

It is Choir Festival Time!



St. John's Treble Choir and Youth Choir members are heading to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 500 South Country Road in Bay Shore on Saturday, February 3 for the *American Guild of Organists Children's Choir Festival* with guest director Meredith Neumann.

The closing service, open to all, is at 3 pm.

Ms. Neumann is director at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Hartford CT. and is also director for the Connecticut Children's Chorus.

Photo from 2015 AGO Festival (St. James Lutheran)

Music for this year's festival was selected for good musical settings of scripture including John 3:16, The Beatitudes, Ps. 25, Ps. 95, Ps. 150 and more! These are wonderful, biblical texts made memorable for our choristers and congregation with the help of music!

Practicing Piety

Cambridge English Dictionary defines piety as "strong belief in a religion that is shown in the way someone lives." Vocabulary.com defines piety as "devotion to God or to religious practices."

There it is – that word *practice* - an act that dominates so much of a musician's life!

Pianist, Arthur Rubenstein is often quoted as saying, "if I omit practice one day, I notice it; if two days, my friends notice it; if three days, the public notices it."

Might the same be said of how we practice piety? One day glossing over our prayers and devotions or church, we might get a pass. After two days gone, might we catch that something is missing? Would our spouse or other loved ones notice? Three or more days on the run, who else could tell; co-workers, fellow drivers on the LIE, friends, teachers, someone who accidentally bumps into us on the street?

It doesn't take much inattention or moving from "center" to quickly find oneself slightly or dangerously off balance, or slipping away on a greasy slope, not even realizing it is happening. Not being involved in ones' relationship with God – not listening when He speaks, not reading His Word, not praying, not prioritizing time with the Almighty will quickly push God down the list of what is perceived as important in life. He keeps reaching, but if I choose a host of other things or activities over Him (even practice!), the relationship is not going to grow, the strong armor of God is going to be hard to locate and put on. The inevitable tough times will be tougher without the peace He wants to bring to our lives.

Faith is a gift, salvation is a gift, God's love is a gift, His grace is a gift.

Choosing to be in Christ's presence is a choice. Seeking to walk in His footsteps is a choice. Making time for prayer and meditation is a choice. Sharing the good news of the Gospel is a choice. Loving is a choice to put someone else (everyone else?) and their best interest ahead of one's own. That is what God does for each of us every day – up to and including dying for us.

And our response would be...?