Congrès choir to feature 60 voices

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ST. MARTINVILLE — The chance to sing in the choir during the closing Mass of Congrès Mondial Acadien has attracted more than 60 people from across Acadiana, according to choir director Sarah Roy.

"The response to the choir has been terrific and inspiring," Roy said. "We received calls from everywhere."

The official closing Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Aug. 14 at St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church. The closing ceremonies are scheduled for the Cajundome on Aug. 15, which is the Feast of the Assumption and the National Day of the Acadians.

The 11 a.m. Mass on Aug. 14 is open to the public. A large television screen will provide viewing via live coverage by KATC TV-3 to an expected overflow crowd on St. Martin Square.

After the Mass, restaurants around the square will be open for breakfast.

The 60 men and women who answered the call for singers are from Arnaudville, Breaux Bridge, Broussard, Cade, Carencro, Cecilia, Eunice, Lafayette, New Iberia, Opelousas, Perry, St. Martinville, Sunset and Youngsville.

"Many responded because they love to sing, and several expressed appreciation at having the opportunity to participate in the Louisiana World Acadian Congress in this unique way," Roy said.

Several compositions were considered, but Roy learned of a composition by Paul Saulnier, a well-known Acadian musician who lives in West Pubnico, a French-speaking fishing village on Nova Scotia's south shore.

A pianist, organist, composer and choir director, Saulnier created the Messe St.-Pierre for the centenary celebration of the Catholic church in West Pubnico. He composed the Mass for a four-voice mixed choir.

Acadiana will be introduced to Saulnier's other works one week before the midnight Mass when he sings with Chorale Acadienne on Aug. 7 at St. Martin de Tours.

Congrès Mondial Acadien will be held Aug. 1 to 15 and will feature more than 60 reunions of families of Acadian ancestry. The opening ceremonies are Sunday at the Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center.