I came to know Fr. Failla, Anthony, as he liked to be called by his friends, when I was in junior high school. He was my parish priest, my confessor and eventually my friend. Besides our mutual faith, we were drawn together by our love of music. Anthony had a deep appreciation for music and, although he did not play an instrument, he loved to sing. I had just formed a band, The Vinny Gennaro Combo, composed of my best friend, my brother, my cousin and myself. Anthony heard us play and thereafter became our biggest supporter. He hired us to play at many a church dance, where we would always ask him to sing a few tunes. He chose mostly Broadway show tunes, which he absolutely loved. After Vatican II Anthony asked us to play jazz mass when he was the celebrant. For couple of years he even asked asked us to play midnight mass on Christmas eve. All that exposure helped us to gain enough of a reputation to get a lot of band jobs; gigs. We were on our way.

Essentially, Anthony was the person who gave us our start as working musicians; a gift which our appreciation for increases with every passing year. The Vinny Gennaro Combo was successful for many years and we played hundreds of 'gigs' in many venues. Today we are all retired from our day jobs and don't play gigs anymore. About 10 years (need year cited) ago however, after the last of us had stopped playing gigs, we decided that in order to keep up our musical skills we would get together occasionally and record. Anthony attended our first reunion/recording session and sang some of his favorite tunes. We have carried on the reunion/recording tradition ever since; we meet once a year and record for three days. (Those recordings are posted on this site and are available for download, free of charge.) Our time together is full of music and fellowship, the same things which Anthony fostered in us more than 55 years ago.

We are forever in Anthony's debt for what he did for us and for his continuing friendship over the years. His thoughtfulness, generous giving of his time and the ease with which he connected with people were hallmarks of his priesthood and person-hood. We are proud to have known him and to call him friend. In tribute we post a version here of what we consider his 'signature' song, You Better Love Me While You May, which he sang with us at the inaugural reunion.

May Anthony rest in peace, as he enjoys the music of the heavenly choirs of angels.

Vinny Scalia

Arthur De Gennaro

Anthony Napoli

Edward De Gennaro