



Tony Avellana shares his faith through music ministry

File photo by Mary Ann Wyand

Catholic musician Tony Avellana sings during a youth rally on Respect Life Sunday in October 2003. He plays the piano, synthesizer, guitar and violin, and has sold 6,000 copies of his "Journey Songs" CD.

(Editor's Note: This is the fourth article in a series of occasional feature stories about Catholic musicians with connections to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.)

By Mary Ann Wyand

Joy. Hope. Peace. Love.

During Advent and throughout the year, Catholic musician Tony Avellana wants people to experience God's love and to find joy, hope and peace in the midst of the busyness and stressfulness of daily life.

God is always present but sometimes people need reminders, Avellana said, so his music ministry is dedicated to helping people grow in their faith.

"My ministry starts with invitation, inviting people to open their hearts to God," he said. "I encourage them to keep their faith strong with God's grace ... and to celebrate the life that God gives us."

"Journey Songs," his first CD released in 2004, features inspirational songs that include "Watch Over Me," "Lord, I Bow," "Jesus Is the Way to Life," "I Wish You Love" and "The Child Jesus Is Here."

In "I Will Trust You, Lord" on his CD, Avellana sings about his promise to God and his mission in life—"I will lift you up. I will sing your praises."

Avellana has sold 6,000 copies of "Journey Songs" and will release his second CD titled "The Path" in early 2007.

He redesigned his Web site at www.tonyavellana.com, which expands upon his former www.journeysongs.net Web address used to promote his ministry.

Avellana will present an Advent concert to celebrate the birth of Jesus following a Christmas dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 14 at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis.

"I want to make the concert as interactive as possible," he said. "I'm also going to talk about the seasons of Advent and Christmas ... invoking heartfelt praise and thanks to God. ... My wish for those who attend the concert is to use this time to focus on preparing for Christ ... and to truly seek God in all things."

Rick Wagner, director of the archdiocesan retreat center, said Avellana presented a wonderful Marian concert at Fatima last May that inspired this program.

"He will sing sacred Christmas music as well as his own songs," Wagner said. "So many people love Tony so much ... [and enjoy] his music and message. He is a strong Christian man and is so talented."

Avellana and his wife, Julie, and their four children—Jacob, Peter, Jonathan and Maria—are members of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Westfield, Ind.

Born in Quezon City near Manila, Avellana emigrated from the Philippines to the United States with his parents when he was 4 years old.

He still has about 200 relatives in the Philippines, and is praying for their safety in the wake of a powerful typhoon on Nov. 30 that caused huge mud slides there.

Avellana grew up in Chicago and graduated from Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., then moved to Indianapolis to work at Eli Lilly and Co.

His music ministry began as a youth ministry volunteer at St. Luke Parish in Indianapolis in 1988 at the urging of former youth minister Bob Schultz, his longtime friend.

Avellana served as the music minister for the archdiocesan Respect Life Sunday Mass on Oct. 1 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

He also provides music for the archdiocesan Helpers of God's Precious Infants Pro-Life Mass on the third Saturday of each month at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Indianapolis.

"God gives us the gift of life to share with others," he said. "He gives us our talents and many incredible things in life that we can use as a vehicle and conduit in leading others closer to him and eventually home to him. The sanctity of life is so important. ... We're all called to defend life as one of our highest priorities."

He shares his faith and pro-life messages with youths and adults during retreats and concerts at parishes.

"I saw what a powerful effect my music had on the youth and also the parents and other adults," he said. "Through a lot of prayer and discernment, I felt it was so important to speak the truth in love to God's people and give them hope. My message is one of peace, hope and everlasting joy.

Connecting people to Christ through my mission of prayer and song is so important to me. I want people to know they have a prayer warrior in me."

(To register for the Christmas dinner and concert on Dec. 14, call Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House at 317-545-7681.) †