

Musicians, singers follow tune of faith

After each monthly Mass at St. John's Catholic Prep, Frederick, students comment, "This is the best Mass we've ever had!"

Angie Galleno, director of campus ministry, said the students' enthusiasm stems from a new facet of school liturgies - the Praise & Worship Band - composed of 15 singers and musicians from within the student body.

New for the 2006-07 school year, the band was conceived as a way to make school liturgies more engaging for students.

"What better way to appeal to them but with music they can respond to in a positive way?" said Mrs. Galleno. "The response has been wonderful. Every month they get a little bit better."

According to Mrs. Galleno, members of the student body participate more fully in the Masses, which are offered monthly and on special occasions including Catholic Schools Week, the ring ceremony or to honor Sept. 11.

"It's been very successful," she said. "The students seem to really enjoy the praise and worship music we play, and it's added a completely different dimension to our gatherings."

Directed by Anabel McGill, chair of the music department, 9-12th graders either sing or play the cello, violin, flute, guitar, drums, piano or keyboard to bring alive hymns and psalms and add a higher energy to school liturgies. Ms. McGill said the students enjoy playing in the band together.

The band practices Wednesday mornings at 7 a.m. - the only common time band members have since most play sports and schedules are tight.

“They are very dedicated,” said Mrs. Galleno.

What is particularly interesting, she noted, is that a student liturgical committee has emerged because of the band. Music and readings are chosen and each Mass is planned by the committee, “which is great,” said the director, “because we give students ownership of the liturgy planning and thereby they have a vested interest in how the liturgies are celebrated.”

Student Krystel Martinez, 17, thinks participating in the band has helped to strengthen her spirituality. “I feel that by singing I’m involved in another ministry to serve God,” said the parishioner of St. John Neumann, Gaithersburg. “I can encourage my peers to express themselves and let them know that God’s love is within us.”