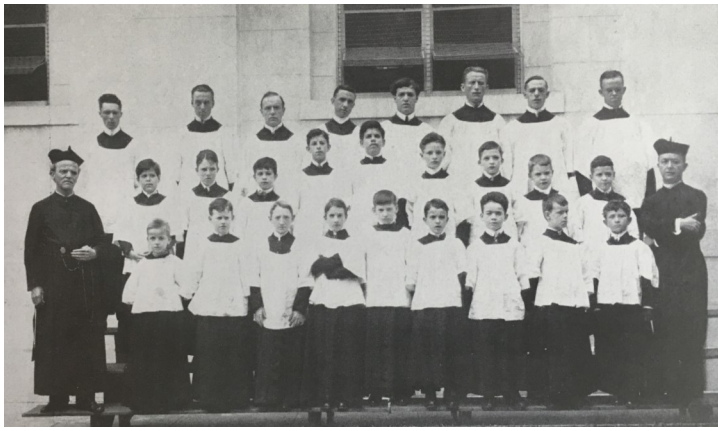
### *Bringing Flowers of the Rarest: May Procession at Holy Trinity*

The annual May Procession was the crowning glory of Holy Trinity rituals. Established early in the 1900s, it perdured well into the 1960s.

On the second Sunday of May 1945, I made my first communion at the 9am Mass. Still wearing the white dress and veil from the morning, I lined up with my classmates on the playground of the Lower School shortly before 3pm. It would be for me the first of twelve May processions. My partner was Ann Scheele, a niece of a Queen of the May from 1917 (*Ed. note: see accompanying reflection on page 4*). Ann and I stayed partners and were first in line for 10 years, as we were the shortest in the class. Coincidentally, that first day we were wearing identical dresses.

The schoolyard was full. The first through eighth grade girls, all in white dresses, carried flowers. Ann wrote recently that it was always such a joy for her to make her own bouquet

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## Choral Music, *cont. from page 1*

In 1919, George Wells brought back the mixed choir. It appears that this choir was highly capable, because we know that it performed Mercadante's *Seven Last Words* in concert on Passion Sunday. Wells remained as choirmaster and organist until moving to the Franciscan Monastery in Brookland in 1928, when Armand Gumprecht—who had worked at Holy Trinity previously—returned to succeed him.

### Mid-20th Century

In 1936, Glenn Ashley took over the music program at Holy Trinity. Ashley, a composer, organist and director, was a notable figure in 20th century liturgical music in the Washington area—first at St. Aloysius, next at Saint Ann's, and finally at Holy Trinity.

He completely revamped and expanded the church choir. Following his appointment, he served both the church and the school as music director, well into the 1950s or later. Parishioners who were students in the 1950s remember him as an imposing presence and excellent musician who supervised the installation of an organ from the Library of Congress in 1954.

What was music like in mid-20th century Masses at Holy Trinity? The Mass schedule differed from the one we are familiar with today. During the 1950s, the 9am Mass was a children's Mass. The "choir" was comprised of the 4th to 8th graders at Holy Trinity School. There were no elaborate hymnals in those days. The children sang from legal-size song sheets printed on cardstock with words, not music, on the page.

Although we don't have details, we believe that Sunday mid-morning Mass was sung by a mixed choir. As some of us remember from our own childhood, congregational singing was much more limited than it is today, and Mass-goers undoubtedly sang a few traditional pieces (*Bring flowers of the fairest*, etc.) that were known by all.

### Music after Vatican II

Big changes occurred in the 1960s. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church met in Rome from 1962-5, and its decrees had a significant and lasting impact on the nature of music at Holy Trinity. The document "*Musicam Sacram: Instruction on the Music in the Liturgy*" certainly spoke favorably about Gregorian Chant, but it allowed much more latitude for the other types of music that would promote conscious and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy. It also encouraged the use of the vernacular, in both the words of the liturgy and in singing. The nature of choirs was left to the "customs of each country and other circumstances."

From 1964 to 1970, Thomas Gavigan, S.J. served as pastor at Holy Trinity. While in that position, he overlapped with Vatican II, and he actively supported many of the edicts of the council. Among his objectives were promoting a fuller participation of the laity in the Mass, and encouraging congregational singing, in addition to music sung by choirs. Father Gavigan is remembered as a man deeply committed to classical music and traditional religious music, while at the same time being open to newer forms of music for the church.

In the 1970s, Holy Trinity already had a reputation as the home of good choral singing and as a church with excellent homilies. In 1976, Jim English, S.J. became pastor, serving until 1981. Since he faced many challenges during his tenure, including the renovation of the church in the spirit of Vatican II and the controversy surrounding the decision to use church funds for this renovation, his focus was by no means exclusively on the music program. However, Father English is credited with bringing in Leslie Gray, Tom Gosselin, and Art and Irene Cavanaugh, who provided music for the Sunday morning family Mass. Gray and Gosselin led the 5:30pm liturgy as well. Their mission was to encourage and support robust musical participation by the congregation, a characteristic of Holy Trinity that is still much in evidence today.



Jim Connor, S.J. (pastor 1981-7), who followed Father English, was another pastor who promoted increased lay involvement in music. In the mid-80s, a second Mass, parallel to the 9:30am liturgy in the church, began in the theater due to overcrowding. Parishioners recall that the two liturgies were basically the same, although the theater liturgy included a guitarist and a keyboard player, rather than a pianist.

In the decade of the 80s, the music program at Holy Trinity continued to grow in reputation. As the 80s drew to a close, the very richness of musical talent at Holy Trinity led to a reconsideration of the music program. When Jim Maier, S.J. was pastor from 1987-93, he led a discernment process to think through the nature of music at Holy Trinity and to increase coordination among the musicians. It was felt by some that there was a need to promote music that could be known and sung by all, especially at parish-wide liturgies, such as the Triduum, and even the Parish Picnic (where musicians from all of the Masses, eventually with the choir of St. Aloysius Church, joined together to accompany the liturgy).

As a result of the discernment, Michael Gribschaw was hired as a full-time Director of Pastoral Music in 1990, and he held this position until resigning in December 1994. During this period, Holy Trinity music moved from separate choral entities toward a more unified program, where the various litur-



## Choral Music, *cont. from page 2*

gies maintained their individual styles but where there was a common body of music for parish wide celebrations.

As of January 1994, the Sunday Mass schedule at Holy Trinity began to resemble the one we know today. The resulting schedule was two Masses with a cantor (Vigil and 1:15pm), a 7:30am Mass with no music, two 9am Masses with contemporary music, a more formal choir at the 11:30am Mass, and a 5:30pm contemporary Mass choir.

### End of 20th Century

Larry Madden, S.J., pastor from 1993-2000, had a strong impact on the music program during the last decades of the 20th century. Even before becoming pastor, Father Madden had influenced music at Holy Trinity through his work as director of the Holy Trinity-based Liturgy Center and through the artful use of a puppet, "Mr. Blue," who captured the attention of both children and adults during Sunday Mass. Himself a music lover and excellent pianist, Father Madden viewed good music as an integral part of the liturgy. Under Madden's leadership, Bill Usher was hired as choir-master in 1995. Usher not only introduced new music to the church repertoire, but he resumed the practice of contracting paid section leaders to add depth to the choir and to provide soloists for important liturgical celebrations.

In addition to rehearsing the choirs to sing at Sunday Mass and at other liturgies, Bill Usher took the music program in a new direction. He prepared and directed the choir in performances of several choral masterworks, *the Messiah*, Bach's *B-Minor Mass*, and the *Poulenc Gloria* among others. Additionally, he led members of the choir on three overseas tours: to Spain (1999), France (2001), and Brazil (2004).

### Present Day

In 2008, Dr. Kathleen DeJardin was appointed as Director



of Music Ministry. Since her arrival, DeJardin has worked with the 9am Mass choir, known as the Loyola Ensemble, and with the 11:30am singers, known as the Ignatian Choir, while coordinating music overall for most of the liturgies—at times serving as cantor, playing the piano, and singing solos at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. At Holy Trinity, she has organized a women's choir. Notably, she has promoted a sense of community among members of the various music group and has encouraged participants from all choirs to sing at church-wide celebrations.

Now 225 years into its history, the music program at Holy Trinity has evolved and will continue to evolve. With the passage of time, there has been increased parishioner involvement in many aspects of planning the liturgy. Throughout it all, the church has remained committed to music as an important component of the liturgical celebration. ■

—Rosemary Lyon

## Holy Trinity's "Pipe Dream"

The organ that we hear at church today has a long history. It is located in the rear balcony, the only remaining part of a three-sided gallery that once separated white and African-American worshippers at Holy Trinity.

Purchased with funds received from the federal government for using the church as a hospital during the Civil War, the organ was made by Henry Erben (1800-84) in 1869. Erben was the leading American pipe organ builder in the mid-19th century and was never surpassed in quality and craftsmanship. It contains 3,000 pipes grouped in 43 ranks (or families of pipes), three keyboards and a full pedal board, and is controlled by a single stop.

In 1954, an organ built by Ernest M. Skinner was installed in the original 1869 case. The pipes of the original organ were incorporated. Ernest Martin Skinner (1866-1960) was one of the

most successful American pipe organ builders of the early 20th century. He had designed this second organ in 1925 for the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Auditorium in the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress. The Coolidge Auditorium has been home to more than 2,000 concerts, primarily chamber music, that are free of charge and open to the public.

Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953) was an American philanthropist, pianist, and patron of chamber music. She established the Berkshire String Quartet in 1916 and started the Berkshire Music Festival in Massachusetts two years later. In addition to the Coolidge Auditorium, she established the Coolidge Foundation to support the Music Division of the Library of Congress and to commission new chamber music from both European and American composers. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1951.



The organ is only one example of the interaction of art, history, faith, and worship at Holy Trinity—from the development of organs in America, from the church to the Library of Congress, from the musical arts to the music ministry that inspires us today. ■

—Alicia Weber

## Parishioner Reflections, *cont. from page 1*

from the lilies of the valley and roses in her backyard. The boys wore white suits or at least white shirts and best trousers. Behind the Sister of Mercy in charge of each class, an eighth grader carried a banner and a younger student held its colorful streamers.

Along the convent side were the priests wearing their black birettas, the altar boys in their surplices and red cassocks, the high school girls in caps and gowns and white gloves. The Holy Name Society positioned a half dozen of their own to hoist on their shoulders a platform. On it stood a statue of the Blessed Mother to be carried through the streets and later crowned in the church. Still sequestered inside the convent, the May Queen in wedding dress, veil, and a bouquet of flowers, plus attendants to carry her train, would end the procession.

A short prayer by the pastor, a ring of the recess bell by the principal and we started slowly through the gate, down the path by the school and on to N Street, then left to 35th Street, left again at Sugar's Drug Store, to O Street and left again on 36th until we reached the bottom of the church steps. All along the way, friends, neighbors, relatives and strangers lined the sidewalks or sat in folding aluminum lawn chairs. They waved, clapped, called out our names.

Surprises, mishaps and back stories emerged with the years. If it takes a village to raise a child, it most certainly took a parish—and more—to bring off a May Procession of this magnitude. First, the Sisters of Mercy and the Mothers Club joined forces as usual to assure a white dress for every girl from first to eighth grade. They achieved this so quietly we never knew it for years.

We never did learn how the sisters acquired just the perfect size bridal dress for the May Queen each year, but the result was always splendid. And Virginia Ann Reckert was even photographed for the *Evening Star*. I always wondered what came first—was it the dress, or the sisters' choice of the May queen to fit into it?

No one exerted more effort more successfully than music director Glen Ashley who had been rehearsing us in the grade school basement every Thursday for months, teaching us the entire hit parade of "Tis the Month of Our Mother" favorites.

Some of the bumps in the road were just that—real bumps/ In high school we wore blue caps and gowns and somehow felt that merited us high heels. What we had not anticipated were the streetcar tracks along the route. High heels inevitably got caught in between tracks, and stalled the procession until a kind onlooker could pry them out. Then there were always latecomers who would slip into any line near their height. And more than one tall 6th grader would be testing his rosary as a lasso along the way.

The year I was in second grade, my mother saw I was not with my class in line. She almost fainted, according to my father. He steadied her so that he would not have to go across N Street to the then-Georgetown Hospital, and I did eventually reappear at the end of the line, carrying the Queen's train.

Once at the church, we processed in and Mr. Ashley pulled out all the stops on the organ that he usually played with such delicacy. We all stood and the full church sang lustily "*Salve Mater, Misericordie*" followed by more of the Mary hymns. The fragrance, the incense, the tightly packed church, the music and the singing were all working their

magic on us.

But what I remember best was the change in the light. (Remember—we only had morning Masses in those days). This light was different. The afternoon sun pouring through the stained glass windows seemed to just descend on us and stay.

Out front afterwards, 35th Street had the air of a street fair, full of that humanizing energy that comes from such rituals celebrated together. The next day we were back to fractions and diagramming sentences. But our classroom May altars were there to remind us of the day before and what we could at that time have no words for: the deep unspeakable sense of feeling such a part of a faith community. ■

—Natalie Ganley



My mother, Frances Beatrice Scheele, was born and raised in Georgetown. She lived with her parents, sister, and two brothers at 3035 O Street NW, a few blocks from Scheele's Market and across Wisconsin Avenue from their family parish, Holy Trinity. It was where she was christened in 1900 and where we celebrated her funeral Mass in 1986.

All the Scheele children graduated from Holy Trinity School. Mother claimed to be Queen of the May. By chance, I found a Monthly Bulletin (Vol. 1, No. 6) from 1917 in the Holy Trinity archives. It reported she was only one of 11 "Attendants to Queen" and my uncle Andrew was a "Page to Heart Bearer." Frances must have been queen in another procession.

Mother also bragged about her participation on the team that raised the most money to build the Upper School. She had many leading roles in stage production of the Stellar Dramatic Society. I remember Dad, who came from Pittsburgh to study at Georgetown Medical College, kidding her about dancing on the Holy Trinity stage.

My wife, Kathy, and I married and settled in Glover Park in 1967. For more than 51 years, we have enjoyed being parishioners at Holy Trinity. Our four children attended Sunday school. Kathy was an original hostess for the 9am coffee and donuts service. I have served as Communion minister. We have consistently attended the 9am mass, moving down from the balcony (left side) when our children graduated and moved on. ■

—Neal Davies