



# Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

## St. Peter's Music Ministry before Vatican II

PALM SUNDAY  
**All glory, laud, and honor** 26  
Gloria, laus et honor  
From the Latin of St. Theodulph  
by Dr. J.M. Neale  
Maestoso con spirito M. Haydn

1. All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or To  
2. Thou art the King of Is - rael, Thou  
3. The com - pan - y of an - gels Are  
4. The peo - ple of the He - brews With  
5. To Thee be - fore Thy Pas - sion They  
6. Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es, Ac -

1. Thee, Re - deem - er, King, To  
2. Da - vid's roy - al Son, Who  
3. prais - ing Thee on high, And  
4. palms be - fore Thee went; Our  
5. sang their hymns of praise; To  
6. cept the pray'rs we bring, Who

1. Whom the lips of chil - dren Made  
2. in the Lord's name com - est The  
3. mor - tal men and all things Cre -  
4. praise and pray'r and an - thems Be -  
5. Thee now high ex - alt - ed Our  
6. in all good de - light - est, Thou

Figure 1 *Young People's Catholic Hymn Book*  
1911

As we enjoy the wonderful music provided by the different choirs at St. Peter's during this upcoming Easter season, we reflect on how the Music Ministry has changed over the years, since we first celebrated Easter in the original chapel, 200 years ago.

In 1823, at the consecration of our first church in Liberty, a local paper reported on the “ladies and gentlemen composing the choir of St. John’s church in Frederick”, writing that “much credit is due ...we have rarely heard such music in this part of the country”.<sup>1</sup> It may not have been possible for us to have our own choir for this very first Mass, but the importance of music during this sacred liturgy brought parishioners of St. John’s Parish in Frederick to Liberty – no small distance when traveling by horseback or buggy.

48 years later, in 1871 at the dedication of our 2<sup>nd</sup> church, “the most delightful music was rendered by the choir from St. John’s Church, Frederick under its skillful organist and leader, Prof. John C. Engelbrecht”, was the report in a “Letter From Frederick”, sent to the editors of the *Catholic Mirror*. The writer wrote further that “the selections were choice and were executed with happy effect”. The ‘new’ church may still not have had a choir worthy of such an

auspicious event, but it most likely had an organ because 20 years later, in February of 1890, *The Daily News* reported that “Henry Kappes of Mechanicstown (now Thurmont) is engaged in repairing the pipe organ in the Catholic church at Liberty, which has been silent for the past ten years.”

<sup>1</sup> Archives of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, Box #10/Folder # 14, on deposit at the Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University Library, Washington, D.C.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived in 1892 to staff the newly built Notre Dame Academy and the Sisters most probably took on the role of organist for the liturgies. Recalls Elizabeth Lee, who retired from the choir in 2018 after 50 years as a member, “Mary Unglesbee told me that in 1924, when she was

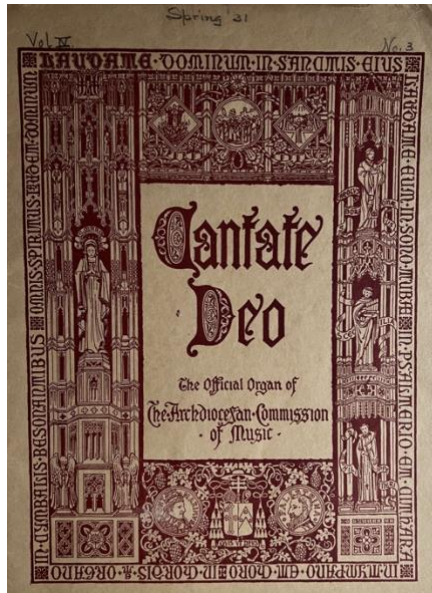


Figure 2 *Cantate Deo* (Sing to God)  
Spring 1931

15 years old, Sister Barbara was scheduled to play the pipe organ at St. Peter’s for midnight Mass. Sister was too ill to play and she [Mary] was sent for, to play in the Sister’s place.” Mary also recounted to Elizabeth that Ann Riordan, Paul Sappington and Miss Claire Sappington were part of the choir at that time.

By the Spring of 1932, however, the choir was no doubt a joy to hear. *Cantate Deo*, the official publication of the Archdiocesan Commission of Music, published their 5th report on the choirs of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, in the matter of liturgical music. St. Peter’s received an AB rating as a Senior Choir “where co-operation and spirit are good”. It should be noted that St. John’s in Frederick received the same AB rating, with an AA rating the only higher rating.

60 years ago, in March 1963 - and shortly before Mrs. Unglesbee took over as organist for the 9am Mass, St. Peter’s said goodbye to its pipe organ. It had broken and this time it was too expensive to repair. In its place, the Parish bought an electronic Baldwin organ. Wood from the console of the old organ, and possibly the wooden pipes, were cut into squares that were tole painted and marked as being from the pipe organ. A few of pieces of this history have survived and are on display in the Narthex this month.



Figure 3 Choir in choir loft in 1983 at dedication of Church Altar  
Right to left: Mary Unglesbee at organ, Ann White directing, Janet Walker, Edna Spilman, Paul Sappington, Ken Spielman, Elizabeth Lee, singing

Mary Unglesbee continued to play for the 9 AM Mass until the retirement of then choir director, Ann White. At that time she started to play at the 7:30 AM Mass, where she continued to play until the church fire in 2004, when she was 95 years old. However, Mary didn’t limit herself to playing; in 1952, at the suggestion of Sr. Barbara, she joined the choir and when she wasn’t playing, she was singing!

Prior to Advent of 1964, which marked the beginning of the Church year, Mass was in Latin, the organ was the only accompaniment instrument, 4 hymns were sung in either English or Latin, and at High Mass, the Gloria, Creed, Sanctus and Agnus Dei were sung. At Low Mass only the 4 hymns were sung. After the Vatican II Council, more parts of the Mass added and were sung – the Responsorial Psalm, the Memorial Acclamation and Great Amen, to name a few. See next week’s ‘Key Moment in St. Peter’s History’ to learn how Vatican II influenced music at St. Peter’s in the ensuing years, through today.