

FROM THE BOARD

Many Voices, One Mission

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you all on the Board of Directors, and, as someone new to the Board, I approach this responsibility, I hope, with both humility and enthusiasm. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to help shape an organization that has such an important role in the life of the Church and in the formation and support of those who lead its sung prayer.

One of the great gifts—and challenges—of Catholic liturgical music in the United States is its extraordinary diversity. The Church's musical life encompasses Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony, organ, piano, and guitar music, hymnody and contemporary song, Gospel traditions, Hispanic and Latino musical traditions, music from six continents, bilingual and multilingual repertoire, and countless other forms of music rooted in various communities and cultures. This diversity is not a problem to be solved; it is a reality to be embraced and a gift to be stewarded. Paragraph 1201 of the Catechism states: "The mystery of Christ is so unfathomably rich that it cannot be exhausted by its expression in any single liturgical tradition." This too then extends to our liturgical music: no single musical aesthetic should define the whole of Catholic pastoral musicianship.

So, NPM must then also understand itself as an "umbrella organization." Our purpose should not be to promote one musical aesthetic, theological emphasis, generation, culture, or liturgical pathway over another. Rather, NPM should provide a broad, wide, "big tent" under which the many legitimate expressions of Catholic pastoral music can meet, learn from one another, and remain united by our common service

to the Church. This is particularly important given NPM's relationship with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and their role in serving the Church in the United States. NPM's existing mission—to serve musicians, clergy, liturgists, and other leaders of prayer—already points toward this breadth.

NPM must be genuinely open, inclusive, diverse, and welcoming. These values must be tangible in our programming, leadership, chapters, educational opportunities, conversations, organizational culture—and, most of all, in our membership. We should want people to recognize themselves in NPM and, equally importantly, to encounter people whose experiences and musical traditions are different from their own.

Our unity does not require uniformity. Indeed, Catholic liturgy itself demonstrates that unity can contain remarkable diversity. The Church calls us to sing together as one body while respecting the cultures, languages, gifts, and musical traditions of the people who make up that body.

NPM can be that place: a large and generous umbrella under which the Church's many pastoral musicians gather—not because we all make the same music, but because we share a common vocation to serve the liturgical sung prayer of all God's people.



Orin Johnson

NPM Board of Directors