

After a 16-month absence resulting from the pandemic, Saturday, June 5th marked a wonderful and long-awaited return to our Rapid City NPM Chapter quarterly meetings. The temperature in Hot Springs was closing in on 100 degrees, but inside St. Anthony of Padua's church and parish center, we enjoyed the air-conditioned comfort and delightful company of over 25 music ministers from around the diocese who gathered for a day of fantastic presentations and fellowship.

The day began with a welcome from Fr. Grant Gerlach, pastor at St. Anthony's, followed by morning prayer from the musicians at St. Isaac Jogues. Our programming co-coordinator, Jeanine Gerlach, had the pleasure of introducing her son, Fr. Grant, as our first presenter of the day, and the ensuing banter between mother and son entertained everyone throughout the day. Fr. Grant provided an overview of Sing To The Lord (STL), supplemented by a unique diagram depicting the interchange between God and us (His Eucharistic people) in the liturgy. Jesus is the song that God sings to us, and we respond in sung prayers of thankfulness and praise.

Fr. Grant touched on multiple points (Why We Sing; The Church at Prayer; The Music of Catholic Worship), and noted the usage of choirs (liturgical musicians) must be promoted, as they lead the congregation to active participation. Additionally, he touched on how people can mistake the choir's "preparedness" for "performance," noting that their music and presentation is God-centered, rather than self-centered. Of particular interest to the meeting attendees was discussion on multi-cultural music in liturgy, noting a key principle that there is distinction, but not segregation, in the music.

The second presentation, Formation/Implementation of Liturgy Committees, was given by Peggy Lovrien, a 45-year member of NPM and retired Director of Liturgy from the Archdiocese of Dubuque. Peggy provided a dynamic and informative overview of development of liturgy committees, noting Christ's presence in the Word, the Eucharist, the Priest, and the Assembly. The emphasis of commissions on the sacred liturgy, sacred music, and sacred art are frequently consolidated in a diocesan Office of Worship. The mission of a liturgy committee can be traced to the Constitution of Sacred Liturgy (CSL, 14) which states: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that *fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations* which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their *right and duty by reason of their baptism.*"

Peggy addressed how faith grows when it is expressed well in celebration – Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith, while poor celebrations may weaken it (STL, 5) – and noted our goal is a strong, vibrant and engaging liturgical celebration, because it strengthens the 'true Christian spirit' (discipleship) in each of us and sends us to carry out Christ's mission to build the kingdom in our daily lives (evangelize). Several meeting attendees asked if Peggy could come to their church to discuss this topic in greater detail with their priests and formation committees.

Following a delicious lunch provided by the music ministers of St. Anthony and a brief business meeting to address upcoming preparations for our 30th anniversary celebration in October, we returned to our popular 'Sage on Stage' series. Terry Schroeder, longtime musician and choir director at Blessed Sacrament Church, gave us an engaging look at her roots in music ministry, traced back to her grandparents, nurtured at college, and continuing at Blessed Sacrament during and beyond her years as an educator in the Rapid City public schools. She enjoys seeing the involvement extend to the next generation in her family, as her nephews are active music ministers.

Closing out our day, our meeting attendees enjoyed an overview on Taizé prayer, presented by Brad Blauvelts of Our Lady of the Black Hills church. Brad spoke of Brother Roger who experienced the conviction to assist people going through ordeals. During World War II, he settled in the French village of Taizé and offered shelter to refugees fleeing the war. Following the war, Brother Roger and his fellow brothers formed a community committed a life in great simplicity. From this, the Rule of Taizé evolved, expressing “the essential that makes the common life is possible.”

Brad noted that today, the Taizé community consists of nearly 100 brothers, Catholic, and various Protestant backgrounds, from around 30 nations. They want their life to be a sign of reconciliation between divided Christians and between separated peoples. Taizé prayer focuses on meditative singing, comprised of short songs, repeated again and again. Through use of just a few words to express the basic reality of faith and quickly grasped by the mind, the sung repetition penetrates the whole being with this reality and becomes a way of listening to God. It allows us to keep on praying even when we are unaware of it, in the silence of our hearts. Brad then led a Taizé prayer service, in which the calming beauty of the prayers ended our day together and provided a welcome rejuvenation of God’s peace in our hearts.

All Rapid City Diocese music ministers and clergy are encouraged to attend quarterly NPM meetings at which education, prayer and fellowship are the focal points. For more information about the Rapid City Chapter of National Musicians, go to www.npmrc.org or [www.facebook.com /NPMRapidCityChapter](https://www.facebook.com/NPMRapidCityChapter).