

Put Some Divine Music on Your Mental Playlist

BY SUSIE LLOYD

You hear music everywhere you go — at home, in your car, in the store — whether you want to or not, right? You love some of it and sing your favorite songs in the shower. You hate some of it and complain that the same stupid song is stuck in your head for three days. How do you chase it out? Another song, of course. That’s the power of music. Love it or hate it, it sticks.

Music is not just entertainment. For better or worse, it influences us. Song lyrics, be they positive or negative, can encourage us to do the right things, or very wrong things. Yet the power of music to plant good ideas into our heads and hearts is, actually, great news for parents.

A lot of my love for the Catholic Faith came from the beautiful music my parents played when I was a kid. Take Handel’s *Messiah*. Very catchy. Fun to sing. Haven’t heard it? Yes, you have. That’s

where the “Hallelujah Chorus” comes from. (“Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Ha-lay-ay-lu-yuh!”) What are they hallelujah-ing about? The triumph of the Redeemer. Not a bad thing to have stuck in your head. Songs like that often played in the back of my mind as I grew up.

There was one exception. I was 12 when my older sisters came home from college singing Mozart’s “Ave Verum Corpus.” Mary Ellen took the soprano; Jane took the alto. There are two more parts and an organ besides, but even their two-bit version was The. Most. Beautiful. Thing. I’d ever heard. It refused to play in the background of my mind. It demanded my complete attention. I hummed it all day, piecing it together, as I swung from our huge maple tree on my tire swing. My whole body and soul wanted to sing that song. Without realizing it,

I was praying. All day. Didn’t Jesus say to pray always? Singing in your heart is one way to do that.

I didn’t know the words. But who does at that age? (“Oh, the ramp parts we washed were so gallantly gleaming”?) True, “Ave Verum” was in Latin. It didn’t matter. Music is patient. It stays with you. It waits until you’re ready. “Ave Verum” spoke to my soul long before I understood what the words were — or what they meant: “Hail true body, born of the Virgin Mary, having suffered on the cross for men.” When I grew up I learned to sing that piece. Sacred music, for me, was the gateway to discovering the most beautiful things in Christian life.

If you are thinking your kids will never go for sacred music or traditional hymns, consider this: Pop music is fun, but it’s not all there is. Why limit yourself when there’s a whole world of beauty to be discovered? It’s like saying you like soda pop too much to try fine champagne. Divine music is an acquired taste — like wine or coffee or caviar — only this one gives voice to your deepest longings. *As a deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, my God.* (Go ahead, listen to *Sicut Cervus*, by Palestrina, on YouTube.)

Try adding some sacred music to your playlist. Once it enters your mental playlist, it will come to you whenever you need it. It will lift your heart up and bring you to a better place. It might even stay for a few days.



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