

OUR MUSIC, OUR FAITH

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4, 6-7

Dear friends in Christ,

After reading the above quote from Paul's letter to the Philippians, one may find it hard to rejoice and give thanks after all that we have endured this year. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers the following insight into the circumstances under which Paul wrote this passage: "Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi was written while he was in a prison somewhere, indeed in danger of death. Although under guard for preaching Christ, Paul rejoices at the continuing progress of the gospel and expresses gratitude for the Philippians' renewed concern and help in an expression of thanks most clearly found at Phil 4:10–20." That's right—Paul was imprisoned and in danger of death, and yet he implores the Christians at Philippi (and by extension, all of us) to rejoice in the Lord, to be not anxious, and to express thanksgiving to God through our prayers.

With tens of millions sick, more than one million dead globally, and our country in a state of social and political discord, Paul's exhortations seem to be a tall order, if not impossible. How can we not be anxious and instead be thankful? Paul provides us with a simple answer later in the chapter: be grateful and joyous for what we do have. Above all, our joy in God and the salvation given to us through God's Son Jesus Christ can—and must—outweigh our transient sorrows.

As a lover of all things music—especially vocal and choral music—it is indeed difficult to focus on joy and thanksgiving and not on the uncertain future of choral and liturgical music. After deep reflection, I indeed have much for which to be grateful and in which I should rejoice and give thanks to God:

- I am joyful for my Catholic faith and the knowledge that God's steadfast love endures forever.
- I am joyful for the gift of music that I can share with St. Barnabas, even if it is minimal at this time.
- I am grateful that St. Barnabas's doors remain open, while many of our Christian brothers and sisters find their churches' doors shuttered due to the pandemic.
- I am thankful for the hard work of my colleagues on the St. Barnabas staff who work tirelessly to make sure that I can come into a clean, sanitary, and safe space for work, prayer, and worship.
- I am grateful to all of the musicians—both from St. Barnabas and from outside the parish—who assume some amount of risk to bring the gift of music to our music and liturgies.
- I am thankful for my own health and that of my loved ones, and I rejoice in every opportunity I have to protect my family and our community from illness.

As we approach this year's Thanksgiving Day—which may look very different from years past—I invite you to join me in reflecting on what we can and should be grateful for and in what we can rejoice and give thanks to God, from whom all blessings flow. May the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus.

AMDG,



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