PRESENTATION SPEECH

FOR

YVON ST. MARC

“Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.” Those words were spoken hundreds of years ago by Martin Luther. Although expressed in another place and time, this describes how I feel about music and my relationship with God. Music fills our souls, connects us to our emotions, gives shape and form to our spirits and our connection to God, and literally brings us in harmony with our fellow human beings, even if only for a little while sometimes.

I am Yvon St. Marc, and as I have been touched by music, I have found a greater level of connection to God, my faith, my fellow man, and my wonderful father, may he rest in peace.

As a child growing up in Haiti, one of my most profound memories since the time I was old enough to create and maintain memories, is the closeness and admiration I felt for my father. (**Name your father**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was a deacon in the Episcopal Church and as he tended to his congregants, he made sure our family was inspired and devoted to our faith. I was baptized and had my confirmation, and served as an acolyte of the church at ten years of age. I was devoted to the missions of our church and at a young age, I became engaged in a music ministry and found that work more fulfilling than I might ever have imagined. Psalm 150:1-6 teaches us, “Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! PRAISE THE LORD!” Through music, I saw the real workings of God, and I found a way to acknowledge and praise and to spread the joy. To feel the vibrations of every level come together to form the sweetest sound is something only God could have created, and to use such a brilliant creation of God’s to in turn celebrate and praise Him is truly a revelation. Music inspires every emotion within us and when applied to religious services and purposes, the experience is deeper than any other form of expression. To create harmony from instruments and the human voice and to encourage all of the different sounds and vibrations to come together in one harmonious burst of spirit is truly a magical, emotional and inspirational experience. To have the privilege to teach young people to find their voice and learn to share something so spiritual, personal and fulfilling has been the true blessing of my life. Singing and playing music is a gift all by itself. To use those voices and instruments in praise of God is a blessing. To work with children to encourage them to find their inner voice and teach them to find God within them through music is really priceless and one of the greatest gifts I have received in my life.

I was so inspired by the work I was doing and the impact it was having on the community’s youth, that when I was just sixteen years old, I saw myself as a priest. When I shared my thoughts with my father, he was very happy for me. So many young people, especially in this day and age, do not have the focus, direction and passion to discover and appreciate their calling in life. I had a deep experience of my mission here on earth and although I was young and I knew I was about to face the challenges of growing up, entering adulthood, and finding my actual path in life, I knew that I found something that truly touched my soul and gave me the platform to serve others. Since my father was a deacon and so proud of the work I was doing and the level of the commitment I was demonstrating, he knew of many ways to encourage my calling and did whatever he could to support my dream. He guided me and inspired me as a truly devoted and loving father would. He sent me on wonderful trips to church conferences, camp, and other related activities that really opened my mind and exposed me to incredible and fulfilling experiences. Even though I was young at the time, I knew that I was really blessed to have such a supportive family, such a devoted father, and such a deep and fulfilling connection to God through music.

We practice our faith in good times and in bad. God does not abandon us, but we are all tested when we least expect it. In my seventeenth year, my father was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, and our lives were about to change forever. He became too ill to continue his work in the church and it became very difficult to find treatment in our native home of Haiti. My father made the decision for the family to move to the United States, and although we understood that the move was best for all of us, it provided its tests and challenges. My father was sick and that was hard enough to accept and handle, and although I did anything and everything I possibly could for him, I had to learn English as a second language, I had the challenge of finding my way in a strange school, studying and learning in a language I didn’t yet fully understand, but all the while, I had my music and found a church within which to establish my music ministry. Like I said, through good times and more challenging times, God is with us to test us, comfort us, and ground us. Although it took an extra year to complete Uniondale High School, I did well and graduated and went on to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ College where I graduated with a B.S. in criminology. Through it all, deep in my being, I knew the idea of becoming a priest was part of me and deeply ingrained in my heart and soul.

There’s an expression that I want to adapt to describe my life. “You can take the boy out of Haiti, but you can’t take the calling out of the man.” My father has since passed away, and although I miss him every single day, he is with me in the lessons he has taught me, the music ministry he so lovingly encouraged me to pursue, and in my connection to God. My connection to my faith and my faith in my religion and in God has never waivered. It is now \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years since I first began my work in my music ministry and I feel that my calling is stronger now than it has ever been. I am now old enough and experienced enough to know what my true calling is in life. I am truly grateful for all of the blessings I have received, and each challenge I faced and lived through has strengthened my faith and my commitment to God. About a year ago, I approached Father Rawlins and told him I feel that the time had arrived for me to begin my process to study for the ministry. He was happy to hear it and has been a positive and encouraging mentor ever since. I know that my father watches over me and I know how proud he is of the music I make, the message I bring to my practice and the passion I bring to my studies. The music fills my soul and my beautiful memories of my father inspire me to continue his work and the work of God.

I chose to share these moments of influence because the inspiration of music has left a profound mark on my life, my faith, and my choice to dedicate my life to serve others through music and the church. God is everywhere and inspires all tests, challenges, and joy. I feel closest to God and my father when I am serving others through musical expression. It’s a universal and unique way to spread the word of God and to instill faith and confidence in the human connection. To me, my calling comes from deep within me and although it is a very personal experience, being able to share and, dare I say, bare my soul brings me closer to the core of each person with whom I come into contact. We all may have different stories and circumstances, but we are all united in our desire and wishes for an enriched and nurtured soul.

I want to thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to share something so profound and personal. As I continue to study and learn more each day about life, people and faith, I am grateful for the expression I have found through music. I hope that I have given you a new perspective on something that inspires every aspect of my life and I look forward to sharing God’s beauty and wonder through the music each one of us may share with each other.

Thank you and God bless you.