

**Memorial of St. Cecilia**  
**Homily of Bishop Barres**  
**St. Agnes Cathedral**  
**November 22, 2022**

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, St. Cecilia has been invoked as the universal patroness of music. And she is mentioned in the Roman Canon which we will pray at today's Mass.

It is said that St. Cecilia "sang to God in her heart" on her wedding day, desiring to live for Christ alone. With the help of an angel, Cecilia converted her pagan husband and both died as martyrs.

In art, St. Cecilia is often portrayed as playing the organ, viola or lyre as she lives and brings to life Psalm 22. "Give thanks to the Lord on the harp; on the ten-stringed lyre offer praise." (Ps. 22:2)<sup>1</sup>

And so today, we give tribute to the great Catholic musicians, composers and singers through the centuries who have given glory to God through the gift of music.

Excellent liturgical music has Catholic philosophy, Catholic theology, Catholic spirituality and Catholic aesthetics behind it. Excellent liturgical music evangelizes.

In his discourse on the Psalms in today's Office of Readings, St. Augustine states: "Let us sing a new song not with our lips but with our lives...You must first understand that words cannot express the things that are sung by the heart...Such a cry of joy (in song) is a sound signifying that the heart is bringing to birth what it cannot utter in words...Your heart must rejoice beyond words, soaring into an immensity of gladness, unrestrained by syllabic bonds. Sing to him with jubilation."

Pope Benedict XVI once said that theologians need to do theology on their knees.

The same could be said of great Catholic musicians, composers and singers.

On this Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr, Universal Patroness of music, we express our gratitude to these great Catholic musicians, composers and singers through the centuries and pray for their souls at this Mass.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. November 2022 *Magnificat*, 318.

We pray for current Catholic musicians, composers and singers, especially here at the Cathedral of St. Agnes, and we pray for the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the development and evangelizing progress of liturgical music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

And as we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving on Thursday, we remember that the very word *Eucharist* means *Thanksgiving* and we remember that every diocese, every parish, every Catholic school and every Catholic University, Hospital and Institution is involved in a Eucharistic Revival.

What do we mean by the phrase “Eucharistic Revival”?

Eucharistic Revival, in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, is a rekindling of “Eucharistic Amazement” and Eucharistic Devotion.

Eucharistic Revival is an effective Catechesis of the theology and spirituality of the Catholic Mass that moves the hearts, minds, souls and imaginations of the People of God.

Eucharistic Revival in regard to our Catholic schools means the cultivation of a radical fidelity to the Sunday Catholic Mass on the part of our teachers, our staff and our families.

Eucharistic Revival is a rekindling of Pope Benedict XVI’s insight that every period of Church reform and effective Catholic evangelization and mission throughout history can be traced to a rediscovery of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>2</sup>

A Eucharistic Revival requires a Biblical Revival since all of our Catholic theology and spirituality of the Catholic Mass and the Eucharist are grounded in the Sacred Scriptures. The manna that falls from heaven in the Old Testament foreshadows the Multiplication of Loaves in the New Testament which in turn foreshadows the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and Christ’s Sacrifice on Calvary.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord*, Pope Benedict writes: “Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the Word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist.

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<sup>2</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI’s 2017 Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* 6: “Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord’s eucharistic presence among his people.”

The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist.” (55)

The rhythm of every dimension of our Catholic schools and our parishes is a Biblical rhythm, a Eucharistic rhythm and a Missionary rhythm.

We are all Eucharistic missionaries and the mission of our schools and our parishes is driven by the Eucharist and the cosmic power of the Catholic Mass.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families!