

WELCOME TO THE LITURGICAL MUSIC CORNER!

This portion of our semi-monthly newsletter will focus on various aspects of Musical Liturgy. In this month's newsletter, we will take a look at some prayerful and practical ways of selecting music to be proclaimed at the Liturgy. All information is rooted within the following ecclesiastical sources: *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Third Edition) and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

The content of this article is based on the lecture and PowerPoint that is presented at the archdiocesan Regional Congresses as well as at parish music ministry formation sessions.



WHAT SHOULD WE SING?

**EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE
LITURGICAL MUSIC PLANNING**



**ARCHDIOCESE
of LOS ANGELES**

SOURCES USED WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT:

- *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (USCCB)
- *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITURGICAL AND SCRIPTURAL THEMES

As we begin discerning and selecting liturgical music to be proclaimed at the Liturgy, we ask ourselves these questions:

▪ What is the celebratory theme of the Liturgy? Are we celebrating any of the following:

- Ordinary Time
- Advent
- Christmas
- Lent
- Easter
- Confirmation
- First Communion
- Pentecost
- Sacrament of Holy Matrimony
- Wedding Anniversary
- Quinceañera
- Funeral
- Memorial Anniversary
- Holy Day of Obligation
- any other special liturgy

▪ What are the themes of the individual readings? What is the primary theme of all readings combined?

SELECTING LITURGICAL MUSIC BASED ON THE THEMES

To thoroughly read, understand, and reflect upon each reading is the first imperative step that leads to effective musical selection. When we read Sacred Scripture so that the Word of God enters our hearts, minds, and souls to the point where we feel fully immersed and prayerfully enveloped within it, we have then achieved a reading practice known as *Lectio Divina* ("divine reading"). In doing so, we listen for God's Word in our lives instead of taking a purely analytical or academic approach. We then ask ourselves:

- Are we knowledgeable of the textual content within our various hymns so that we can make scriptural connections between the spoken Word and hymn texts?
- Are we making sure to select hymns that are all related to each other, but do not have redundant texts? For example, if the Responsorial Psalm of the day is Psalm 23 (*The Lord is my shepherd*), are we aware of not using hymns elsewhere in the Liturgy whose texts are closely related to that particular Psalm?

The theology of the Catholic Church gives us insight into making the final decision to include a particular hymn within the Liturgy. The *Three Judgements* portion of this article will shed more light. With this in mind, all liturgical documents share the following commonality regarding musical appropriateness:

While there is a wide selection of Christian music that is inspired by Sacred Scripture, not all is appropriate for use in Catholic worship, which is, among other elements, Eucharistic-centered. Additionally, not all music that speaks about love and/or God is theologically sound and appropriate for use within the Catholic Mass.

PLACEMENT OF HYMNS WITHIN THE LITURGY

There are no specific directives regarding where to place each hymn. However, the following possibilities can assist in an effective way for the sung Word to correspond with the themes of the spoken Word:

- The *Gathering Hymn* can be based on the First Reading.
- The hymn at *Preparation of the Gifts* can be based on the Second Reading. If, however, only one Reading is proclaimed such as at weekday Mass, this hymn can also be based on the First Reading along with some of the thematic elements of the Gospel.
- The *Communion Processional Hymn(s)* is (are) based on the Gospel. They can also be ones that exemplify the action of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Although no guidelines are given in the various liturgical documents, the hymn at *Sending Forth* can be based on the theme of all Readings combined.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The *Responsorial Psalm* is the most important hymn within the Liturgy because it is the assembly's reflection and response to the First Reading and should always be sung whenever liturgical musicians are present. The proper place for its proclamation is the ambo, because it is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word -- it is not "just another hymn." The cantor podium may be used for its proclamation only if difficulties prevent it from being proclaimed at the ambo.

In regard to Sunday Liturgies, a musical setting of the prescribed Responsorial Psalm within the Lectionary should always be used. If circumstances do not permit the prescribed Psalm to be used, one of several *Common Psalms* may be selected as long as they correspond to the First Reading. The Common Psalms are:

Advent

Ps. 25, 85

Christmas

Ps. 98

Epiphany

Ps. 72

Lent

Ps. 51, 91, 130

Easter

Ps. 66, 118

Ascension

Ps. 47

Pentecost

Ps. 104

Ordinary Time

Ps. 19, 27, 34, 63, 95, 100, 103, 145

Final Weeks in Ordinary Time

Ps. 122

Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm.

THE THREE JUDGEMENTS FOR SELECTING LITURGICAL MUSIC

In *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, paragraphs 126 through 136 give us three judgements to utilize in evaluating hymns prior to their inclusion within the Liturgy.

- ***Liturgical:*** Does the hymn correspond with the theme of the Reading? Is the length of the hymn adequate in order to successfully accompany the ritual action or the portion of the Liturgy at which it will be sung? Does the text of the hymn tell the full truth of Catholic faith and doctrine without error?

- ***Pastoral:*** Will the hymn serve well the gathered faithful by enabling them to fully participate in the Sung Word because it is not too difficult for them to sing? Is the hymn well-received by the people so that it will become a part of the parish's standard liturgical music repertoire? Is it accessible by all parish vocalists and instrumentalists, in that all ages and skill levels can render it prayerfully, meaningfully, and musically without too much challenge?

- ***Musical:*** Is there a sense of melodic and harmonic beauty within the hymn? Is the melody written in such a way where it will not place a burden on the assembly because of extreme skips between the notes? Is it written in a comfortable key to enable full participation by all? Does it have too much predictability and common "sound" that are oftentimes found in popular-style music? Regardless of the style, can the hymn be rendered in such a way where it truly fosters prayer and steers clear of being just an empty musical performance?

COMMONLY USED LITURGICAL MUSIC PLANNING RESOURCES

All planning resources should be utilized as references, not as the primary method for selecting hymns. In other words, the suggested hymns within those resources should be chosen with great care and liturgical contemplation. Hymns should never be chosen just because “it is my favorite song,” or that “this one is easy for the choir to sing,” or that “the choir and I know this one really well, and we can sing it without having to practice it.” While it is true that some hymns can be selected due to easiness or familiarity, it should not become habitual. In addition, not all suggested hymns are appropriate for any given liturgy – extra effort on the part of the pastoral musician must be utilized to make possible the best liturgical choices.

Click on all texts in blue for more information.

Oregon Catholic Press (OCP Publications)

- [Liturgy.com](#) (online subscription)
- [Today's Liturgy](#) (quarterly journal subscription)
- [Liturgia y Canción](#) (quarterly journal subscription in Spanish)

Gregorian Institute of America (GIA Publications)

- planning pages online at [giamusic.com](#)
- [GIA Quarterly](#) (quarterly journal subscription)

International Liturgy Publications (ILP)

- planning pages online at [ilpmusic.org](#)

Cantica Nova

- planning pages online at [canticanova.com](#)

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EXAMPLE OF SUGGESTED MUSIC SELECTIONS FOR A PARTICULAR SUNDAY

To assist in selecting the most liturgically appropriate music, here is a scriptural and spiritual reflection of the readings for the **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)**, courtesy of OCP Publications. Also included are the summaries of the individual readings. To view them in their entirety, visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website at usccb.org.

The suggested English, Spanish, and bilingual music selections can be found on the next page. Titles, along with each hymn's composer (last name) and primary publisher are included. Keep in mind that this is only a partial list of selection possibilities – many more options are available within various planning resources. Each hymn has been selected to reflect the overall theme of the Liturgy as well as the themes of the individual readings.

REFLECTION

The image that today's Scriptures present us is the "banquet" that God prepares for those who are invited to the kingdom. In the First Reading, this banquet is more than the physical satisfaction of sharing food and the company of guests. In Isaiah, the banquet is a symbol of the presence of God, who wipes away all tears and destroys death forever. The parable of today's Gospel sets the banquet in a different context. The king sends out the invitation for his son's wedding, but it is rejected by many who even kill the servants who bring it to them. This parallels the kingdom of God, to which all are invited but some reject the love of the son, Jesus. In this Sunday's Liturgy, invite the assembly to reflect on the good and bad times of their lives with their family and friends. Did you recognize the presence of God in those times? How can we help others to seek comfort in God in times of crises?

FIRST READING (Isaiah 25:6-10a)

Isaiah prophesied, "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide...a feast of rich food and choice wines.... The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face.... The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

SECOND READING (Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20)

Paul wrote, "I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry." When people share each other's hardships, God supplies their needs fully in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL (Matthew 22:1-14 or Matthew 22:1-10)

Mt. 22:1-14 Jesus likened God's reign to a great wedding banquet that a king gave for his son. Many were invited; some ignored the invitation. One guest was thrown out for disrespectful dress. In God's reign, "many are invited, but few are chosen."

-OR-

Mt. 22:1-10 Jesus likened God's reign to a great wedding banquet that a king gave for his son. Many were invited; some ignored the invitation.

GATHERING (based on the First Reading)

- All Are Welcome (Manibusan, OCP)
- Alleluia! Sing to Jesus (HYFRYDOL)
- Here at This Table (Whittaker, OCP)
- In This Place (Thomson, OCP) (sing verses' 1 and 3)
- Las Puertas de tu Casa (Espinosa, OCP)
- Me Alegré (Rosas, OCP)
- Qué Alegría (Cortez, OCP)
- Table of Plenty (Schutte, OCP)
- Vamos Todos a la Casa del Señor (Coppo, OCP)
- Vamos Todos al Banquete (Cuéllar, OCP)
- Ven al Banquete (Hurd, OCP)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Any setting of Psalm 23, whether the refrain is, "I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," **or** "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want."

PRESENTATION AND PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS (based on the Second Reading)

- Bienaventurados (Montgomery, OCP)
- Eye Has Not Seen (Haugen, GIA)
- Felices (Fernandez, OCP)
- Hay un Trono de Gracias (Martinez, OCP)
- Many and Great (Manalo, OCP)
- We Walk by Faith (Haugen, GIA)
- Within the Reign of God (Haugen, GIA)

COMMUNION PROCESSIONAL (based on the Gospel)

- Bread for the Broken (Martinez, ILP)
- Gusten y Vean (Reza, OCP)
- Hoy es Día de Fiesta (Montgomery, OCP)
- May We Be One (Daigle/Cooney, GIA)
- O Taste and See (Haugen, GIA)
- Pan de Vida (Hurd)
- Señor, Tú Eres el Pan (tradicional, OCP)
- Spirit and Grace (Manalo, OCP)
- Todos Esperamos de Ti (Taule, OCP)
- With the Lord There is Mercy (Wheeler, ILP)

SENDING (based on the themes of all Readings combined)

- City of God (Schutte, OCP)
- Con la Cruz (Rubalcava, OCP)
- Cristo Está Conmigo (Espinoza)
- Deo Gracias (Rubalcava)
- Now Thank We All Our God (NUN DANKET)
- We Belong to You (Thomson, OCP)
- Your Grace is Enough (Maher, OCP)
- We Are the Light of the World (Greif, OCP)
- Te Den Gracias (de Zayas)
- Todos los Pueblos de la Tierra (Castillo)

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For additional information and consultation in regard to the selection of music for the Liturgy, please contact Victor A. Wheeler, Coordinator of Sacred Music Formation. He can be reached at (213) 637-7054. You can also send him an e-mail at: vwheeler@la-archdiocese.org.

General guidelines regarding liturgical music in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles can be found by clicking [here](#).

The next article also within this section of the newsletter covers the selection of music to be proclaimed at the Wedding Liturgy.