



National Association of Pastoral Musicians

May 31, 2024

Press Release: 2024 NPM Major Awards Given to Pastoral Ministers

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) presents two awards to pastoral ministers who have faithfully served the Catholic Church throughout their lives. NPM's Executive Director, Jennifer Kluge, shares the joy of the Association for both awardees: "NPM's major awards recognize those who have profoundly impacted Catholic music and liturgy and continue to meet the needs of our Church today. Certainly, Cardinal Gregory and Paul French are exemplars of these criteria." NPM's 2024 awardees are Mr. Paul French, Pastoral Musician of the Year, and Wilton Cardinal Gregory, *Jubilate Deo* Award recipient.

The Pastoral Musician of the Year award is given to an individual who exemplifies the best of NPM, one who has given substantial witness or promotion to the role of pastoral music in parish, diocesan, or institutional life. This year's Pastoral Musician of the Year recipient is Mr. Paul French.

For over four decades composer, conductor, organist, Paul French has worked in parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago, and since 2001 he has been the Director of Music at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church where he leads a thriving choral program of adult and children's voices. For over ten years he served as a faculty member of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians Choir Director Institutes. Mr. French was invited to create *Fanfares and Alleluias* for the papal visit of Pope Francis to the United States in 2015. Another of his works, *Concertato on Grosser Gott*, was performed for the papal visits of both Pope Francis (2015) and Pope Benedict XVI (2008).

Mr. French also serves as the President of the Board of Directors of the American Federation Pueri Cantores, (the student-choral organization of the Roman Catholic Church with Federations in nearly 35 countries worldwide), and is a member of their conducting roster, leading annual youth choral festivals in dioceses around the United States. He served as Music Director of the William Ferris Chorale from 2005-2016, in that time establishing it on the professional choral scene as the premier ensemble for breathing life into works of lesser-known and living composers. His 2015 performances of the early 20th century Requiem Masses of Ildebrando Pizzetti and Bonventura Somma were hailed as one of the Top Ten Performances of the Year by the *Chicago Classical Review*, with critic Lawrence Johnson proclaiming, "French and his singers



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*provided glowing and deeply felt advocacy to these beautiful, neglected works.*" During his tenure with the Ferris Chorale, he released two discs with Cedille Records, *Snowcarols: Christmas Music of William Ferris* (2007), and *American Choral Premieres* (works of Alan Hovhaness, George Rochberg, Easley Blackwood, and others (2009).

Mr. French studied composition, conducting, chant and organ at St. John's University, Northwestern University, the Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra in Rome, and privately with William Ferris. A composer of more than 200 instrumental and choral works, he was also the long-time Director of Choral Recordings for World Library Publications, for whom he was the editor of a series of choral works for children's choirs, under the distinguished banner of the American Federation Pueri Cantores.

Mr. French's published music is available through, MorningStar Music, Paraclete Press, Santa Barbara Music Publishing, World Library Publications, GIA Publications, CanticaNOVA Publications and Oregon Catholic Press.

Mr. French expresses deep gratitude upon receiving this award, while also noting the ministry behind his work: "This recognition is a profound honor on one hand, and I am deeply grateful to NPM for the acknowledgement. On the other hand, it is an accolade that I would share with every member of this association, for we share a mission and a purpose, and it is our very shared experience of the power of Christ which impels us to be His humble workers in the field. What a privilege it is to work with children and youth, adults and seniors, both singers and instrumentalists, in the creation of a transforming beauty that points to the Divine. The National Association of Pastoral Musicians is to be commended for their unwavering dedication to this vital ministry."

Dr. Jennifer Pascual, former member of the NPM Board of Directors and the 2023 Pastoral Musician of the Year, reflects on this year's recipient and the contributions Mr. French has made to pastoral music today:

It is an honor for me to pass on the torch of Pastoral Musician of the Year to Paul French, an outstanding conductor, composer and pastoral musician. Having served throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago for over three decades, he has influenced and shaped the liturgical music life of many musicians, and through his more than 200 compositions he has reached hundreds of choristers and instrumentalists throughout our country and the world who utilize his music in their regular repertoire.

Paul is a hard worker and is totally devoted to the people with whom he makes music, through Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, through the William Ferris Chorale and through the American Federation Pueri Cantores. He excels in all of these endeavors to make music for the glory of God, for sung prayer and as a wonderful means of evangelization.



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Additionally, NPM's *Jubilare Deo* Award is given in recognition of a substantial contribution to the development of pastoral liturgy in the United States. The 2024 *Jubilare Deo* recipient is Wilton Cardinal Gregory.

Wilton Cardinal Gregory is the first African American Cardinal in the Catholic Church. Cardinal Gregory has generously served in a variety of leadership roles in our local and global Church communities. Appointed the College of Cardinals in 2020 by Pope Francis, Cardinal Gregory is a leading voice in the Catholic Church for racial and social justice, immigration reform, and numerous life issues that challenge our unity in our shared humanity and ability to treat each other with dignity and respect. In 2019, he was installed as the seventh Archbishop of The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington (D.C.).

As a young priest, Cardinal Gregory first served in his hometown of the Archdiocese of Chicago. He was then installed as the bishop of Belleville, Illinois, before being appointed the archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta in 2004. In 2001, he was elected president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the first time an African American bishop held that position. Under Cardinal Gregory's leadership, the bishops implemented the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," a comprehensive document that responded to the sexual abuse crisis within the Church, outlining guidelines and procedures for abuse prevention, accountability, reconciliation, and healing.

Cardinal Gregory has written and spoken prolifically on the intersection of social justice and faith. He leads The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington with the initiative "Made in God's Image: Pray and Work to End the Sin of Racism (CCC 1935)," providing opportunities for community prayer, social justice involvement, and education to combat racial injustice. The Archdiocese also has a local "Laudato Si' Action Plan" to implement Pope Francis' call to integral ecology and protection of the earth in its parishes, schools, and ministries.

Cardinal Gregory currently serves as a Member of the Vatican Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life and on the Board of Trustees for the Papal Foundation. Additionally, he is the Catholic Co-Chair of the National Council of Synagogues consultation for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In July 2023, Cardinal Gregory was appointed by Pope Francis as a Member for the Synod of Bishops on Synodality. The Vatican Synod of Bishops on Synodality, "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," is a process begun in 2021 and will continue with a second Synod Assembly in 2024 as Pope Francis "... has called the entire People of God to journey together through listening and discernment rooted in the Holy Spirit, ... to contribute to a process by which the Church deepens in understanding of Her mission and looks toward the future." ([synod.va](https://www.vatican.va/synod.va))



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Cardinal Gregory is Chairman of the Board of Trustees for The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., and is Chancellor of The Catholic University of America.

Cardinal Gregory expresses his gratitude for being this year's *Jubilate Deo* award recipient:

I know that the work of our pastoral musicians is of critical importance. They work very hard to bring quality music and encourage active participation on the part of the people in the assembly. The fact that they are honoring me in this way is a humbling feeling for me.

NPM member leader Mary Prete shares these thoughts about Cardinal Gregory as the 2024 *Jubilate Deo* awardee:

Wilton Cardinal Gregory has faithfully served the Catholic church for over 50 years in varied ways. As a fellow Chicagoan, I knew him as the most popular bishop for the sacrament of Confirmation. He also was active in our Office of Divine Worship where he advocated for the enactment of the Vatican Two mandates. Named as one of the youngest bishops, he served faithfully in Belleville and then was assigned to Atlanta, where he again called the faithful to embrace change by being attentive to the needs of the Spanish speaking communities. In the midst of those positions, he was the president of the USCCB during challenging times. His focus always remains with the people and the liturgy we pray. He is a holy man, a man who cares about the people he serves, and is always ready to stand for those who have no standing. I am thrilled that he is our 2024 *Jubilate Deo* award winner.

The 2024 NPM Major Awards will be presented to Mr. French and Cardinal Gregory during the 47<sup>th</sup> NPM National Convention, which will take place July 8-11 in Kansas City, Missouri. A list of past award winners is available on the NPM website.

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**Related links:**

NPM Website: [www.npm.org](http://www.npm.org)

Paul French Bio (Source: ECS Publishing): [www.ecspublishing.com/composers/f/paul-m-french.html](http://www.ecspublishing.com/composers/f/paul-m-french.html)

American Federation Pueri Cantores: [www.pcchoirs.org](http://www.pcchoirs.org)

Archdiocese of Washington: [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org)

Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center: [www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/mcier-sheraton-kansas-city-hotel-at-crown-center/overview](http://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/mcier-sheraton-kansas-city-hotel-at-crown-center/overview)