Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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"All that you see here -- the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone ... (Luke 21:5).

Rev 14:14-19; *Luke 21:5-11*

St. Cecilia, Martyr, Patroness of Music

I often stop to thank Robert Basolo, the choir director at our small Midtown Kansas City church. Sunday by Sunday I am struck by just how important the "acoustic envelope" is that holds our community focused on the mystery of the liturgy.

A small, fervent group of singers representing the typical range of most church choirs blends its voices to fill the vault of the 116-year-old structure we call St. James Church. Robert's virtuoso keyboard skills (on both piano and organ) lead the choir, which leads the assembly through a full program in many styles or hymnody from Gospel, contemporary and classical music. St. James, Robert says, is an exceptional Catholic church because everyone sings. We regularly share exuberant songs led by our Nigerian and Micronesian parishioners.

Today's commemoration of St. Cecelia, patroness of music, is oddly served by a Gospel reading in which Jesus foretells the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. “Not a single stone will be left standing on another stone.” For God’s house will survive and flourish because it is in essence not a building. The Spirit of Jesus resides in the members of the body of Christ. As music does not reside on sheets of paper but in performance, so faith lives in believers when it is expressed in our voices and actions.

It has been said that three things reveal a living, worshiping community -- a warm welcome, good preaching and singable music. Two out of three is good; all three make possible a miracle of transcendence formed from the "full, conscious, active participation of the baptized," in the words of the Vatican II document on the liturgy. We rejoice to share a portable, precious faith, especially in difficult times when structures fail us, for it is a song in our hearts that sustains us, and no threat or force can take it from us.