



Parish music directors, teachers, priests, and religious sisters gathered near San Francisco last week for a workshop helping them learn how to teach children and teens how to sing Gregorian chant.

[Benedict XVI Institute for Sacred Music and Divine Worship](#) held a **Teaching Children's Chant Camp Workshop in Menlo Park**, about 30 miles south of San Francisco, Aug. 9-12.

Among those participating were three religious sisters of the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa.

“Our mission at the Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa is to teach joyfully the truth, goodness and beauty of our faith; we work with a lot of children and teens in Catholic schools,” Mother Teresa Christe explained, “So we are very grateful for this Benedict XVI Institute workshop.”

The Marian Sisters were founded by Bishop Robert Vasa of Santa Rosa in 2012. The community has a focus on teaching and evangelizing in parishes and schools.

Two Missionaries of Charity also attended the workshop. One of them, Sister Maximiliana, said they were participating because of their after school program “which prepares the children we work with from poor families for consecration to Mary. We want to learn how to teach children so they can sing beautifully for the Mass.”

Before the workshop, 25 Missionaries of Charity from across the San Francisco bay area had attended another event organized by the Benedict XVI Institute to learn how to chant more beautifully.

The workshop was directed by Mary Ann Carr-Wilson, who has helped pioneer chant camps for children.

Carr-Wilson emphasized the importance of respecting children as you teach them: "Give them a high aim. Let them know what they are doing in helping sing the Mass: praying not performing, with all the angels and saints. They respond."

Rather than focusing solely on performance techniques, the institute incorporates catechesis and works to help participants deepen their understanding of the Mass, including their ability to offer intentions for their participation in the liturgy.

The workshop aims to help both teachers with experience with music generally, or with chant in particular.

Aaron Fidler teaches music at Kolbe Academy and Trinity Prep, a Catholic classical school in Napa. A violinist with extensive teaching experience, he expressed appreciation for help with his new task of preparing the school's choir to chant at Mass.

And Mary Castaneda, a music director from Washington state, said she has long taught chant to adults, but is "now teaching chant to children and teens. It's really useful to get a sense from Mary Ann what she does that young people respond to."

The Benedict XVI Institute was founded by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco in 2014.

It aims to form the Catholic imagination through beauty, and to promote the vision of the Second Vatican Council, whose constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, said that Gregorian chant is “specially suited to the Roman liturgy” and that “therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”