

Wisconsin Forward

Grand Commandary of Wisconsin

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December 2023

Prelate's message for Christmas
2023

November 13,

“Music and Christmas”

Oh, I know....what has music to do with Jesus' birth? Probably nothing, however, we do remember the song “Little Drummer Boy”, and the words that tell of music for the Christ

child. We also are taught in Sunday school to sing out for the Lord. Most of us have a plethora of tunes we could sing during this Season, amazing how we were brought up with music.

A church is, after all, a place to help the wayfarer along the rough road of life, not an academy of fine arts – however, we do appreciate good music during this Holiday season. Esther Porter says, “A minister should study the contents of the hymnal as he does those of the Bible if he is to employ hymns as a means of his people’s fellowship with God.” Sacred music is intended to bring the emotions along so the whole person can be united in worshipping God.

Music is ubiquitous with the Christmas season and goes hand-in-hand with the tradition of the Holiday. Whether Christmas music is something that one enjoys or not, it has been a part of most of our childhoods. It seems that music and Christmas have a symbiotic relationship, and will continue to bring cheer to many over the Holiday season for years to come. Martin Luther encouraged congregational singing during the Mass, in addition to spreading the practice of caroling outside the liturgy.

The first known translations of Christmas music to English was a collection of 25 songs compiled in 1426. However, in the U.S.A. our “traditional” Christmas music goes back to the 1930’s-40’s-50’s. We do have Bible-based hymns such as “Angels from the Realms of Glory”, “Away in a Manger”, “Come Thou long expected Jesus”, and “The First Noel”. We also have the non-secular tunes like, “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas”, “Winter Wonderland”, “Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!, and who can forget Mel Torme’s “The Christmas Song”.

And, a final thought from Henry Ward Beecher in his treatise “The Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes” (1855): “The church can ill afford to let the music used in its services to be of a quality inferior to that heard in schools and concert halls, for as Henry Sloan Coffin has said, “If young people grow up to despise what was given them in the House of God, either in words or in tunes, their respect for the Christian church is seriously enfeebled.””

And, just to bring it all back around –Psalm 68:4-5 says “Sing to God, sing in praise of His name...”; and in Hebrews 2:12 we read “I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing praises.”

Let us pray, “Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, whose entry into our world we celebrate today. Fill our hearts with the peace that only He provides. Amen.”

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