

February 10, 2019

From Fr. Jim . . .

Please consider this: There is a true story about former Prime Minister Menachem Begin's visit during the Carter administration. Seated in the Oval Office of the White House, Prime Minister Begin asked President Carter about the three telephones on the president's desk. President Carter responded: one goes to Plains Georgia, so I can keep track of my brother, Billy; one is a hot line to Moscow, which gives me instant communication with the Russians and one is a direct line to God!" "How much does that cost?" asked Begin. "Ten thousand dollars a month but it is worth every cent," replied the president.



Sometime later, Carter visited Israel and sat with Begin in his office. Seeing three telephones on his desk Carter asked, "Why do you have three phones?" "Well, one is a hot line to Cairo, Egypt, one is my direct line to Parliament, and one is my direct line to God!" Carter asked, "What does your direct line to God cost?" "Ten cents," Begin responded. "It's a local call!"

Would you consider your relationship with God a long distant one or a local one? Is God more of a higher power watching over you from a distance or very near to you, one with you and within your reach and grasp? When we pray, is our praying more like making a long distance call or talking to our neighbor from across the back yard fence?

We can't ever forget that our God is transcendent-always greater than ourselves and more than we can imagine, truly a God of heaven but our God is also incarnate – one with us in our very flesh, a God also of earth. God is as near to us as our very heartbeat and is as real to us as our love for our neighbor and as the Church is the Body of Christ, living its faith into action. Let us call upon the Lord always and often, especially while he is near.

Also please consider this: In Seoul, South Korea, there was a theater manager who thought the *Sound of Music* was too long of a movie. Therefore, he decided to reduce the running time of the film without doing damage to the plot by removing all the songs! This brings to mind this question: What is truly wrong with this picture?

Although one may be able to understand the plot without the music, arguably the plot was damaged without the songs. Since the movie was a musical, how can you have a musical without music and singing?

This sheds some light on the importance of music and song in the liturgy and why some parts of the mass need to be sung like the Gloria, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Holy, Holy, Lamb of God and the Alleluia. This is also why some parts are better when they are sung like the Responsorial Psalm and the Penitential Rite and why there is the option to chant the prayers and the Eucharistic Prayer. Could this also be the reason why some church musicians want to sing all the verses to the hymns?

How about with the liturgy that is our lives and when we leave church each Sunday with the charge: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord with your life?" Can we glorify the Lord throughout the week without singing the music of the liturgy? When during the week are we aware of God's presence raising us up or when our focus is truly on the higher things? Would bursting out an Alleluia be appropriate or does humming a Sanctus deepen the plot of our lives with God? What opportunities are we given to pray the psalms with our lives and to sing a familiar refrain? How could softly singing the Lord Have Mercy or the Lamb of God give meaning to the ongoing musical of God living with us in our very flesh and converting us to a spiritual nature? Singing with God and to God in prayer and in the prayer that is our very life makes for a really good, if not great picture!