

# Ochoa shares her faith through music ministry

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



When Rosemarie Ochoa sings during Mass, whether as a cantor at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock or in the chapel at Mount St. Mary Academy, it is “a different kind of prayer,” a way for her to connect to people and God.

“Be glad in the Lord; give thanks to God’s name,” Psalm 97, is a favorite responsorial psalm for Ochoa, 18. “It’s very simple in meaning, but I feel it can encapsulate the Catholic tradition. There’s so many ways you can be glad in the Lord and give thanks to his name ... visiting someone, little acts of kindness, it doesn’t have to be huge to really impact someone.”

During high school, Ochoa, the oldest daughter of Eduardo and Kelly Ochoa, has gone with her mother to bring Communion to the sick at UAMS Medical Center in Little Rock and to the homebound.

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Rosemarie Ochoa

“You just see the light come into their eyes, and they’re so happy you come to talk to them for just a little while,” Ochoa said.

She has taken Spanish for four years, which has helped while visiting a hospital. “It’s very meaningful to be able to pray with Spanish-speaking patients in their native language.”

Ochoa has excelled academically with a 4.1607 GPA and has been honored in countless ways, including as a National Hispanic Recognition Program finalist for high scores on the PSAT/NMSQT. But putting herself out there was not always second nature until she met MSM Concert Belles choral director Jennifer Boccarossa, also a Holy Souls parishioner, her freshman year.

“She really worked to seek out any opportunity she could” for the choir, Ochoa said. “I was kind of shy; I didn’t know my place yet in the choir. Even the first day ... she knew I played the piano she helped me lead everyone. She let me cantor one of the first Masses.”

On Nov. 11, 2013, Boccarossa, 30, died from a stroke.

“It was very tragic and unexpected,” Ochoa said. “... She was always so joyful with her teaching, she obviously loved it. I wanted to be like her.”

Boccarossa’s legacy is something Ochoa has tried to emulate. Throughout the years, Ochoa has led the choir, played the piano, cantored and chosen hymns for several school functions and Masses, including the Mercy and Me luncheon and this year’s junior ring Mass.

“I just kind of pushed myself to try different things,” she said.

Ochoa will major in music and minor in secondary education in the fall at Hendrix College in Conway. She enjoyed being a helper in a second-grade Holy Souls class as part of the junior service learning requirement at MSM.

“I was teaching them, and they were following me and it showed me I can have that impact,” she said.

“There might be something that really speaks to me that’s needed at the time,” she said of what career path she’ll ultimately take. “I’ll still continue to cantor and accompany at Mass,” at Holy Souls and said she’d love to step into the “choral director role at Mount” one day.

Though she will still be connected to MSM — her sister Amelia is a freshman — Ochoa said she will miss seeing the Sisters of Mercy.

“I joined the Alive in Mercy group this year, and I enjoyed sharing time with the sisters and other girls that are strong in their faith,” she said. “I love that Mount has opportunities for me to connect with them in that way.”