

## The Ministry of Bernie Choiniere: Evolving into

# A Family Affair

by Susan Bailey



Bernie Choiniere has been a fixture most especially in the New England area for many years. Teens throughout the area know his songs well and sing along with great enthusiasm each time he appears at a parish or youth function. He has been a fixture at the Proud2BCatholic festivals since its inception.

Signed by World Library Publications in 2002 just after the release of his second album *With You*, Bernie has worked tirelessly ministering to young people across the country.

During that time, he and his wife Loretta have been raising 4 lovely blond daughters. Family life has greatly influenced Bernie's ministry to the point where his own daughters are now getting involved. I asked Bernie about his work and how it has evolved over the years.

**GV:** Catch us up on your ministry. What has been happening in the last year? Tell us about the work you've done and continue to do with Boston Catholic TV.

**BC:** This past year I have really tried to focus on my work at St. Monica Parish. I am the new Director of Music there for all the liturgies, including our Lifeteen mass every Sunday night. St. Monica's is the 7th largest parish in the Archdiocese of Boston so that means a lot of funerals and

weddings. I've witnessed many families who have suffered in the loss of their loved ones. There are many who have passed away that I wish I knew when they were alive. I have grown to appreciate the value of life and to appreciate my family in particular more and more everyday.

I am very busy throughout New England and different parts of the country. I continue to give concerts and retreats to youth and adults alike. Recently I was in Branford, CT giving a retreat for forty-five Confirmation students. It was an honor to witness to them and share my music with

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them. It's amazing to see how teens can open up with the help of the Holy Spirit! Many teens as you know, are such victims of the world and when someone comes in onto their turf and starts talking about GOD, and sin, and mass, and personal relationship with God, etc, the tendency for the average teen is to close down. But more often than not, I am happy to experience teens stepping out of their comfort zone and opening up about their faith. That's what happened this past weekend. I was happy to give away about thirty free rosaries and about twenty holy medals.

I am getting ready to perform and witness for the archdiocese of Fall River for their High School Youth Convention, and the day after I will be providing the music and keynote for the Junior High Youth Rally. I'm looking forward to sharing my witness and challenging them in their faith.

There is also an event happening in December called Extreme East that I am involved in. It is based on the kind of weekend you would experience at Steubenville East. There will be adoration, a keynote speaker proclaiming the main theme of the evening, uplifting music and I believe also an opportunity for the Sacrament of Confession. The first one was very successful, with about 300 people present for the event. I'll be with my band for this event, which is always very special. These guys are first class professionals,

and they know how to bring praise to another level. I'm blessed to be able to serve with them.

**GC:** *What do you feel your mission is as Catholic musician? Who do you hope to reach with the music? How does it tie in with your ministry to youth?*

**BC:** At this point in my life and my music ministry career I believe that God is starting to take me in a new direction with my music and evangelization. I really feel called these past couple of years to family ministry. I have been asked to do a number of family conferences lately throughout the country. You know I love the youth, and my heart has always been focused on helping to bring teens closer to Christ, but it is the family bond and the domestic church that God is calling us all to ultimately surrender to. I really have been focusing on the importance of family prayer, and calling fathers and mothers to task in their relationships with their children. We live in a world where there are two family incomes, two cars, lots of fast food, a digital world that is in many ways keeping us from communicating more intimately in our families, less prayer time together, if any- and how about just sitting together at mass, and how about not enough time being spent together period. The list can go on and on. Bringing these concerns to light I think is important. We as Catholic families are so happy to drop our kids off to youth groups and prayer meetings at their parishes week after week. Yes, we do need our treasured youth ministers and leaders and our parish communities need to support each other, but this

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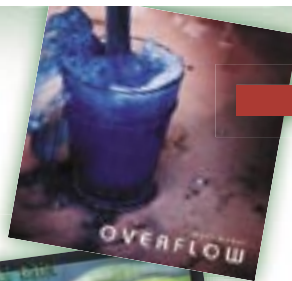
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should flow forth from the family outward to our youth programs and communities, not the other way around. Parents should not rely on our parish programs to groom their children in the faith. We as parents are our children's first teachers! I hope to convey to the parents and to the teens as well that family attachments are important, and grooming secure and Godly relationships within the family is what will help keep our domestic church alive and real. Too many marriages end in divorce. One out of every two is too many! I know we don't live in an idealistic world, but all things are possible with God's love, and mercy. If we can raise the bar in how we nurture our relationships with our children, teach them to love and forgive, and help them grow in their commitment to Christ and the Sacraments, we the church will be stronger for it.

**GV:** *What percentage of your time is spent as a speaker vs. worship leader vs. performing/recording artist vs. what else...?*

**BC:** I haven't been in the studio for a while. Financially it has been difficult for us lately. Right now I am concentrating on my craft and trying to perfect my music, witness talks and presentations. I have also spent a lot of time working with my girls and getting them ready for their debut in the Catholic music ministry world. In regard to how my time is spent on the road, I would say it is half and half with regards to speaking verses being a worship leader. I enjoy both very much.

**GV:** *Do you have any new projects in the works?*

**BC:** Right now I am trying to get my new CD in place. I really just need time and patience to get it together. Right now I am concentrating on getting my girls' first recording in place.

**GV:** *I understand that your daughters are now getting involved in your ministry. Can you elaborate on that? How do they feel about joining their father in his work for God? Did they have to overcome stage fright or is performing in front of people natural? Will they be singing on your new recording? How do they feel about joining their father in his work? How has them singing with you changed the way you perform? Has it inspired you in a different way?*

**BC:** Well, I have 4 daughters. My first answer to anyone who says "You've got your hands full," I like to say, "Blessed am I among women!" Obviously as a Dad I am very proud of them and look forward to being with them and singing with them. I know it is difficult to give an unbiased opinion, but they are doing well. I've got them singing in 3 part harmony now. My oldest is Chantal. She is going to be 14 this October. My second daughter is Rachelle. She is 11 years old and Marielle is 8 years old. They can all sing harmony or take the lead if need be. I hope to have them on my next recording, and I am planning on having them record a CD very soon, within the next 3 months.

They have been asked to perform at the Indiana Catholic Family Conference this coming May with me and they will be singing during the liturgies and prayer segments. I hope to have them involved in the concert as well. It should be very exciting! I am very humbled that God has chosen us to participate in this way together as a family.

I got my daughters involved in singing when I gave concerts. I would ask them up to come and sing a couple songs. After awhile it became very natural to them. At first they were a little nervous, but now they have become acclimated to the environment of performing and more importantly praising God in front of their peers.

As home schoolers we get to have a little more flexibility with rehearsals. We try late mornings to practice but sometime it can be 9:30 at night. I feel that God definitely has a plan for us as a family and I see his hand in all that we are working toward with our ministry. We have grown closer as a family and closer to God in many ways. I try to teach the value of serving through music and the importance of praying through music. All of these things are important to learn and understand as they grow in their own understanding of faith and their personal relationship with God. I truly look forward to the future as we are in the beginning of our musical journey together! †

*Visit Bernie's website at [bejcmusic.com](http://bejcmusic.com) for more information.*

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