

# Music and family are intertwined

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GREEN BAY — When Ed Selinsky reflects on his life, the lessons his parents taught him as a child are what continue to impact the choices he makes today.

Selinsky spent his entire career in the field of liturgical music and directing choirs in the Diocese of Green Bay, retiring in May 2021.

That career included 23 years at the then Ecumenical Center on the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus and 18 years as music director at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Green Bay, where he grew one of the most noted parish choirs in the diocese.

Selinsky also provided liturgical music for any number of diocesan events and served Green Bay Catholic elementary schools for nine years. His last position was directing the choir for the linked parishes of St. Mary and St. Francis Xavier in De Pere for five years.

“Music is what feelings sound like. ... Music enhances what the words are saying,” he said, noting, “It’s definitely a part of which liturgy would be much less of an experience without it.”

Selinsky’s first family home was in Peshtigo. When he was 1, Edward and Josephine Selinsky packed up their five children to move to Green Bay. Edward continued his work with the railroad, a career that spanned 45 years, most of them as a chief clerk.

His father’s love for the railroad was deep and, on his days off, he was an amateur railroad photographer. Selinsky recalled the “magic” his father made in his home darkroom and now, he said, he has the “privilege” of being caretaker of his father’s treasured railroad photograph collection. Edward lived to age 80.

After Selinsky turned 18, he worked five summers for the railroad, doing everything from repairing and cleaning cars to serving as a clerk. Railroading remains a passion: he travels numerous times a year to Minneapolis to work on and volunteer with the [Milwaukee Road 261 excursion train](#).



Your Catholic Neighbor: Ed Selinsky  
(Sam Lucero | The Compass)

Both his parents were devout Catholics and members of St. Joseph Parish. But it was his mother's faith life that most impacted the Selinsky household, he said — a family which eventually included six children.

Daily Mass was a must, Selinsky reminisced, adding, "The family said the rosary every day (and), even if we had friends over, they had to say the rosary with us." His mother, who lived to be 99 years old, insisted.

There was something else she insisted upon: piano lessons.

"My mother always made us have two years of piano — I had four," said Selinsky. The irony is, "I never planned on going into music." His instruments of choice would eventually become string bass and guitar.

Selinsky thought his life's path would lead to the vocation of priesthood. He attended Sacred Heart Seminary in Oneida (now closed) for high school and then Maryknoll College in Glen Ellyn, Ill., from 1967 to 1970. The Second Vatican Council ended in 1965 and, said Selinsky, "Right after the end of the Vatican Council, the world was changing so fast. I didn't feel I could commit myself to a permanent vocation."

So he came home and completed his college education at UW-Green Bay, earning a degree in music education. It seemed natural. "I have three sisters who were nuns... All my sisters were in music," he said, one of whom just retired after 50 years of music ministry in Oregon.

As a student, he became involved with campus ministry. "It got bigger," he said, leading to 23 years providing the liturgical music for Catholic Masses at the Ecumenical Center.

In 1993, he became music director at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. "I played bass and conducted (the choir) at the same time," he said. Through the 18 years he served there, the choir first grew to 25 members, then 30 and, ultimately, 60 members, plus seven or eight ensemble musicians.

He and his wife, Mary Jane, have been married 30 years. He has three stepchildren, Eric, Matthew and Lori, and eight grandchildren, from age 2 to 23.

Today, he sings tenor in the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton choir, led by Maria Hinnendael, the parish director of liturgical music, who Selinsky said is "excellent," noting, "She's now getting her master's in choral conducting."

Selinsky is also busy weekdays working as a van driver for the Green Bay Public School District, transporting special needs students, students requiring language classes, gifted students and homeless students to various schools.

It's a job, but also a ministry, Selinsky said. "It's the kind of thing, you live out your Catholic faith ... It's what you put into it — it makes a difference."

Since age 18, Selinsky has also been making a difference as a blood donor. "My dad would give blood when we were growing up," he said.

For 20 years, Selinsky donated whole blood every eight weeks. For the last 30 years, he has been donating platelets, which he can do up to 24 times each year. It takes about two hours to complete the donation process. "I'll donate from my body now," instead of waiting until passing away, he said.

Platelets are often used by cancer patients, but also patients with blood disorders or who are undergoing open-heart surgery and organ transplants.

It is prayer that begins and ends each of Selinsky's busy days.

"I can't wake up without morning prayers," he said, and at bedtime he said he must "review the day with prayer and fall asleep."

Prayer allows Selinsky to express the gratitude he has for his life. "Gratitude turns what we have into enough," he explained, quoting an often-heard saying. "Our society, we always have a tendency to want more ... and we should be grateful for what we have."

Name: Ed Selinsky

Parish: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Age: 72

Favorite saint: Francis of Assisi

Words to live by: "In a world where you can be anything, be kind."