

**By Dr. Carly York | Correspondent**

The sanctuary in Nativity Church glowed in soft candlelight and the scent of incense permeated as Father James Grogan solemnly placed a monstrance on the altar table. Reverently looking on from their place were congregants who gathered in the Fair Haven church Oct. 28 for the 177 Project Concert where they took part in the celebration of Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and worship through contemporary Catholic music.

“I came because I believe in the power of prayer,” said Dolly Rose, a Nativity parishioner. “It is so important for unity to be formed in our Church. This event of prayer and asking for God’s mercy in the presence of Jesus is a remarkable way to bring unity.”

The 177 Project was brought to Nativity Parish at the behest of Father Grogan, pastor, and is composed of a group of nationally-known touring Catholic musicians who have evangelization as their mission. The group strives to share Jesus in the form of Eucharist Adoration, Confession and music. Over the course of three months this fall, these teams of artists will bring their Holy Hour events to all 177 dioceses and archdioceses in the United States, including Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“It is very biblical,” Father Grogan said of the mission of the 177 Project. Of the team members, he added, “They are truly following Jesus’ instruction to the disciples to go out two-by-two and share the Gospel.”

“I hope by hosting this event, it will inspire an increased devotion to the Eucharist in our Diocese,” he added.

Throughout the evening, 177 Project artists Dana Catherine and Jon Niven sang and played reverent music as people quietly prayed before the Blessed Sacrament or went to Confession to one of the several priests in attendance. Among the songs that Catherine, Niven and the other three featured artists sang included “I Need You Lord,” “I Surrender” and “Tantum Ergo.” At the conclusion of Adoration, Catherine and Niven lead in the singing of “Holy God We Praise Thy Name.”

After a brief intermission, the concert portion of the evening began with Catherine and Niven singing a rousing duet of Chris Tomlin’s “How Great is Our God,” during which the duo encouraged everyone to sing out in praise. Their following song selections included sharing reflections about their personal callings to serve in music ministry.

Niven, who has been in Catholic music ministry for more than 15 years, said it is his hope that his music will inspire more people will attend Adoration and receive the Sacraments regularly.

Heads nodded in familiarity when Catherine mentioned having spent the early part of her childhood in Freehold, but then eventually moved to her present home in North Carolina. It was as a college student when she realized her calling to music ministry and went on to produce an album of Catholic songs. Her work earned her a spot as an artist with “Rekindle Records,” who eventually connected her with the 177 Project.

“I hope to re-ignite a love for the Eucharist in people all over America. Project 177 is a great way to bring Adoration to people and parishes who may never have had the chance to see something like this,” she said.

Participants such as Nativity parishioner Tammy McKennan said she found the 177 Project to be a prayerful experience and noted how amazing she thought it was that Eucharistic Adoration was being brought to the country's 177 dioceses.

"The setting of this event feels like going to someone's house with all your friends and family. The combination of Adoration and Confession is really special," McKennan said.

Terri Matsen of St. Mary Parish, Middletown, said she learned about the event through a social media post.

"I wanted to come because I love to go to Eucharistic Adoration as much as possible," said Matsen, a mother of college-age children. "Music is relevant to our times and appeals to all ages. An event like this is especially good for young people."

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