

Preaching to the Choir (and Band)



Music camp passes ministry on to the ‘next generation’

BY KATIE PETERSON
Catholic News Service

After his experiences traveling around the country as a musician, John Angotti, director of music and liturgy at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Franklin, Tenn., came up with the idea of having a music camp to mentor young musicians and pass on the Church’s music ministry to the next generation.

This came to fruition this summer when the St. Philip Arts and Liturgy Institute held its first Play It Forward Music Camp June 19-23.

The institute is a mission of the church “to promote the Gospel by developing musicians and liturgists for St. Philip and the local community” by offering lessons in various instruments, including voice, piano, guitar and more, according to St. Philip’s website.

More than three dozen youth from seventh through 12th grade from various churches and schools in the Nashville Diocese spent the week of camp learning about various instruments, including piano, guitar, saxophone, handbells, violin, drums, and more, while also receiving the opportunity to attend daily Mass and spend time in prayer with Jesus at adoration.

“The church is getting older, the music directors are older, choirs are older, and the music programs are dwindling,” Angotti told the *Tennessee Register*, Nashville’s diocesan newspaper. “I thought, ‘Why not start something that will gather the parishes together and try to develop a youth camp where we can mentor and pass the ministry on to



(OSV News photo/Katie Peterson, *Tennessee Register*)
Kimberly Tizapa, a parishioner at St. Catherine Church in Columbia, Tenn., practices her guitar before dress rehearsal begins at St. Philip the Apostle Parish in Franklin, Tenn., June 23.

the next generation.”

To do this, Angotti gathered several of his fellow musicians and other professionals with Franklin’s Arts and Liturgy Institute to make it happen.

Camp percussion teacher Dion Clay, who has worked with Angotti in his band for several years, explained, “A camp like this is so needed. I came from an era where music was on the same level as sports, and unfortunately, now it isn’t.”

“[I’m] seeing the potential in so many of these little leaders; they’ve got a natural gift, so I hope this kind of program

continues every year,” he said.

“Like with anything new, there was apprehension, there was nervousness, and simply the unknown, which I think was applicable for everybody. Nobody knew what to expect,” Clay continued, as he reflected on his time with the students throughout the week. “But I told them just this morning that I was extremely proud of them for stepping into the unknown.

“To ask a child to stand up before people to sing or play an instrument, that takes a lot of nerve, and these children are doing that with

a lot of tenacity, fervor, and fortitude,” he said. “I’m in the midst of potential leaders in the Church.”

Stepping outside of his comfort zone is what Beau Jones, an upcoming seventh-grade student at St. Bernard Academy, said he did during the week as he prepared to perform at the final show. He sang a solo on “We Walk with Faith,” and played piano for “Goodness of God.”

“I’ve learned what it means to work as a team, and I’ve gotten to play with some really great musicians,” he said. “Music is a whole different language that allows you to touch people in a way that you couldn’t with just words.”

For Kimberly Tizapa, a member of St. Catherine Parish in Columbia, the week wasn’t just about music, but also about deepening her faith.

“I learned to be more open with people and more comfortable and trusting, and I enhanced my love for God and for music,” said Tizapa, who played electric guitar for “Holy Spirit” and “God So Loved” during the final performance.

“Lately, I’ve been struggling with my music, and I feel like this week God has been telling me what I needed to hear,” she said.

“It’s something that is so beautiful and profound because you know that God is answering your prayer, and it only makes your love for God increase when you know He’s confirmed that you’re doing what He wants you to do,” she said. “Ever since I was little, I was always interested in music. It’s a connection and something inside of me that I was born with and have loved ever since.”

These things are what Angotti called the unexpected fruits of the week.

“Music allows us to experience a bigger God,” Angotti said. “Such a community has been built; this community of kids that never really knew each other before have now developed a family.”

“Working inside the Church, you can become disgruntled very easily because sometimes you get so caught up in the

Are you a young musician?

It can be hard to get involved in music at your church, right?

“All the cantors are older than I am. There’s no way they’ll let me help.”

“There’s way too much music I’d need to learn to even *think* about playing accompaniment.”

“I’m in college, so I can’t really help at home. And I like the music here better anyway.”

But God calls us to share our gifts, no matter what our age is — to be a voice in His choir and a player in His band (and orchestra, too).

If you’re looking for inspiration (and some guidance on music ministry) — check out a July 29 concert at Holy Family Parish in Rockford, featuring music director Max Cichock (Boylan ‘16) and his brother Frank Cichock (Boylan ‘20). The concert starts at 6 p.m. and is free.

politics that you start to lose hope,” he continued. “Working with these kids, it has revitalized my hope in the Church, that we can get through all the politics and all the craziness and just stay focused on Jesus.”

He said the idea of the U.S. National Eucharistic Revival, which kicked off the Year of the Parish with the celebration of Corpus Christi June 11, was paramount throughout the week, too.

“The Eucharistic Revival is more than processions and adoration. It’s about becoming what you receive, and I think the kids got that this week,” Angotti said. “They see themselves as living, walking sacraments.

“I hope they take away that their faith is important, that participation is important, that they are called to participate and be full, active, and conscious members of the Church and that, in the end, the world is a better place because of it,” he said. “It’s kinder, more merciful, more empathetic, more like Jesus.”

John Angotti, director of music at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Franklin, Tenn., plays the piano for a group performance.

