

DATE: September 2007

TO: Parents & Members of Children's 9:30 Choir

FROM: Sheila Ebbels, Director of Music Ministry

Email: sheilaebbels@aol.com
Rectory Phone # 201-261-3366
Home Phone # 201-612-1068

RE: CHILDREN'S CHOIR INFORMATION

Dear New & Returning Choir Members and Parents,

Thank you for making the commitment to our Children's Choir at St. Peter the Apostle Parish. I am very proud of this group and what they do to enhance the worship experience at the 9:30 Mass. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you more about the ministry and my expectations of its members (and accordingly, their parents!)

THE MINISTRY

The Children's Choir services at the 9:30 am Sunday Mass. **All members of the choir should arrive at 9:00 am on Sunday morning** so that we can get organized for assigning mass parts, soloists on special songs, etc. The choir is open to **all** children of families in the parish, both from public and parochial schools, Grades 2nd through 8th. (As an aside, we use 2nd grade as the lower-end cutoff simply because there is so much reading they need to do; I generally open it up to 1st graders in the 2nd term after Christmas.)

The choir's role in the liturgy is twofold:

- to **lead the assembly** in the parts of the mass where we **sing the liturgy** itself (e.g. the Gloria, Gospel Acclamation, and the Eucharistic Acclamations, etc)
- to **lead the assembly** in the places in the mass where we **sing during the liturgy** (e.g. the gathering song, the song during the preparation of the gifts, the communion song, and the closing song; occasionally, we will also do a special choir song, generally also during the communion procession.)

Please notice that the terminology "**leading the assembly**" is quite deliberate! The choir is not there to perform for spectators in attendance. The responsibility of the choir – any choir – is to act as a support and inspiration to engage the assembly more fully in its sung prayer and worship. **Please help us be a more successful choir by participating more fully in the sung responses and prayers!**

MEMBERSHIP & REHEARSALS

As returning members will know, I have instituted a system of FULL-NOTE and HALF-NOTE membership in the choir. I understand from first hand experience how difficult the scheduling can be for children of these ages/stages, and I know that it is difficult and sometimes even impossible to get them around to their various activities. Hence the two-tiered approach.

FULL-NOTE MEMBERS – are those who make a regular commitment to both Sunday worship and weekly rehearsals; these members will have the first opportunity to sign-up on a weekly basis as "assistant cantors" (leading the responses, etc) and for solo parts on special songs. Also, please note that only FULL-NOTE members may participate in the Christmas program preceding the Christmas Eve Mass.

I do take attendance at Tuesday rehearsals. I know you can't make all rehearsals – no problem!! **Please**

just either email me or call the rectory at least 24 hours ahead so that I know your child is not coming – I don't even need to know the reason.

Rehearsals for Full-note members are on Tuesdays after school, from 3:30 to 4:30 in either the choir area of the church, or in the music rehearsal room, located through the door by the piano/organ and up the stairs. Drop-off and pickup will be via the parking lot main portico entrance to the Gathering Space. Please note that I dismiss them from the rehearsal area. I will not be going down to the door to see them off (I do check before I leave the building to make sure that no one has been left behind – but you should be aware that I'm not watching the door until all have left.) If you are more comfortable coming in to get your child, please park in a legal spot (not the drive-through area) and come in. Parents are always welcome to drop in and quietly observe a rehearsal in progress at any time. Please just make sure that any younger children that may accompany you are not distracting to the group. Thank you for your cooperation in this.

HALF-NOTE MEMBERS - are those who make a regular commitment to **Sunday 9:30 worship but are unable to attend weekly rehearsals**; these members will still be able to fill in where we need assistant cantors, but would not likely be able to do solo parts on our special songs, and would be unable to participate in the Christmas program. **These members, like full-note members, would still be expected to come at 9:00 am on Sundays for our pre-Mass organizing/warm-up/ rehearsing.** (And for your information, I do not take attendance for either group on Sundays!)

REGISTRATION

Please decide which group best fits you and your child's schedule, from now through January, and complete the registration form below. As seasons and circumstances change, you can change your participation level – I'll ask again after Christmas. (Please register Full & Half-note members.)

CONTACTING ME

My preference for communication is via email, (see top of letter), or you can leave a phone message at the rectory and I will call you. I prefer not to take calls at home, but you will notice I have given this number if you feel you need to get to me more promptly. In giving this out, I trust you will respect that my home number is not my work number! **Also, I would ask that you not advise me verbally on a Sunday that your child cannot make a rehearsal.** If you wish, you can write it down for me, with name/date, etc. and give it to me on a Sunday, but I simply can't remember if you just tell me! Thanks!

COMMUNICATIONS FROM ME

My communications to you will be via bulletin notices, group emails and/or web-site information/updates. **If you are uncertain if a rehearsal is on or off** (e.g. inclement weather), **it is your responsibility to either check the website or phone the rectory.** In bad weather, I will make the decision to cancel or continue by no later than 12 noon of that day, and will advise the webmaster and rectory by then. It is very difficult to start a phone chain that late in the day, and I cannot make 50+ phone calls by myself.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

I'm delighted to be able to tell you that Mrs. Theresa Donohue and Mrs. Lily Beaugard will both be returning this year to help me with logistics and conducting, but we could always use more help as further back-up and/or with record keeping, hymnal preparation, attendance-taking, microphone and/or chair set-up, etc. Let me know if you're available. And as you know, our drummer, Dan O'Keefe, went off to college – any dads or anyone out there that can play the set with us?? I want you to know how much I truly love the 9:30 Mass and working with the children. I hope we can get even more children involved. The children themselves are the best recruiters – if you or your child knows of someone in the parish who might be interested, please encourage him/her to join also. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, just call or drop me an email.

Sincerely,
Sheila Ebbels

(P.S. The children call me Mrs. Ebbels, but you may call me Sheila.)

**ST. PETER THE APOSTLE CHILDREN'S CHOIR 2007-2008
MRS. SHEILA EBBELS, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRY
445 FIFTH AVENUE, RIVER EDGE, NJ 07661
(201) 261-3366**

FAMILY NAME: _____

NAME(S) OF CHILD/REN IN CHOIR: (Please use common names)	FULL-NOTE (FN) or HALF-NOTE (HN) (specify)	GRADE	SCHOOL
1) _____	_____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____	_____

PARENT(S) NAMES: MOTHER: _____

FATHER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE #: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

♪ PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO MRS. EBBELS VIA THE RECTORY ♪

THANKS!