



Saint Cecilia, Pray for Us: Guided Prayer and Reflection Inspired By and Honoring the Patron Saint of Music

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) offers this resource to help you celebrate the feast of Saint Cecilia. As pastoral musicians, we draw inspiration from the patron saint of music. On her feast day (November 22), we invite you to pause and reflect on the gifts we have been given and that we share with others.

This resource is intended for individual or group use. If you're using it with a group, we invite you to use the Scripture passages and subsequent reflections for dialogue and insight.

The opening and closing reflections are also appropriate for individual use.

If you would like to use this resource as a time of prayer with a group that sings, we invite you to add an opening and closing song that fit your community, both stylistically and musically. Need some suggestions? The NPM staff offers some of their

favorite selections at bit.ly/NPMstaffpicks.

For more information about the National Association of Pastoral Musicians and how to join as a member, visit www.npm.org.



Opening Prayer

Close your eyes and breathe ten full breaths, gently in and out. Feel the spirit that fills your lungs and your heart as you begin. Slowly re-open your eyes and pray:

Almighty ever living God, like so many who have preceded us,
we come to you with gratitude for the gift of music.

By the gifts of the Spirit, you have inspired lyrics and notes
that help us return praise to you.

May our ministry guide those under our pastoral care to raise their hearts,
minds, and voices in worship before your Throne of Grace. Through our
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Opening Reflection

Lord, as I begin, I am thankful for:

The gift of music has blessed my life in these ways...

Lord, teach me to...

Prayer Requests:

Opening Scripture (Psalm Option for the Memorial of St. Cecilia)

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.

Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear,
forget your people and your father's house.
So shall the king desire your beauty;
for he is your lord, and you must worship him.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.

All glorious is the king's daughter as she enters;
her raiment is threaded with spun gold.
In embroidered apparel she is borne in to the king;
behind her the virgins of her train are brought to you.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.

They are borne in with gladness and joy;
they enter the palace of the king.
The place of your fathers your sons shall have;
you shall make them princes through all the land.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.

-Ps. 45: 11-12, 14-15, 16-17

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Reflection Questions

Remember a time when God led you into the desert. What did God speak to your heart in that time?

God invites us to forget and forsake all to serve and worship him. What do I cling to from the past that hinders this?

Am I ready for the Lord? What can I do to become ready to enter the wedding feast with our Lord?
How can I help others be ready?

Sacred Scripture (First Reading Option for the Memorial of St. Cecilia)

Hosea 2:16bc, 17cd, 21-22

Thus says the LORD:

I will lead her into the desert
and speak to her heart.

She shall respond there as in the days of her youth,
when she came up from the land of Egypt.

I will espouse you to me forever:

I will espouse you in right and in justice,
in love and in mercy;

I will espouse you in fidelity,
and you shall know the LORD.

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Scriptural Reflection

Name the desert where you meet God.

For Hosea, the revelation came in the struggles of a difficult marriage. There, condensed in this reading, came the memory of Israel's wandering in the desert. In suffering and hunger and fear, they met God. In the desert, Israel was offered and then accepted eternal covenant with God. They were fed with manna and water pouring from a rock. In daily memory of that covenant experience, as they wind the tefillin (phylacteries) on their bodies, observant Jews quote verses 21 and 22, in which God offers the "bride price" as his part of the covenant: right and justice, love, mercy, fidelity, knowledge.

Cecilia, according to legend, was raised from childhood as a Christian. Her desert came when her parents arranged a marriage for her when she wanted to remain a virgin. In her choice, facing the possibility of death, she deepened her faith. In her desert struggle, she brought Valerian (her husband) and others to faith. In her desert, during the marriage ceremony, she "sang in her heart to God."

As a pastoral musician, where do you find your desert? How do you meet God when all the distractions are wiped away? Is it in a choir rehearsal where nothing seems to go right, but you keep moving forward anyway? Is it at Mass when the congregation seems not to understand how important congregational song is in worship, who are not even willing to pick up a hymnal?

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Scriptural Reflection (Continued)

As a cantor, is it when you stand up to sing a psalm that you don't understand or dislike, but you sing because the Church's wisdom has assigned this text as somehow revelatory on this occasion? As a priest, is it when you need to take time to learn the chant for upcoming orations or a preface or when you feel called to reflect on the selected hymnody as well as the readings in preparing your homily? As a director of music ministries, is it when you are summoned to a meeting with the pastor over the parish music program?

And in your desert, do you find the promised "bride price" that God holds out to you?

--Gordon Truitt



Reflection in Song

Has there been a song that has guided you through this year? Write the lyrics down in this area, highlighting or circling any phrases that speak strongly to your heart:

What words/phrases do you hear among the stillness and silence you've created as you reflect on Scripture and song?

Closing Prayer

We return thanks to you, loving Father, for this moment of reflection.
May it increase the grace in us so that we may be distributors
of it to your faithful. May our part in worship always be for
your glory and not our own.

Guide us always through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and
reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

As I end this time of prayer and reflection, I take this phrase/word with me on my heart:

As I go forward on my day, I offer this to the Lord:



Acknowledgements

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Scriptural Reflection Written by Gordon Truitt

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