



## The Music of Faith

*By Sister Teresita Espinosa, CSJ, '59 as told to Aaron Smith*

I grew up with music in Mexico. My mom and dad, who was a doctor, and my grandfather and uncle, who were lawyers, all loved music. I took piano lessons and gave recitals. Later, I was sent to the United States to learn English. At 17, I felt called to give myself to God. I thought that was the end of my musical career — whatever the Lord wanted me to do, that was what I wanted. But while I was learning to be a sister, the community decided to have me continue my education in music.

I received my bachelor's degree in music from Mount St. Mary's College, and I began teaching courses while finishing my master's and doctoral degrees at USC. I never thought I would be at the Mount for long, but very soon I was asked to take on more responsibility. I became a full-time faculty member and the music department chair in 1972. During the summers, I continued my postdoctoral work at Harvard, Yale and Oxford.

I have loved being in the music department at the Mount. The distinguished faculty members have been great companions. And, of course, I love my students and have been blessed to have known so many — not just the gifted music majors, but also the students going into nursing or political science who took music appreciation courses to

awaken their interest in fine arts. I often saw their minds opening to things they never thought about, and I love that.

Many music students are amazing performers when they arrive, and they have a real desire to improve, but they don't have any training in the theory of music. It's exciting when those students go on to learn more about music analysis and history, and then are able to confidently pass it along to others.

Now I am passing on the leadership of the department to a wonderful person, Sister Therese Fassnacht, BVM. I didn't do that until I knew we had someone who understood our department and had the qualifications.

I continue to teach, and I am enjoying every bit of it. For my course called "Guided Experiences to the Arts," I take students to the theater, museums and concerts. For "Arts in Europe," we go to London, Paris, Rome and Florence, where every moment is filled with the aroma of the arts. The experience opens windows of opportunity for the students.

For me, music is a gift of God. God speaks to us in so many different ways, and music is very much a part of how we not only try to understand the sacredness, beauty and mystery of God, but also how we try to express that beautiful sacred mystery. Faith works slowly, and sometimes obscurely, but music can express faith in a way that is not expressible otherwise. ✦

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