

By Pat Haggerty

When I am driving I listen to Sirius Radio---usually the Catholic Channel or On Broadway. Recently, Julie James of On Broadway referred to music as “magical.” I think it is not only magical, but it is also mesmerizing and can be meditative. Music has always played an integral part of my life since I was very young. I am not a clever instrumentalist but I do think of myself as a singer.

I brought myself down a sort of “musical memory lane” and thought of all the people who have inspired me to do music in the church. First, there was Sister Theophane who directed our children’s choir at St. Antoine. I can still see her huge posters with the words of the hymns written so clearly and carefully on them. She used little accent lines to indicate how many notes were in each syllable. That was her way of giving us some visual cues. Then, there was Diane Weed, who taught us so much about liturgical singing. I was only in eighth grade then, but Diane was a fantastic mentor. She got me to sing at my first wedding when I was only 13.

I could go on and on, but I have to mention Sister Cecelia. With a religious name like that you can imagine her patroness. She instructed me in voice while I was in high school. She has long since passed away, but I pray to her now to help me to sing with emotion and in a prayerful manner.

The thing about all of these people is that it wasn’t just about the music itself. To them, it was about using the music to inspire prayer, to enhance the liturgy, to think of the words we were

singing and not just the notes.

This lesson was so clearly illustrated to me last week during our shrine's novena to St. Anne. We had various choral groups singing at the different masses. They were each from a different ethnic group. They were all amazing! It wasn't about the quality of their voices; it was about **H OW**
they sang with such heart-felt emotion and with such
JOY.
That became an important reflection for me. All of these groups, from all of these different churches and towns had one thing in common: they used their singing as a way of praying. That was not just theoretical to them; it was real!

In one of the letters of St. James, he writes: "Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise." (5:13-14)

Some of these singers most assuredly were living through some kind of pain. However, they let their cheerfulness come through in song. We need to learn a lesson from this. We need to spread our faith and our cheerfulness through our singing during the liturgy. The quality of our voices is not the issue. The issue is---are we singing with our hearts? Do we let our cheerfulness shine through? Please try it the next time you are at Mass!