

# Lift every voice: St. Bernardine's Gospel Choir praises God

**By Elizabeth Lowe**

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St. Bernardine's Gospel Choir delivered a rousing performance July 27 at an annual summer concert that attracted about 350. Those in attendance, however, described it as much more than a concert.

"It was a spirit-filled event," said Monsignor Richard J. Bozzelli, pastor of the West Baltimore parish.

Using music to move people in worship of God has been the focus of the choir since it was founded several decades ago. The largest of the parish's six choral ensembles, the Gospel Choir sings at the 11:30 a.m. Mass September through June, the 9:30 a.m. Mass in July and has August off.

In addition to St. Bernardine, the group has sung at other churches in Baltimore; King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; and Rome. A professional recording of some of its work has also been produced.

*To listen to sounds of the choir, click below:*

"Singing is another way of proclaiming the Gospel and our Gospel Choir does that very well," said Denise Stanley, the parish's administrative assistant.

James Butler, a tenor and the choir liaison, has been a member since 1982. He enjoys watching the congregation react when the choir sings, whether someone shouts "Alleluia" or raises hands in the air.

"It's awesome," he said. "I love that we are able to minister to others through song."

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Monsignor Bozzelli said the choir is able to "tap into the depths of the human spirit and soul and lift it up."

"It's thanking God, praising God, calling upon God's help," he said.

Monsignor Bozzelli recalled the choir's presence at a liturgy in December, following the sudden death of Monsignor Edward M. Miller, the parish's longtime pastor.

"The day Father Miller died, I came to celebrate the 11:30 Mass and I remember the Gospel Choir singing 'Thank you, Lord,' " Monsignor Bozzelli said. "The ability of music to move our hearts to God is just amazing."

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