



## **Director's Address: State of the Guild 2019**

I am writing this column for the March newsletter knowing that by June first, I will no longer serve as your director. We have had several people in the past who have served several terms each. I believe that I am the first director to serve three terms consecutively. This is allowed by the new by-laws. I have decided that it would not be wise to serve a fourth term. Change is good for all of us.

It has been a pleasure to meet so many of you. You are hard workers who receive minimal appreciation for working evenings, weekends and holidays. Many of you play far more services than is recommended by NPM. Some of you work several jobs concurrently. A few are not paid for their services. It has not been easy to work in an environment that has endured the Journey of Faith and Grace and the sexual abuse crisis.

I had a series of meetings around the diocese: Niagara Falls, Lockport, Batavia, Jamestown, Fredonia and Wellsville. I tried to make this organization a diocesan organization instead of an Erie County organization. We did not get a strong response; people act out of habit.

We created awards to be given out at the May mass and the annual meeting. This includes awards for 50 years of membership, the Cecilia Roy Kenny award and the new young adult music ministry award. It was a pleasure to give Bridget Dick Blesnuk the Kenny award before she passed away. To acknowledge members who have belonged to the guild for 50 or 60 years was recognition that was long overdue. I hope that our young people in the guild honor these individuals for the foundation they have created for the guild's continued existence.

A survey monkey was created by Heather Lovelace asking members

Continued Next Page

# **SAVE THE DATE**

**Sunday, April 7**  
4:00 PM

**Three Choirs Festival**  
Holy Trinity Church, Buffalo

**Monday, May 6**  
7:00 PM

**Organ Scholarship  
Auditions**  
St. Benedict's Church,  
Egbertsville

**Thursday, May 9**  
7:00 PM

**Mother's Day Concert  
w/Two High School Choirs**  
St. Joseph's Cathedral

**Thursday, May 23**  
7:00 PM

**Mass, Awards, and  
Annual Meeting**  
St. Andrew's Church,  
Kenmore

**Director's Address: State of the Guild 2019, Continued**

their preferences on topics, and days and times of meetings. Many of your suggestions have been implemented. The membership of the guild is holding at about 115, but the attendance at meetings is below par. If you read in the minutes of the guild in years past, attendance has always been a concern.

As I heard the well known Father Ed Foley say at a conference in Chicago recently, people don't seem to care about music and liturgy like they used to. There has been a corresponding drop in membership in the American Guild of Organists and National Association of Pastoral Musicians. Conventions do not attract the large numbers of yesteryear. There is a feeling that the excitement generated after Vatican II has largely dissipated.

Yet the history of the guild is to be admired. This is preserved in our archives which have been moved to Canisius College library, thanks to the effort of Sarah Sutcliffe. I hope to continue as the archivist for the guild. We are the oldest chapter in the history of NPM. I have been writing a history of the guild that amounts to 60 pages. We have acquired some wonderful historical pictures from Cecelia Kenny's family. If all goes well, this publication will be published in a year or two. I want you to know how special this organization is by learning its history.

We have many wonderful people on the board and have made an effort to bring in young adults in order to secure our future. In fact, about half the board is under the age of forty years. In addition, we now follow NPM guidelines by creating ex officio positions, mandating term limits for officers and requiring all officers to be members of the national organization. Your president has attended most NPM conventions as your designated representative. We did raise the dues, but kept the former membership fee for the retirees. This pattern was established by NPM.

The rest is really up to the membership. Do we value the existence of the guild? Do we need support in our ministry? Do we seek continuing education to maintain or upgrade our skills? The reality that I see is some complacency and limited time. The development of technology in communication has been helpful but does have a downside. I see people multi tasking to the point of exhaustion. No wonder doctor offices now call their patients to remind them of their appointments! We know that people easily delete emails from the guild and some say their newsletters go to spam and they do not read it.

Continued Next Page

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

**Monday-Thursday,  
July 1-4  
American Guild  
of Organists  
Regional Convention  
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Buffalo**

**Tuesday-Friday,  
July 16-19  
NPM Convention  
Raleigh, North Carolina**

**NPM Convention  
Raleigh, North Carolina**

Since the guild functions as a chapter of the NPM, it is important to know that the annual conference is scheduled for Tuesday, July 16 through Friday, July 19. This is one day shorter than is traditional.

The Eucharist will be in the new cathedral which seats 2000 people and has a Fisk pipe organ to lead the music.

Most important, our dear guild member, Sister Judith Kubicki, will present a major lecture at the convention AND receive the Jubilate Deo award from NPM. We are proud of Judith and the Felician Franciscan heritage which brought forth her musical, liturgical and literary gifts for the diocese of Buffalo and the entire church. Her plenum is entitled: "When in our music God is glorified: singing our communities into transformed life."

**Director's Address: State of the Guild 2019**, Continued

For me I could never do this work without a spiritual foundation. It starts with prayer. I did not have this view point when I was younger. I was more interested in the music. My return to a spiritual outlook is rooted in my experience of following, however imperfectly, the 12 Steps program. It seems to me, we should start with prayer, go to planning and practicing and then we can lead worship in song.

I ask: do you think the guild will make it to its centennial? That will take place in 2046, twenty seven years from now. If we want the guild to get there, we all have to ensure that it will survive with our activism. Dues are not enough!

We are in good shape financially. Our reserves are about the same as when I took the leadership role over five years ago. I know of two people who have included the guild in their wills. Please consider this final gesture for the guild in your later years. However, I am less concerned about financial security.

We brought in a wonderful young musician, Dr. Brian Gurley, from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Albany. He performed with talented Peter Gonciarz for an audience of 25. Last fall I attended a concert given by David Haas at a local parish. That church welcomed 300 people. From an educational point of view, the first person was the better musician yet that program was not appealing to popular taste. The board is always in a conundrum about whether we should bring in someone who is well known or should we bring in someone who is a great teacher / artist but is not well known. Another example was the program for which Glenn Hufnagel arranged for 25 children of Burmese immigrants from the west side to sing with Father Ricky Manalo. Father Ricky loved these children! The concert was artistically rewarding but not financially successful due to attendance of 90 people. The attendance did not balance the expenditures.

We now follow a schedule of offering the convocation at the seminary every other year. It is a lot of work for the board and does not come cheap. The convocation actually began in 1991 and is not a historical tradition of the guild. Now that funerals and memorial services are increasingly scheduled on Saturdays, music directors are less available on Saturdays for continuing education. In the archives, it has been noted that the guild made a profit on the convocation, this is not true anymore.

I want to give past president Gail Shepherd the credit of getting the guild on Facebook and establishing a website. Her vision developed the pairing of beautiful old churches with a children's choir festival.

Continued Next Page

**Robert Chambers**  
**1931-2019**

Our former guild president died January 10. He will be remembered for his long tenure as principal at Bishop Timon High School and as organist at Holy Angels Church.

Your director was privileged to interview him for an oral history project last summer. This conversation has been recorded for our archives. Bob was president of the guild in the 1960's and knew our founders well. May the angels lead you into paradise, Bob!

**Youth Music Ministry Award**

Last year the board was happy to give the award to Chelsea Brodka who ministers at St. Benedict's Church. Applications are due May 1 for this year's award. Please contact Bill Fay at musicman08@verizon.net for a copy of the application form. It is important to reward our young people for their gifts to the church.

**Organ Scholarship Fund**

This scholarship for \$500 is one of the best things we give. Past winners have been Joel Kumro, Maria Chomicka, Peter Gonciarz and James Bobak. They have gone on to make impressive contributions in the fields of organ performance and liturgical music. Applications are due May 1 and can be obtained by contacting Bill Fay at musicman08@verizon.net. The auditions will be held at St. Benedict's Church on Monday May 6 at 7 PM. Joanne Jasinski and Jeanne Suski will be the adjudicators. Maria Chomicka will host. Applicants may play their repertoire piece on the pipe organ or the grand piano.

## Director's Address: State of the Guild 2019, Continued

We now alternate the children's choir festival with an adult choir experience.

As I told the board a few years ago we can not solve the problems around us. We are not going to light bonfires. We can light candles. We can use our music ministry to lift hearts, heal souls and honor the God of our calling. To do so well requires talent, training, preparation, practice and continual search in the craft of music ministry. This quest is never ending.

It is up to the membership to protect the guild's existence with our dues, participation and support. Since we believe in the resurrection, I can not but hope that we will achieve our centennial. Gail, Glenn and I will be in our nineties, but we intend to celebrate with you!

Bill Fay

## "Smells and Bells"

Rev. John Mack

"Smells and bells" is a term often used for celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, appealing to the senses with incense and the sound of bells rung especially during the Eucharistic Prayer at the Epiclesis (outpouring of the Holy Spirit) and during the words of Institution. In reality, often our festive times, such as Christmas and Easter, are accompanied by particular scents, tastes, and sounds that communicate a greater significance including not only at church but at home around the family table.

Just as familiar are the sounds of a Tantum Ergo or Jesus Christ is Risen Today, and the sight and smell of rising incense in at liturgy accompanied with the clinging of the censor so are the flavors and fragrances of our Easter brunch. Hard-boiled eggs, smoked kielbasa, and placek with handmade pierogi and ravioli grace our gatherings included in our blessed Easter brunch baskets as we renew relationships of love among family and friends as well as renew our identities as brought forth by our ancestors who emigrated in.

As a sacramental people, sights and sounds and smells serve as the manner of our encounter with Divine Mystery. Song and silence in liturgy shape sacred space in the ordinary, especially through our music-making. Our music ministry hopefully permeates the whole of our festive celebrations, including those at home. "Smells and bells" remind us of how our lives as a parish family of faith and our families made whole again at shared meals are interwoven as Gift and Grace.

# Around TOWN

Our condolences go to **Lucy Drabczyk** on the death of her father, **Edward Drabczyk**.

The guild welcomes new members **Rev. Ted Jost** and parishioner **Anthony Parisi** from St. Mary of the Lake, Lakeview.

Our former director, **Gail Shepherd**, is serving as registrar for the upcoming AGO regional convention.

**Tim Socha** hosted a tea and conversation for choral directors at Calvary Church. He is moving forward with the Western New York Choral Consortium. Your guild director participated in this conversation. All choral groups have the opportunity to share a master calendar.

Former Cathedral organist **Don Fellows** traveled from Pittsburgh to Buffalo to play the organ at his former teacher's memorial service. **Dr. John Hofmann** was the organ instructor for Don as well as **Joanne Jasinski** at SUNY Fredonia. The service was held at St Joseph University Church in December.

Our sympathy goes to **Rosamond Siegwarth** of Youngstown on the passing of her husband, **Heinz Siegwarth**.

The guild sends warm wishes to our chaplain **Father John Mack** for a speedy recovery from health issues.