

This week I was supposed to think about why I believe that there should be a choir singing at Mass, when it's much easier to just have a cantor. And you asked me to think about why it is that I do what I do, what brings me back, what made me fall in love with music ministry. I think that means it's officially Rosa Story Time.

One of my earliest singing memories was for the Christmas Eve Children's Mass at my home parish. I was six years old, I was part of the children's choir for that Mass, and the music director Leo (who at the time was new to the position, but is currently still in the position) gave me a solo for the Communion song- Silent Night. He saw something special in me then and I really would not be where I am now without him. It was around this time that my dad started volunteering at my church with handling the A/V. My brother and I would sit back there with him and help him out too. Because of this, we got to be closer with the members of the band for the Mass we went to. I fell in love with the music and with the people playing it. I sang the same solo every year for the Christmas Eve Children's Mass until eventually I was the one cantoring for the Mass and singing the psalm. I believe the first time I did that was 2015, when I was eleven. At the time, I was falling deeper and deeper in love with another person in the choir, Theresa. She had (and still has) the most gorgeous voice, the most beautiful smile, the most loving heart.

In the span of about six months (end of 2016-beginning of 2017), the assistant music director, Leo, and Theresa all left the parish. I was absolutely heartbroken. If it wasn't clear to me before how much of an impact they had all had on my life up to that point, it was certainly clear then. This was around the time when I fell more in love with Christian music in general. I found so many songs that helped me through this devastating time. And that's when I started thinking I wanted to pursue a career related to music- although I wasn't quite thinking music

minister yet. Leo ended up coming back to our parish at the end of 2017. August of 2018, I officially joined the choir for the 10:30 Mass. That's a long story in and of itself, but let's say it just kind of happened. And since then, the members of the band have become my family. Leo was my confirmation sponsor. A handful of them came to my high school graduation and party. I love them all so, so much.

This is getting pretty long so I'll cut to the chase. Love of music has been in me since the beginning. It was inevitable that it would become the way that I worship and feel closest in my relationship with God. But the people... the people are what got me into music ministry. I didn't come up to them and say I wanted to join, they said "you're singing with us" haha. And so I can't imagine Mass every Sunday with just a cantor and a pianist. It doesn't feel right. A full choir brings the whole congregation in for the ride. It's a representation of the community that the entire church should be. I feel like the more mic-ed voices there are, the more likely people in the congregation are to join in singing. With just the cantor, it feels like a solo job, if that makes sense. And there are so many talented people who love music and praising the Lord through song and this is their way to give back to their community, which is all the more reason to allow them to do so. I just can't imagine not going up there and singing every Sunday for Mass. I know I'm being paid to do it (and a lot more than that) here at Saint Leo, but I'm certainly not at my home parish. And yet I do it every week. I hate missing a Sunday. So I hope that I can show this love to my volunteers here and maybe even see it in them as well.