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Not of Voice Alone, But Heart

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Monday September 20, 2021

By Eric F. Spina

Some of the University of Dayton's wonderful undergraduate music ministers led Sunday's congregation through a full-throated version of *Lord, Whose Love In Humble Service*, their voices reverberating throughout the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

The hymn's lyrics beautifully captured what UD students bring to the liturgy, whether it's Mass under a tent for New Student Orientation Weekend, before a full house in the chapel on Sundays, or in the residence halls during the week:

"We, your servants, bring the worship
Not of voice alone, but heart…"

I see that heart (and soul) in the dozens of students each week who help plan the liturgy and serve as Mass coordinators, music ministers, lectors, altar servers, greeters, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Their energy and joy take the liturgy to a new level. Karen and I always leave Mass feeling restored and elevated.

Our experience doesn't surprise Scott Paeplow, assistant director of liturgy for pastoral music. "The single greatest thing students bring to the liturgical experience is themselves," he says. "The willingness to foster and share their gifts for the service of the Lord and His Church is inspiring."

Crystal Sullivan, executive director of Campus Ministry, reminds me that "liturgy" means "work of the people." Our students make our worship on campus quite literally the work of the people, and it's a beautiful sight to witness.

A few days before Sunday's 5 p.m. Mass, keyboardist Madison Schroeder, guitarist Miley Azbill, and cantor Claire Snyder met to plan the music based on the Scripture readings. Madison calls these meetings a highlight of her week.

"Everyone in the program has such joy about them. They're very alive and confident," says Madison, a senior health sciences major from Miller City, Ohio. "I hesitated but eventually applied to become a music minister for leadership formation. I'm able to live my faith at UD, but I felt a call to go deeper.

"This has formed me into the person I want to be."

Earlier on Sunday Tom Laveck, a senior religious studies major from Ashtabula, Ohio, arrived a half hour before the 10 a.m. Mass to show the lectors the readings, assign Eucharistic ministers their stations, and figure out who's lighting the candles and bearing the gifts, among numerous other details he attends to as lead Mass coordinator. We observe him go about his work every Sunday with diligence, and the quality of the liturgy is a testament to the care he has for his faith community.

"I love working behind the scenes, and I have a love for the liturgy," says Tom, who plans to study theology in graduate school. "I want to make sure people get the best liturgical experience possible."

Like many of our students, Tom says he "fell in love with UD" the minute he stepped foot on campus. "The place felt welcoming and inviting."

Along with his fellow students, Tom strives to help recreate that spirit in the chapel on Sunday mornings. "Everyone is welcome, regardless of religious background. It's a very positive and happy atmosphere," he says.

"It is *the* community, the perfect aspect of community. There's nothing like it."

(Photo by Mary Kate Fleisher)