



# The St. Louis Jesuits COMING HOME

## BACKGROUNDER: THE ST. LOUIS JESUITS

The name, "St. Louis Jesuits," was not chosen by its members at all! It was meant simply as a subtitle for their first release: *Neither Silver Nor Gold: Liturgical Music from St. Louis Jesuits*. As time went by, however, and people needed something to call the group, what had been just a description became a title for the group itself.

In 1973, a number of young Jesuits in St. Louis started collecting music they had written for the liturgy. Bob Dufford, SJ, John Foley, SJ, John Kavanaugh, SJ [RIP, 2015], Tim Manion, and Dan Schutte, all contributed songs to the 57 piece, four record album. A year later, Roc O'Connor, SJ, began composing as well. At the time, people at large knew only that liturgical music was coming out of St. Louis, written by some Jesuits, and that there was a lot of it. Each of the men composed liturgical music on his own, but they were helped by critiques from each other, a practice that lasted through 2005.

The St. Louis Jesuits, as they became known, produced and published *Neither Silver Nor Gold* (1974), *Earthen Vessels* (1975), *A Dwelling Place* (1976), *Wood Hath Hope* (John Foley, 1977), *Gentle Night* (1978), *Lord of Light* (1980), *The Steadfast Love* (1985), and *Morning Light* (2005)—over 150 liturgical songs and hymns. This does not include all the individual projects published by each of the five. Their songs are now published by OCP (formerly Oregon Catholic Press).

Over the decades, The St. Louis Jesuits were recognized with a number of accolades—honorary doctorates from the University of Scranton (1978) and Creighton University (2006); the Alumni Merit Award from St. Louis University (1981), and a Distinguished Alumni Award from Seattle University (1983). In 1980 the group received the NPM Jubilate Deo Award, as well as an award for contributions to Gospel Music shared with Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, and others.

Their recordings garnered Grammy nominations throughout the 1970s, and their 1975 *Earthen Vessels* album continues to be one of the best-selling albums of Catholic music ever, with over one-million copies sold to date.

Intended as a salute to their many years of music, their most recent album *Morning Light* brought the group together again after many years. Since its release in 2005 The St. Louis Jesuits have given eleven concerts across the United States.

In 2015, OCP released the 40th anniversary edition of *Earthen Vessels*, and in the fall of 2017, OCP celebrated the 40th anniversary of their classic Christmas album, *Gentle Night*, with a beautifully remixed and remastered commemorative edition.

A September 29, 2019 concert in St. Louis will be the last time that Dufford, Foley, Manion, O'Connor, and Schutte will perform together in concert as The St. Louis Jesuits. It will take place at Powell Hall, just a few blocks from both St. Francis Xavier College Church and the former Fusz Memorial (residence for Jesuit scholastics), where it all began.

Fittingly, the concert's title and theme is: *The St. Louis Jesuits—Coming Home*.

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