

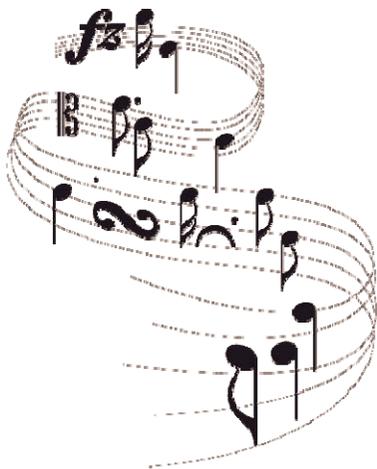
5. PASTORAL JUDGEMENT

Great importance should, therefore, be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities in each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary to sing (e.g., in weekday Masses) all the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.²

6. PLANNING FOR CELEBRATION

The power of liturgical celebration will depend on its unity. The preparing for a liturgy/liturgical season should be done in a spirit of cooperation by all parties concerned. The priest will be a key member of this planning team. The Scriptures set down for a particular liturgy, provide a sound basis for planning its various aspects. The set readings may suggest a theme that helps determine the choice of music for the liturgy. However, there is only one theme of every liturgy, the Paschal Mystery.

There is vital interest today in the Mass as prayer, and in this understanding of the Mass lies a principle of synthesis which is essential to good liturgical worship. When all strive with one accord to make the Mass a prayer, a sharing of a celebration of faith, the result is unity. Styles of music, choice of instruments, forms of celebration – all converge in a single purpose: that men and women of faith may proclaim and share that faith in prayer and Christ may grow in us all.³



Diocesan Liturgical Commission Christchurch

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To: Priests and Pastoral Assistants
Parish Liturgy Committees
Directors of Religious Studies
PPRE Teachers



MUSIC IN THE LITURGY

1. THE ROLE OF LITURGICAL MUSIC

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in liturgical celebrations. By his power He is present in the sacraments so that "when anybody baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes." He is present in His Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in Church. He is present when the Church prays and sings. He is present in the poor, the sick and imprisoned. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, and in the person of the minister. But, he is present *most especially in the Eucharistic species*. In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained. Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church in its liturgical celebrations, music is of pre-eminent importance. As sacred songs united to words, it forms an integral part of the solemn liturgy. The quality of joy and enthusiasm, grief, solemnity and beauty which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way.

The function of music in the liturgy is always ministerial, that is it must serve and never dominate. Music should deepen the meaning of the texts of the liturgy so that they speak more fully and effectively. Every liturgical celebration should, if possible, include music and singing but it is especially important in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist – the heart of the Church's life.

² GIRM *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (40)

³ MCW *Music in Catholic Worship* (84).

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church 1373.4

2. THE CRITERIA FOR THE USE OF MUSIC IN THE LITURGY

Sacred songs and music closely linked to the celebration, should:

1. Raise the mind and heart to God
2. Lead one into prayer.
3. Foster the participation of all the faithful.
4. Reflect the sacred character of the liturgy

3. LITURGICAL STRUCTURE.

The Mass is an act of Worship made up of two parts:

1. The Liturgy of the Word.
2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist.

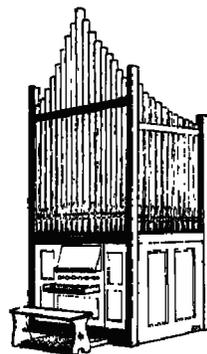
The Introductory and Concluding rites are secondary. The Mass has more than a dozen parts that can be sung but each must be understood according to its nature and function.

4. WHAT PARTS OF THE MASS SHOULD BE SUNG?

When the reform of the Liturgy was introduced after the Second Vatican Council, there was a tendency to fall prey to the “4-hymn syndrome”. Perhaps because musical resources of the assembly were limited, the common pattern was to sing entrance, offertory, communion and recessional hymns – and nothing else.

The nature of the liturgy, however, calls for a variety of musical forms to reflect the different parts and rhythms of the Mass. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* suggests priorities and possibilities: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons and song...” (#30). The *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* says that: “In choosing the parts to be sung, preference should be given to those that are more significant and especially those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the reader with the people responding, or by the priest and the people together.” (GIRM 2000#40) This indicates clearly that acclamations and responses have priority when it comes to deciding what parts of the Mass to sing.

There are **four acclamations** which should be sung at Mass, even if there is no other singing. We stand and sing the **Gospel Acclamation** in anticipation of the Good news of Christ. To speak these Alleluias is like reciting the words of “Happy Birthday”.



In fact the *General Instruction* says that the Gospel Acclamation may be omitted if it is not sung. (#63). During the Eucharistic Prayer, three acclamations mark special moments and allow the people’s active participation – the “**Holy, Holy**” (Sanctus), the **Memorial Acclamation** and the **Great Amen**.

Musical settings of these acclamations should enable people to sing them from memory and to join in these songs of the whole assembly without great difficulty.

The psalms are a form of sung prayer of great importance in our liturgical tradition. Generally the psalms of the Mass are linked to the first reading, but the option is offered of using a common psalm throughout a liturgical season. This enables assemblies to sing the responsorial psalm every Sunday without people having to learn a new one each week e.g. Sundays of Advent.

Litanies such as the “Lamb of God” and the penitential rite lend themselves to singing because of their invocations/response form.

At times in the liturgy, music serves the purpose of accompanying a ritual. The entrance hymn accompanies the entrance procession. It also serves the purpose of expressing the unity of the assembly as it gathers for worship and of setting the tone for the particular season or feast being celebrated.

The communion song that accompanies the communion rite expresses our thanksgiving and our unity with one another in Christ.

A hymn may be sung during the preparation of the gifts, but since this a secondary rite in the Mass it may be preferable to have instrumental music. This is also an excellent place for silence. Many communities customarily sing a hymn at the end of Mass to give a strong conclusion to the celebration.

With the rich offering of settings for Mass now available and being taken up, parishes are increasingly putting into practice the principle that in Catholic worship we ‘**sing the Mass**’ rather than ‘**sing at Mass**’.