

A Coffee with Alessio



The Fourth Sunday of Advent

After our rejoicing Sunday last week, we are back to purple this week (ever so briefly, because Tuesday is Christmas Day) as we continue to focus on the coming of the Lord on Christmas Day.

I have been thinking for a while what I should write in this final column for 2018. I find the end of the year can bring about a mixture of emotions- excitement as we look forward to Christmas and the holidays, weariness from all the goings on at this time of year, a sense of pride in all that one has achieved during the year and also a sense of nostalgia as we look back on the past year. As you know I am a teacher, and this time of the year is when everyone 'hits the deck running'. That got me to thinking about two things. Firstly, in the Gospel Reading this Sunday we will hear how Mary visited Elizabeth. That visit was another example of how Mary quietly and humbly served the Lord and neighbour. Elizabeth (and John the Baptist) were filled with joy when Mary visited. I hope people will be filled with joy and see the Lord in us through the music that we joyfully provide for the Christmas liturgies.

Now, this year marks two hundred years since the first performance of 'Silent Night'. To cut a long story short, this piece of music was written to fulfil a need on Christmas Eve 1818 when the organ wasn't working in Saint Nicholas Church, Obendorf. The text had been written sometime earlier by Father Joseph Mohr. On Christmas Eve 1818, Franz Xavier Gruber composed a melody to go with Mohr's text. That's pretty amazing when you think that back in 1818 they didn't have all the technological equipment we do today. There were no music writing software programs back then. So, the text and melody were sung for the first time at Christmas Midnight Mass in 1818. Here we are two hundred years later and that carol has become a firm part of the Christmas repertoire. It's not Christmas without 'Silent Night'. While I'm writing about *Silent Night* it was the Christmas Carol sung when all arms were laid bare during World War I on Christmas Day. We recently commemorated the centenary of the end of World War I. I don't think Father Joseph Mohr nor Franz Xavier Gruber could have imagined the impact that carol would have over the next two hundred years and beyond. So it is with us. Will our liturgical Music (and enactment of other liturgical ministries) have a positive impact in the future? Will our music be a source of peace in the world as Silent Night was during the war?

A couple of comments before I conclude my column for today and for this year. As you know I have written about what I call the "kitchen cabinet". That is a group of people, whom I can bounce ideas off

and they use me for ideas as well. Some people in this group are known to each other and some aren't. It's always a good idea in the kitchen cabinet, to have some people who are known to each other and some people who aren't. To all the members of my kitchen cabinet, thank you for your support through the year. I suggest after the busyness of Christmas is over, those of you who are liturgical musicians, might get together with a couple of members of your kitchen cabinet, go out for a coffee and do some forward preparation for 2019. It's always much nicer and more palatable of course to do such things with a coffee and a cake, than sitting at an office desk.

I wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas and I hope that you have an opportunity to enjoy some down time post-Christmas. This column will be in recess and resume when school goes back next year. The holidays will give me some time to try out some new cafes and revisit some of my favourite ones as well.

Till next year enjoy your coffee and cake!

Alessio Loiacono
Music Field Officer

Friday 21 December 2018