

Sunday, April 24, 2016  
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

## MUSIC

A variety of choral and musical groups, e.g., Arts For Living, Cuesta College, San Jose State, Morro Bay High School, have participated in concerts here at St. Timothy's recently. I attended most of these and, in the name of the parish, welcomed them to our church. Music, of course, is an integral part of worship and the Catholic Church, over the course of centuries, developed and inspired countless forms of singing and composing. The Church has encouraged music since its beginning (Colossians 3:16).

Music possesses the best of both spiritual and human qualities. It resonates beauty, grace, and awe. It is creative and artistic. It can be soothing and rejuvenating. It penetrates the soul but also stirs the body into spontaneous movement. Dancing needs music. Every celebration does. Music covers the gamut of human experiences, from sadness, tragedy, war, deception and death to joy, love, passions, hope, and valor. Music mirrors human moods in its pitches, tempos, meters, staccatos, and flourishes. It has highs and lows, from altos to basses, synthesizing, exaggerating, and interpreting the universal circumstances of life. Music is inclusive of everything that exists.

There are so many forms of music – jazz, classical, pop, ballads, chant, plainsong, rap, blues, opera, etc. Music is constantly evolving and re-inventing itself into new expressions. This is the rhythm of life itself, continually growing, moving, expanding, adapting, and improving. Music continually searches new horizons and explores new possibilities. Every musical style was originally inventive, a testament to human ingenuity. Gregorian chant is an obvious example. While it may have a set, stylized format, it started out as an improvised technique, used by monks to sing sacred texts. Classical music was sponsored by the Church and wealthy patrons while jazz was developed by American Blacks who lacked access to musical instruments. Now, it is one of the most popular forms of American music. Many people reject rap, and perhaps with good reason. The lyrics can be violent and misogynistic, but it is also honest and sharply critical about systemic unfairness within contemporary society. It is, in its way, a new form of jazz which, at one time, also was considered crude and unsophisticated. What is sometimes rejected at first often becomes the accepted standard. Music teaches us to appreciate novelty and to integrate it into our lives.

Music, and all art forms, can stimulate ethical and altruistic qualities. Religion and music, therefore, are natural partners. The arts are not something secondary but integral to developing character. They promote attitudes of peace, cooperation and beauty, of which we need more in today's world. They encourage creativity. They entertain and enthrall, joining diverse groups of people into a common community, thereby helping to overcome the divisions and dissensions of society. Music teaches us to hope and smile, to forego smugness and criticisms, and to create a more cohesive and joyful environment. All of us are called to be artists.