

## A FEELING OF EMPTINESS

In the turbulent 60's and 70's, when folk music was synonymous with the protest movement and the status quo was the object of contempt, along with whatever music was associated with it, the church found itself on the defensive. Mainline Christianity was part of the status quo, first in the civil rights movement, then in the Vietnam era, when flying a United States flag caused congregational splits. To counteract this, we began to see a breakdown in all church traditions, liturgy, music, forms of worship, and even clergy and congregant attire.

Much of this change was accomplished so quickly that it seems very little thought was given to either the consequences or the validity of the replacements. To be sure, some changes were needed. The church needs to constantly reform itself in order to minister to the world. However, in the rush to become less rigid and to appeal to the rebellious young, some elements of worship which had nurtured, unified, comforted, uplifted, and edified the church for centuries, were suddenly thrown out. In the haste to find suitable substitutes, there was a lapse in quality and integrity. Many new translations (often watered-down) of the Bible appeared, as did countless hymnals full of cheap folk-sounding melodies set to cynical and protest texts. One hymn I have tried to forget (unsuccessfully) is "Apple pie, martini dry, with Old Glory waving high, aren't we very lucky to be free." In every church I have served, I have found the drawer in the music library where all of those Avery and Marsh (Richard Avery, a Presbyterian minister, and Donald Marsh, his church music director) anthems and hymnals have been stowed away. They are useless for today. They are what is known as "disposable music," like paper plates and cups. Use it once, if you must, but then throw it away.

The Roman Catholic Church so convulsed itself over the loss of its disaffected young, that it threw out the most precious heritage of its music. That music had inspired composers down through the ages to create masterpieces based on the great Latin hymns of the church and on the mass. In its place, practically overnight, came the folk-sounding (not real, in other words) music accompanied by guitars, referred to derisively as "hum-and-strum." Now, after a good look at itself and the effects of that loss, the Roman Catholic Church is desperately trying to bring back the music it lost. But it is not that easy. No one remembers what it sounded like and everyone wants what is familiar. Unfortunately, what we learned as youth and children tends to take on the mantle of what we love most. We are constantly trying to re-create the sounds of our youth, and if you were raised on "Apple pie, martini dry," or commercial folk-sounding hymns, are you really going to thrill to singing "O God Our Help in Ages Past?"

In a series of articles in our newsletter, I am going to examine some of the changes in music in modern times and the crisis I believe exists in the church. A crisis must involve self-examination and reflection. A crisis demands that we educate ourselves about the many choices we have, so as not to make serious errors in judgement which will leave us with a feeling of emptiness, a loss of beauty, and a loss of the tools of our faith. For after all, as the Chinese pictogram reminds us, crisis means danger *plus* opportunity!

This Easter, wash yourself with beauty and enjoy the music of the season!

Linda Lanier-Keosaian  
Organist/Choir Director