

# A Slice of Heaven: My Week at the Liturgical Music Institute

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## ***Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi***



On Sunday, June 29, I left my home to spend five days at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, New York, a beautiful and charming town dotted with winding roads, majestic homes, towering trees, and the peaceful waters of Long Island. Turning into the driveway, I was immediately overtaken by the leafy and welcoming trees which served as an honor guard on both sides of the driveways, reminiscent of an earlier period of history and a slower pace of life. At the top of the driveway sat the Seminary, the “Icon of the Heart of the Church on Long Island.” Built in 1930, this imposing structure, situated on 215 acres close to the Long Island Sound, has served as a special place of learning and formation for both priests, religious, and lay ministers, an oasis of peace and tranquility for all who enter.

What a perfect setting for the Liturgical Music Institute, a five-day comprehensive program that offers musical, pastoral and liturgical formation for both new and experienced church musicians. First-time participants took “The Liturgical Year” class with Christopher Ferraro, Director of the Institute and Music Director of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Lindenhurst, New York, and also the Director of the Rockville Centre Chapter of NPM. Returning participants were offered “The Liturgy Documents” with Msgr. Joseph DeGrocco, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and former Professor of Liturgy and Director of Liturgical Formation at the Seminary, or “The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults” with Sr. Sheila Browne, RSM, a free-lance presenter on music and worship and former Director of the Office of Worship of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Other faculty included Dr. Jennifer Pascual, Director of Music at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City, John Miller, Director of Music Ministries for the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Newark, NJ, Steve Warner, Director of the University of Notre Dame Folk Choir, N, Susan Hugelmeyer, Assistant Director of the Institute and Lisa Kelly, Director of Music at Our Lady of the Snows, Floral Park, NY.



Every day contained an excellent balance of liturgies, seminars, and skills sessions. Each morning commenced with Morning Prayer in the Crypt Chapel; a huge bowl of holy water at the entrance welcomed each person, an invitation to enter into this prayerful space. The monastic atmosphere of the Crypt Chapel with its eight side altars and monastic seating set a mood of reverence and prayerfulness. The modal psalm tones of St. Meinrad filled this space with glorious sound; everyone lifting their voices to give glory and praise to God. This special chapel became a refuge for personal prayer and meditation, a respite from the outside world, a sanctuary of sacred silence and conversation with the Lord.



After Morning Prayer we journeyed to our respective classrooms to encounter the liturgical year, the liturgical documents or the RCIA. Exploring the liturgical year was both a refresher and a learning experience for me. It was invigorating to be in a classroom setting and re-discover the riches of the seasons and cycles with musicians from around the country, to hear how liturgies are celebrated in other states, and even as far as Australia! Participants

included musicians from Wisconsin, Kentucky, Texas, neighboring states, and also another continent. Chris Ferraro led these 10 hours with expertise, and his passion for liturgy and music was quite evident in his presentations.

Daily Mass and Evening Prayer were also part of our week, along with a Taizé Prayer Around the Cross and Eucharistic Adoration. The Taizé service was a highlight for many; the sacredness of the Crypt Chapel the perfect venue for this stunningly beautiful celebration. Steven Warner added subtle guitar accompaniment to the ensemble, the music transporting us to a higher place of inner peace and stillness.

Several liturgies were celebrated in the Main Chapel, home to a three-manual E.M. Skinner pipe organ. Upon entering, one's eye is immediately drawn to the altar, dominated by a magnificent gold and bronze crucifix surrounded by panels depicting events in both the Old and New Testaments. A Blessed Sacrament Chapel is set apart by gates from the iron grille, affording more space for personal prayer.



Dr. Jerry Galipeau, Vice-President and Chief Publishing Officer at J.S. Paluch and World Library Publications, conducted five different spirituality/workshop sessions with energy and passion, mesmerizing all of us with his convictions and testimonials, both personal and professional. We were totally engaged in his witness to his faith, his devotion and unwavering belief in his ministry and the power of music as an evangelizing tool in the modern world.

Liturgical composer Steven Warner, founder and Director of the Notre Dame Folk Choir, focused on multicultural music and his experiences at the University of Notre Dame, along with his work in Ireland with Notre Dame graduate students. He reminded all of us that we need not go into the jungle to evangelize: "the jungle of modern-day secularism is right outside our door, and the need for our ministry is more important than ever."

Skills sessions in organ, voice, choral conducting, guitar, and music theory were part of the daily schedule, along with choral rehearsals for our Choral Festival Concert on Thursday night, July 3, at the Church of St. Patrick in Huntington, under the direction of John Miller. The concert ranged from the traditional South African "We Are Marching" to a hauntingly beautiful arrangement of "O Sacrum Convivium" by James Biery, and culminated with Jennifer Pascual's rousing rendition of E. Power Biggs'

arrangement of John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" on the new Gluck Pipe Organ (see *The American Organist*, June 2014, p. 38).

Participants in the Institute, diverse in age and experience, included twenty-eight full-time musicians, and fully a third of them in their twenties: college students, recent graduates, and first-year parish pastoral musicians. How refreshing to witness the energy, enthusiasm, joy and seriousness of purpose in the younger generation, their eagerness to learn from others and their commitment to a faith-filled liturgical music ministry. We enjoyed social camaraderie in the Seminary dining room and also at the end of the day in McKenna Lounge, a relaxing opportunity to share both fellowship and commonalities.



The week ended on Friday, July 4, with testimonials from various participants. All echoed a common sentiment: we were united in faith and united in our passion and love for our vocations as liturgical music ministers, strengthened and nourished by all we had experienced in the chapel, the classroom, the choral rehearsal, immersed in the oneness and mystery of purpose and power of prayer.



Our liturgy booklet opened with the following quote of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.:

“More than the preacher’s word,  
it is the musician’s touch that brings the young to God again.

Heart speaks to heart in mysterious ways,  
and it is the artist that holds the key to mystery.”

**Heart speaks to heart in mysterious ways.**

***Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi.***

For more information on the Institute check the website: [www.liturgicalmusicinstitute.org](http://www.liturgicalmusicinstitute.org), or email [music@icseminary.edu](mailto:music@icseminary.edu). The next Liturgical Institute will be held July 19-24, 2015.

