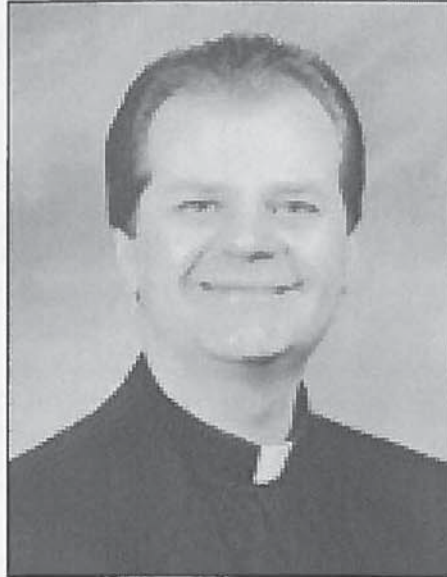


# From Organist to Pastoral Musician

## A History of Church Music in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh 1843-2006

By Father James Chepponis

Father Chepponis's April 22, 2007 lecture was based on *A History of Church Music in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh 1843-2006*, which he, together with Doctor Fred Moleck and Sister Cynthia Serjak, RSM, compiled, wrote and edited. The book was published in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, September 15, 2006, and in commemoration of the Centennial of St. Paul Cathedral, October 24, 2006.



### Summary, from the book's back cover

Since its establishment in 1843, the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh has a rich history of dedicated church music leadership, supported by the bishops of Pittsburgh. The organists and choir-masters at St. Paul Cathedral provided the first musical leadership. Official diocesan efforts began with the formation of a Music Commission, which reached its zenith under the direction of Father Carlo Rossini.

The changes in the liturgy promulgated by the Second Vatican Council's 1963 *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* also brought changes to the role of the church musician. The often-mysterious choir loft organist was challenged to become a multi-skilled minister deeply involved in parish life. This process was guided by the leaders of the Diocesan Music Office, and gained momentum when the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Association

tion of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) was established in 1981.

As the Pittsburgh Chapter of NPM celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary during the centennial year of St. Paul Cathedral in 2006, this book recalls the stories of those who gave the Church of Pittsburgh an immense gift as they led the transformation from organist to pastoral musician.

### Background

As the Pittsburgh Chapter of the NPM prepared to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006, three members of this organization, Father James Chepponis, Doctor Fred Moleck, and Sister Cynthia Serjak, RSM decided to write a history. Initially, the project was only going to be a history detailing the twenty-five years of Pittsburgh's NPM Chapter (1981-2006). As the authors worked, however, the project continued to expand! "We really should include a chapter about the infamous Father Carlo Rossini," the

authors said. So the book was to begin then with the year Father Rossini became Chairman of the Diocesan Music Commission, 1930. As the authors continued research, some information was found about the formation of the first Diocesan Music Commission in 1902. "We must include that information as well," the authors said. Finally, the authors decided that we might as well begin the book with the year 1843, the year the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh was established. One of the driving factors in the expansion of the book was the fact that, up until this publication, no book chronicling the history of church music in the Pittsburgh Diocese existed.

### Sources

A motivating factor in writing this book was the fact that we had primary sources available for an accurate retelling of this history. A number of fortunate events made this possible: first, copies of all the monthly newsletters of the Pittsburgh NPM Chapter were available in the Diocesan Office for Music Ministry; second, the last president of Pittsburgh's Association of Catholic Church Musicians, which was a precursor of the NPM during the years 1961-1981, found in his basement a box of detailed meeting minutes from this era, and donated the material to the Diocesan Music Office; third, a number of separate individuals had written articles about the history of music in the Diocese and at St. Paul Cathedral

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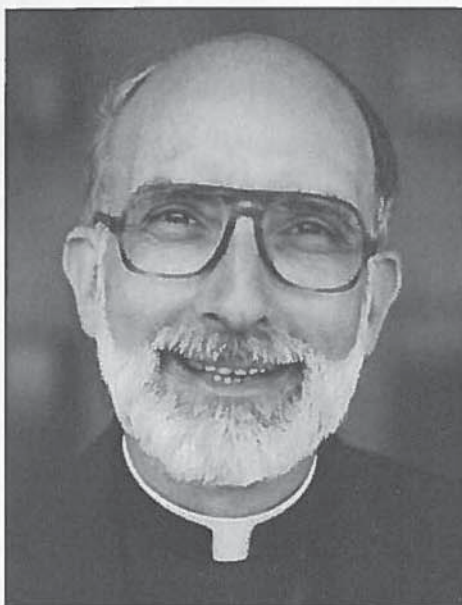


## FAREWELL, FATHER JIM GARVEY

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS bids fond farewell to Fr. Jim Garvey who has been actively involved with the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pa. for more than 17 years. Father Garvey was ordained to the priesthood in 1976 and served as parochial vicar and pastor in a number of parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He was also the Coordinator of Programs for the Homeless and the Director of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. Currently Fr. Jim is the Senior Parochial Vicar at St. Margaret Mary Parish, Moon Township.

Fr. Jim was elected for two terms as President, and two terms as Secretary to the Board of the Catholic Historical Society. Twice he was asked to give the Annual Lambing Lecture to the membership. For several years he edited and frequently contributed articles to this publication: *Gathered Fragments*. He also wrote the histories of many parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh: St. Joseph (Manchester, North Side), St. Francis de Sales (McKees Rocks), Immaculate Conception (Carnegie), Epiphany

Parish (downtown), the first two St. Paul Cathedrals (located at the corner of Fifth and Grant Streets, downtown), and St. Margaret Mary Parish (Moon Twp). Father Jim also took many of the photographs which appeared in these books.



In addition to these histories, he wrote a memoir about street cars, had several poems published, and contributed a number of articles to the Pittsburgh Catholic. He worked with the Centennial Committee and wrote a chapter for the recently published book

marking the one hundredth anniversary of St. Paul Cathedral Parish in Oakland. Fr. Jim was always willing to lend copies of books and historical materials from his personal library to those who were researching and writing articles about history in Western Pennsylvania and especially in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He actively collected the histories of parishes and Catholic institutions, and donated them and some artifacts to the Diocesan Archives, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Department at the Oakland branch of the Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh.

Fr. Jim encouraged others to write histories marking significant anniversaries (25, 50 and 100 years) in the lives of their parishes. He also edited the writings of others, especially those which focused on local history. We will miss his leadership, the accurate and detailed minutes Fr. Jim wrote for Board Meetings, and his thoughtful and creative efforts to promote local Catholic history. Thank you Fr. Garvey. May God bless you.

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during the sesquicentennial year of the Pittsburgh Diocese, 1992, and the articles were included in the NPM newsletters at that time; and fourth, some interesting information, limited in scope, was on file in the Diocesan Archives and Records Center from the time of Father Rossini. Finally, in the mid-1980s, the Bishop's Office was cleaning out their files and had a box of correspondence and materials dating from the early

1900s. The Bishop's Office at that time contacted the Diocesan Music Office, and asked if the Music Office wanted the material. If not, the material would be thrown in the trash. Fortunately, the Diocesan Music Coordinator accepted the material, which included priceless gems such as an original carbon copy from 1902 establishing the first Diocesan Music Commission and a copy of a hand-written 1908 letter from Bishop Canevin to the Vatican Secretary of State requesting that

he ask the Pope if women were allowed to sing in church choirs. The actual letter from the Vatican Secretary (answered in the negative!) is included in this material from the Bishop's Office as well – material that could have met its fate in the trash bin.

*Father Chepponis, an accomplished composer and musician, is Director of the Diocesan Office for Music and pastor of Saint John Capistran Parish.*