



## Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church Music Ministry Guidelines

Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to words, it forms a necessary, integral part of the solemn liturgy. Yet the function of music is ministerial; *it must serve and never dominate*. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively. The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imparts a sense of unity to the congregation and sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration. (Music in Catholic Worship, paragraph #23.)

The entire worshiping assembly exercises a ministry of music. Some members of the community, however, are recognized for the special gifts they exhibit in leading the musical praise and thanksgiving of Christian assemblies. These are the pastoral musicians, whose ministry is especially cherished by the church. (Liturgical Music Today, paragraph #63.)

**What motivates the pastoral musician?** Why does he or she give so much time and effort to the service of the church at prayer? *The only answer can be that the church musician is first a disciple and then a minister.* The musician belongs, first of all, to the assembly; he or she is a worshiper above all. Like any member of the assembly, the pastoral musician needs to be a believer, needs to experience conversion, needs to hear the Gospel, and so proclaim the praise of God. Thus, the pastoral musician is not merely an employee or volunteer. He or she is a minister, someone who shares faith, serves the community, and expresses the love of God and neighbor through music. (Liturgical Music Today, paragraph #64.)

*All liturgical ministers are registered parishioners in good standing in the Catholic Church.  
The guidelines that follow conform to theological and liturgical principles.*

## ATTIRE AND BEHAVIOR

By dressing appropriately, liturgical ministers help the assembly focus on the ministry rather than on personal appearance. Ministers, regardless of age, should dress at a minimum in "business casual" attire. Sneakers, jeans, T-shirts, sweat/jogging suits, shorts, and skimpy clothing of any type are not appropriate. Ministers may be called upon to serve at any liturgy, so always come prepared and dressed appropriately. *Choir robes are used for our cantors and choir members. If the choir is not scheduled for the Mass, the cantor is not required to wear the choir robe.*

Ministers model a respectful and reverent attitude by arriving on time, avoiding distracting behavior (e.g. talking with others), and participating in the entire liturgy.

## TRAINING AND FORMATION

Technical orientation and training as well as liturgical and spiritual formation are a necessary part of every ministry. Initial orientation and training with the music director are required before the new minister enters service. Each minister is also expected to grow in faith and action through attending formation opportunities by the parish or diocese.

All liturgical ministry is absolutely crucial and essential for the celebration of the liturgy. An untrained individual cannot properly fill this essential role in the liturgy. This is especially true for music ministers, our role cannot be easily replaced. Please be present in a timely manner. Whenever emergencies do occur, please be responsible; if you are unable to attend when expected please leave a message with the Director by either voice mail or text, as email is not always available to be read in time.

## GENERAL PREPARATION

It is absolutely crucial that each music minister be prepared for the liturgy for which they are serving. This preparation includes not only attendance at rehearsals, but also regular individual music practice, scripture study, and personal prayer. **It involves true commitment.**

Music rehearsals are held each week (except during the summer months of June-August, where rehearsal is held once a month). Regular attendance at rehearsals is expected. As a music minister, missing either rehearsal or liturgy should never be a casual decision. Each musician is important to the ensemble and absences are detrimental to the overall sound of the ensemble.

Be on time and be prepared. It is the music minister's responsibility to maintain his/her folder in up-to-date form and make requests for missing items. Instrumentalists, it is important that you arrive early enough to get set up and tune before either a liturgy or a rehearsal begins.

**Be prepared to serve at the liturgy.** If you were unable to attend the weekly rehearsal make sure that you are familiar with the music being used and that your folder is in order. The ten

minutes prior to liturgy is not a time for going over last-minute details, chatting with other ministers or tuning instruments, etc; *it is a time to prepare your heart and your mind for ministry.*

The cantor's role is an especially important one and should not be entered lightly. Cantors are expected to prepare well, attend regular cantor rehearsals, dress appropriately and make scripture study an important part of their preparation. It is the Cantor's responsibility to proclaim the psalm and the Gospel verse and to be properly prepared to lead the assembly in its sung prayer.

## PRIOR TO THE LITURGY

### *Music Ensemble*

All music ministers are expected to be present and ready to sing/play at the appointed time for pre-liturgy rehearsal.

Please, do not keep questions to yourself, if you are confused then it is likely that there are others who are also confused.

*Recommendation:* Begin by visiting the Blessed Sacrament Adoration Chapel for a few minutes before a liturgy. Ask God's blessing upon your ministry. Offer the ministry to the Lord before, during, and after the liturgy. The following is a suggested adaptation of the direction of intention by St. Francis de Sales: *"Lord, I give you my actions and ministry. Help me to conduct myself in a manner that will praise you and assist my brothers and sisters in their worship of your holy name."*

### *Cantor*

The cantor is the primary link between the Presider, the music ensemble, and the assembly. Therefore, the ministry of cantor is crucial to the smooth flow of the liturgical celebration. The cantor must arrive early enough to rehearse with the accompanist(s) before the regular rehearsal with the music ensemble, unless other arrangements have been made prior to liturgy. Please arrive at liturgy warmed up and prepared to sing. This is especially important at liturgies that take place early in day.

The cantor must be familiar with all of the music being used during the liturgy, with any ritual action that will be taking place, with the General Intercessions that will be either read or sung and with other acclamations or ritual music that is to be used during the celebration. It is absolutely critical that the cantor be familiar with the script of the day's liturgy well in advance of the weekend.

### *Music Director*

Make sure that all necessary music and equipment is in place and in working order well in advance of Pre-Liturgy Rehearsal.

Review the liturgy script, and confirm with the Presider any special instructions included that affect the ministry of music (i.e. baptisms, RCIA rituals, special blessings, etc.)

Make sure that all music ministers are familiar with the music and the instructions for liturgy. Complete music rehearsal no later than 10 minutes prior to liturgy.

If new music is to be introduced, begin the introduction late enough so that a good portion of the assembly is present, and early enough that the teaching will be completed before the liturgy is scheduled to begin.

### DURING THE LITURGY

#### *Cantor*

If there is no worship aid, it is the Cantor's responsibility to either announce the hymn numbers or ensure that someone else will be doing that. Check the numbers to make certain they are correct.

The psalm is sung from the Ambo. When the first reading begins, walk through the sacristy to the other side of the altar. At the conclusion of the first reading, move to the Ambo, bowing towards the altar before reaching the stand. Take your time, it isn't a race. *It is important to step back from the microphone when you invite the congregation to sing.* This encourages participation and makes sure that you aren't over-powering. We are the leaders, not the solo acts. After proclaiming the psalm or canticle pause for 5-10 seconds. Move to the side of the Ambo, bow towards the altar and return to the cantor side of the altar, via the sacristy.

After the 2nd reading has been proclaimed there will be another period of silence for reflection. Wait for the musical introduction to begin before you take your place at the cantor stand, moving quickly but gracefully.

#### *Music Director*

The Opening Hymn begins after the cantor gives the liturgy introduction and announces the hymn.

The introduction for the Psalm should begin after a brief pause for reflection and should be long enough to get the Cantor from his/her seat to the Ambo without haste. This holds true for the Gospel Acclamation as well.

Be prepared to accompany any ritual or prayer that will require musical accompaniment.

The music for the Preparation/Presentation Rite (instrumental and/or vocal) should continue until the Presider finishes washing his hands and is ready to begin the prayer over the gifts. Begin the acclamations to the Eucharistic Prayer on cue without hesitation, with short or no instrumental introduction to the acclamations.

Begin the Lamb of God when the presider (or deacon) has opened the tabernacle and begun distribution of hosts into the ciboria.

Transition into the Communion Procession Song after the recitation of the words, "*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof but only say the words and I shall be healed*" and after your cantor has received and announced the hymn.

Continue the communion songs (instrumentally and/or vocally) until the last member of the assembly has received communion.

Begin the closing song immediately after the words of dismissal.

#### AFTER THE LITURGY

##### ***Music Ministers***

Out of respect for those who may remain in the Church after the liturgy to pray or seek counsel, maintain an appropriately quiet décorum in the music area.

Please help the Music Director with the clean-up of the area. Make sure that all of your music, equipment and other items are picked up and put away.

Please put your music back on the music file cabinets in the sacristy. If you take your music home, you are responsible for it!

Leave the music area completely free of clutter.

*Recommendation:* Visit the Blessed Sacrament Adoration Chapel. Thank God for the opportunity to serve, and for His many blessings.

##### ***Music Director***

Make sure that the music area is clear of all clutter and that all equipment is returned to its proper resting place.

Visit the Blessed Sacrament Adoration Chapel. Thank God for the opportunity to serve, and for His many blessings.