



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

222 NORTH KIMBALL STREET, MITCHELL, SOUTH DAKOTA 57301 • (605) 996-3639

Music and Liturgy at Holy Family Parish.

I have been the Pastor at Holy Family for ten months. Over that time we have gotten to know each other. I feel that things seem to be going well with one exception: the music and liturgical style that we are using. Over and over I hear that we need to go back to the way things were before Father Stevens and Nigel arrived. Statements like “why are we going back in time?” or “why don’t we use music that draws the young kids?” are just two examples of what I am hearing.

I knew that this issue existed at Holy Family even before I was asked to be your pastor (it’s a small Diocese and priests talk). In the beginning I determined I could do one of three things:

1. Change everything back to the way it was when Fr. Larry was here.
2. Change nothing and leave it as it is.
3. Educate myself and others about liturgy and music and come to an understanding of

what the Universal Church instructions are as they relate to the issue at hand.

I have chosen the third option. This will require much patience of all of us but I firmly believe we will be a better parish for it.

My personal formation on the topic is ongoing. I am reading church documents on liturgy and music. I have a weekly meeting with Fr. Andy and Benton Schmidt about the liturgies here. We discuss foundational principles that will guide our liturgical decisions in the future. As the old man in the room I am able to provide some historical context for why the faithful don’t necessarily like the current tone and direction. Fr. Andy and Benton are able to provide insight as to why they are attracted to this style of liturgical music. This dialogue has already born much fruit in understanding between generations.

From these discussions a format is being created for listening sessions that will be open for the parish. This is still in the planning stages but we plan to have at least three events where we discuss the history of liturgy, purpose of the liturgy, and the proper understanding of how music contributes to our praise of God. There will also be the opportunity for dialogue between the faithful, pastors, and music director.

I am hopeful and confident that this dialogue will bring understanding for all of us as to why we do what we do. That we realize that we are dealing with something larger than personal preferences and that our primary goal is to have beautiful prayerful liturgies that give God praise.

You might be interested in why I don’t just change everything back to the way it was. My answer is this: The church is ever ancient and ever new, change is part of our lives. I entered the seminary in January of 1994 and in that short time, between then and now, the way liturgy is being taught in seminary has changed, the way men are being formed in the seminary has changed, and even the liturgical style used at the Cathedral has changed.

The Second Vatican Council was convened 50 years ago. One of the many aspects of the Council was a call for liturgical reform, many liturgical changes came quickly, and for the most part they were well received. Unfortunately the speed of the liturgical reforms got ahead of a full understanding of what the Church was calling for. Therefore the reform continues. *Cont. on back...*

As your pastor I feel the responsibility to educate and form all of us. Would it be easier to just go back to what we know and are comfortable with? Obviously the answer is yes, but that isn't going to change the fact that liturgical reform is going on. Therefore, instead of ignoring it, I hope we will take time to be open to what the Holy Spirit has in store for us.

I ask for your patience and for your prayers. As I mentioned we will be having sessions in the fall to have informative dialogue on the subject. When we get the calendar dates set they will be published so everyone who would like to attend has time to work it into their schedule.

--Fr. Ken