

## **A CALL TO CHORAL ACTION**

### Singing At St Joseph's

Recently, Fr John Adams appointed me to serve as your Director of Music in this parish. I'm here to help lift your hearts and minds heavenward. That's a bold claim but that is what the Church longs for in Her Sacred Music, "to lift the heart and mind heavenward." To both arouse our heart-felt conviction and open our minds to the insight which comes from encountering beauty. The Church also clearly states that Sacred music is of inestimable value, higher than that of any other art. I'm rather relieved about that as someone who is unable to appreciate the visual arts.

So with these lofty thoughts, I stand before you. I'm asking you to deepen your commitment to sacred music in our parish. I say "our parish", as I am joining my life with yours as we walk towards the Lord.

We are already blessed with gifted organists, generous musicians and faithful singers. But as we look to the future and the building of a new parish church, let's lift our sights higher still.

Let's use our imagination for a moment. (We are Catholic, we have an imagination.) Imagine a choir of forty or fifty singers, regularly coming together to rehearse and sing at Mass. A large group coming together to gain musicianship, to enjoy each other's company, to step outside our own world, to develop a range of real friendships, (people interacting in the same room and not just people flicking photos around facebook).

Imagine being able to bring others to Mass so that they can offer their gift of singing. Its hard to get anyone to Mass who is not already actively Catholic. Singing is a great way to do this. How about your non-Catholic spouses who can sing but may not come to Mass with you, or your children or grandchildren who are not active in their faith at the moment, but who make music at school, are involved in the Big Sing, or in other singing contexts. They will be most fulfilled musically when they sing in the service of the Lord. So, in establishing a new parish choir, I am thinking broadly. I want to connect with singers in our schools, both primary and secondary. Imagine a choir which is inter-generational, combining the enthusiasm of young people, the skill and resourcefulness of adults, along with the stability and fidelity of our older singers.

Being an active member of a Church choir is a great blessing. Wonderful music has been composed down the ages for the Church. Through my involvement with choirs, I've sung much of it and glimpsed heaven through it. Being part of choirs has kept me engaged in the life of the Church most of my life. Through singing in Catholic choirs, I've visited and sung in some places of major significance to our faith. I've sung with Catholics and others who love our music but who have not yet discovered its deepest meaning. When we sing something beautiful and do so well, and we listen to the final chord echoing around the building, I think, "How can this not be true?" and I pray that those singing with me who are not yet Catholic, will realise that our music joins that of the angels and saints in their triumphant hymn of praise.

So, at the end of Mass, I imagine many of you will walk passed me, you may smile sweetly at me, and not wish to engage with me, but head for the nearest exit. I hope at the very least, you will introduce yourself to me so that I will not have to shake the dust from my feet and go on to

the next parish. But, think about who you know who might sign up to a newly constituted parish choir. Use your imagination. Do people in. Give me the details of your family and friends who are musical. I will approach anyone. Sometimes it's better for someone outside the family to ask, "how about joining us and using your gift of music for others?" Or, take a form and get them to sign it. You can text or e-mail me their details. Remember: we are imagining a choir of forty or fifty for our parish. I am optimistic, but I am also very determined. So if you don't want me to come and speak to you week after week, it might be wise to get on board now.

It is my job to form a choir, it is your job to provide me with the raw material. So, who will get behind me? You will have a chance to do so as I intercept you on your way out. Please talk to others about a new choir in the coming weeks.

Entertainment is fleeting, singing the Church's music is holy. Let's recall the line from today's psalm, "I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God." and let's take it to heart. Let's act on that promise, now.

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