

## **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 Wedding Liturgy. All information is rooted within various ecclesiastical sources that are mentioned throughout.

The content of this article is based on the lecture and PowerPoint that is presented at parish music ministry formation sessions and also as a webinar via Zoom.



# **LITURGICAL MUSIC AT THE WEDDING MASS**

**LITURGICALLY APPROPRIATE MUSIC PREPARATION**



## **MEETING WITH THE ENGAGED COUPLE**

The first step in this liturgical journey is to find a date and time to meet with the engaged couple. Prior to this meeting, ask if they received any resources from the parish that contain the wedding Mass Scripture Readings – if so, encourage them to sit down with each other and to take time in selecting readings that encompass who they are as a couple and as a family. Tell them to bring their selections to the meeting since knowing the readings beforehand will expedite the planning process.

Get to know the engaged couple prior to the musical and liturgical coordination – good hospitality and personal connections go a long way. Once a personal connection has been established, let the coordination begin!

## **MUSIC SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

All music that is proclaimed within the wedding liturgy must be liturgically appropriate. It is the right of the community of Christ's faithful that in the celebration of the Eucharist, there should customarily be true and suitable sacred music (*Redemptionis Sacramentum*, No. 57). In addition to *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, other liturgical documents such as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (STTL) give clear guidance on what is (and what is not) musically appropriate within the Mass.

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.*

## **MUSICIANS FROM OUTSIDE THE PARISH, MARIACHI ENSEMBLES**

Whenever there are visiting musicians who will provide the music, it is the responsibility of the parish to set clear guidelines on what is expected of them.

The parish Director of Music (DM) will need to contact the visiting musicians as soon as possible so that timely preparation and coordination can be accomplished. As part of this vital communication, the visitors should be reminded about all aspects of liturgical music appropriateness that have been previously mentioned, as well as what will be mentioned throughout this document.

Recorded music is not to be used because it lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. It is never to become a substitute for the community's singing (STTL, Nos. 93 & 94).

If a Mariachi ensemble will be present, the following guidelines will need to be considered:

- a.) Every musical piece that they render must be sacred and liturgical in nature. If there is uncertainty of what the words are saying due to a language barrier, it is the responsibility of the DM to have them translated to determine their appropriateness.
- b.) The DM will need to contact the ensemble and inquire what pieces they intend to sing. Anything questionable should be let known to them as soon as possible so that they will have enough time to properly make all needed changes.
- c.) If the Mariachi is not able to sing the Parts of the Mass or if their usual Mass setting is outdated, the Music Ministers of the parish should also be present to sing those Parts. They are: *Glory to God*, *Gospel Acclamation*, *Holy*, *Mystery of Faith*, *Amen*, and *Lamb of God*. The same guideline applies to the Responsorial Psalm if the Mariachi is unable to sing it. Additional fees will most likely apply.

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## **SING TO THE LORD: MUSIC IN CATHOLIC WORSHIP**

### **The Rite of Marriage**

**(Nos. 216 – 224)**

**216.** The lifelong bond established by the marriage covenant between a man and a woman derives its force from creation. Jesus Christ has raised this natural covenant to a higher dignity as a sacrament of the new and eternal covenant.<sup>185</sup> Above all else, the “grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ’s cross, the source of all Christian life.”<sup>186</sup>

**217.** “According to the Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of Christ’s grace mutually confer upon each other the Sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church.”<sup>187</sup> Therefore, while the celebration of marriage concerns the spouses and their families, it is not only a private matter. Since their consent is given in the presence of the Church, the celebration of marriage is governed by the appropriate liturgical norms. The Church desires that a person’s wedding day be filled with joy and grace. When preparing the Liturgy, pastors should address any concerns with the couple with due pastoral sensitivity and sound judgment.

**218.** The preparation of the Liturgy must concern not only those involved but also the norms of the ritual itself.<sup>188</sup> The marriage Liturgy presents particular challenges and opportunities to planners. Both musicians and pastors should make every effort to assist couples to understand and share in the planning of their marriage Liturgy. Since oftentimes the only music familiar to the couple is not necessarily suitable to the sacrament, the pastoral musician will make an effort to demonstrate a wide range of music appropriate for the Liturgy.

**219.** It is helpful for a diocese or a parish to have a definite but flexible policy that provides clear guidance and also allows for pastoral sensitivity regarding wedding music. This policy should be communicated early to couples as a normal part of their preparation in order to avoid last-minute crises and misunderstandings.

**220.** Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should be based on the three judgments proposed above (see nos. 126ff.): the liturgical judgment, the pastoral judgment, and the musical judgment. As indicated previously, all three of these judgments must be taken into account, since they are aspects of a single judgment. Additionally, music should reflect the truth that all the sacraments celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ.<sup>189</sup> Secular music, even though it may emphasize the love of the spouses for one another, is not appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy. Songs that are chosen for the Liturgy should be appropriate for the celebration and express the faith of the Church.<sup>190</sup>

**221.** If vocal soloists are to be employed in the celebration of the sacrament, they should be instructed on the nature of the Liturgy and trained in the unique aspects of singing in a liturgical context. Either the soloist should be trained to carry out the ministry of psalmist and cantor, or else another singer should be secured for this liturgically important role. In all cases, soloists should be aware that their talents are offered at the service of the Liturgy. Vocalists may sing alone during the Preparation of the Gifts or after Communion, provided the music and their manner of singing does

not call attention to themselves but rather assists in the contemplation of the sacred mysteries being celebrated. Soloists should not usurp parts of the Mass designated for congregational participation.

**222.** If the Rite of Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the norms for music within Mass as described in nos. 137-199 of this document apply. The entrance procession—consisting of the ministers, attendants, witnesses, bride, and groom—is accompanied by a suitable song or instrumental music. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places. The Liturgy of the Word proceeds as usual with a Responsorial Psalm, which may be sung. Following the homily, the sacrament is celebrated with the exchange of consent and the Church's reception of consent. After the blessing and exchanging of rings, a song or hymn of praise may be sung.<sup>191</sup> Depending on the local custom and the culture of the families, after the exchange of rings, the veiling of the bride and groom and other customary actions may be added, during which an appropriate psalm or song may be sung.

**223.** When, for pastoral reasons, the sacrament is celebrated outside of Mass, the Liturgy should begin with an entrance song or instrumental piece.<sup>192</sup> If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places. The Liturgy of the Word takes place in the usual manner, with the possibility of singing a Responsorial Psalm.<sup>193</sup> Following the homily, the sacrament is celebrated with the exchange of consent and the Church's reception of consent. After the blessing and exchanging of rings, a song or hymn of praise may be sung.<sup>194</sup> When the sacrament is celebrated outside of Mass but Communion is distributed, a chant or song may accompany the distribution of the sacrament, as well as the period of thanksgiving after Communion is distributed.<sup>195</sup>

**224.** Since the celebration of marriage is a communal celebration, participation aids should be provided to the congregation so that they might follow the ritual with understanding. This, in turn, allows them to have full and active participation in the celebration. Participation aids should include especially those elements of the Liturgy unique to the marriage rite, as well as translations of any songs not sung in the vernacular. Such participation aids should also include proper copyright notices for permission to use copyrighted music in the program.

## SOURCES

**CCC** – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

**OCM** – *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*

**SC** – Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*) (1963)

**185** See Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition: New English Translation (Codex Iuris Canonici) (CIC) (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1998), can. 1055, §1; GS, no. 48, §1.

**186** CCC, no. 1615.

**187** CCC, no. 1623.

**188** See *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*, editio typica altera, (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990), also known as Order of Celebrating Matrimony.

**189** See SC, no. 61; CCC, no. 1621.

**190** See OCM, no. 30; SC, nos. 118, 121.

**191** See OCM, nos. 64, 65.

**192** See OCM, nos. 67B, 68, 81.

**193** See OCM, nos. 90 - 91.

**194** See OCM, nos. 94 - 99.

**195** See OCM, nos. 113, 114.

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# **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.

## **THE LITURGICAL JUDGMENT**

- Does the hymn correspond with the themes of the readings, along with what is being celebrated or commemorated at the Liturgy?
- 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?

## **THE PASTORAL JUDGMENT**

- If the hymn is intended to be sung by the gathered faithful, does it serve them well by enabling full participation in the sung Word, because it is not too difficult to sing?
- Is the hymn well-received by the people, so that it will become a part of the parish's standard liturgical wedding music repertoire?
- Is it accessible by all parish vocalists and instrumentalists, in that various skill levels can render it prayerfully, meaningfully, and musically without too much challenge?

## **THE MUSICAL JUDGMENT**

- Is there a sense of melodic and harmonic beauty within the hymn?
- If applicable, 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?
- Also, if applicable, is it written in a comfortable key to enable full participation by all?
- Does it have too much of the 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?

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# **ENTRANCE PROCESSION THROUGH GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

## **ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

The Cross bearer, Altar Servers, additional liturgical ministers, and Priest Celebrant enter first as at Sunday Mass. The entire wedding party, with the groom at the front and bride at the back, processes behind the Priest Celebrant as a single procession with no separate entrances. It is to resemble the Entrance Procession that takes place at Sunday Mass, rather than contain separated entrances that have gradually turned into “showpieces” through the years.

The *Gathering Hymn* is sung by all as the procession takes place. This hymn is drawn from the parish’s standard repertoire that is used on Sundays. It is sustained throughout the entire procession and is repeated as necessary.

Since the bride is part of the Entrance Procession, there is no separate piece of music as she enters. The Gathering Hymn continues at that time until the bride and groom have arrived at the sanctuary.

## **GLORY TO GOD**

The *Gloria* is sung at all wedding Liturgies, even during the seasons of Advent and Lent, due to the joyousness of the Sacrament. A “refrain-verse” or “through composed” setting can be sung. However, it is recommended to sing the setting that is proclaimed at the parish’s current Sunday Mass.

## **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

The *Responsorial Psalm* is to be sung, as prescribed per the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, No. 61. The prescribed Psalm settings, as found in various wedding Mass resources, are prioritized when the engaged couple makes their selection. However, other settings may be selected, provided that their verses correspond with the theme of the First Reading, and with the theme of the Celebration of Matrimony.

As of 2016, it is worthwhile to note that not all of the revised wedding Psalms have been set to music. The refrains may be different, but the verses remain the same from pre-2016. In this case, the older version of the Psalm may be used since it is, in essence, the same Psalm – just with a different refrain.

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

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

During the season of Lent, the *Gospel Acclamation* refrain is “Sing joyfully to God our strength” (Psalm 81:2). Currently, there are not too many musical resources regarding the Acclamations that accompany the revised Order of Celebrating Matrimony. However, a collection entitled [\*Love, Burn Bright\*](#) by Chris de Silva ([GIA Publications](#)) contains these Acclamations set to music, including the Lenten Gospel Acclamation.

Regardless of the liturgical season or musical setting, the Gospel Acclamation is proclaimed in the same manner as at regular Mass. There is no procession of the *Book of the Gospels*.

# **THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY AND PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

## **THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY**

At the end of *The Reception of the Consent*, the Priest says, "Let us bless the Lord," and all reply, "Thanks be to God." In place of "Thanks be to God," or after all reply, an acclamation may be sung. It can be the Gospel Acclamation refrain, a chanted setting of the words "Thanks be to God," or *Acclamation Following the Reception of the Consent* from *Love, Burn Bright*.

After *The Blessing and Giving of Rings*, and if applicable, *The Blessing and Giving of Coins (Arras)*, a hymn or canticle of praise may be sung by the entire community.

## **PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

The *Prayer of the Faithful*, also known as the *Universal Prayer* or *General Intercessions*, can be proclaimed by either an assigned reader or the celebrating Priest, but always by a Deacon if he is concelebrating the Mass. Its response can be, "Lord hear our prayer," or "Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer." Other appropriate responses can also be made.

The response may be sung instead of spoken. If so, it is highly recommended to coordinate with the reader or Deacon beforehand for timing purposes.

## **HYMN AT PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS**

As the Gifts of bread and wine are brought forth and the altar is prepared, a hymn is taken up by all. Or, a piece can be rendered by the music minister(s) without participation of the people. Whichever is selected should reflect the themes of the First and Second Readings but not the Gospel, since that is the intent of the *Communion Hymn*. In addition, if it is sung without the people participating, it is rendered prayerfully in such a manner where it does not call unnecessary attention to the music ministers, as outlined in *STTL*, No. 221.

## **HOLY THROUGH LAMB OF GOD**

These Parts of the Mass are meant to be sung, as outlined in *GIRM*, No. 40. Three considerations can be employed when selecting a Mass setting:

- a.) to proclaim the setting that is currently used at the parish's Masses
- b.) to select a setting that is different than the parish norm for "variety"
- c.) to select a setting that utilizes the native language of the bride and/or groom's family

Regardless of the choice of Mass setting, all Acclamations should be able to encourage assembly participation via musical accessibility (recall *The Three Judgments: Liturgical, Pastoral, Musical*).

The Holy, Mystery of Faith, and Amen are drawn from the same Mass setting for the purpose of liturgical consistency. However, the Lamb of God may be drawn from a different setting.

## **HYMN AT THE COMMUNION PROCESSIONAL**

The *Communion Hymn* begins as the Priest receives the Sacrament, as outlined in *GIRM*, No. 86. If however, he makes an announcement to the people regarding the significance of the Sacrament or how to receive, the hymn begins immediately after.

The selected hymn, using the *Three Judgments* during the selection process, reflects the theme of the Gospel. The hymn does not necessarily need to be Eucharistic in nature, but more importantly, should be carefully chosen to bring forth the Gospel's theme, as per *STTL*, No. 191.

Because this hymn accompanies the procession of the people that leads to the reception of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ, it is to be taken up by all to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the "communitarian" character of the procession to receive the Eucharist (*GIRM*, No. 86).

The Communion Hymn, as per *GIRM*, No. 86, is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful. However, if there is to be a hymn after Communion, the [main] Communion Hymn should be ended in a timely manner.

## **PRESENTATION OF FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

This part of the wedding Mass is optional – however, if it does take place, an appropriate piece that is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary is sung. This may take the form of various settings of *Ave Maria*, or other Marian hymns.

It should be of an appropriate length so as to not unnecessarily prolong the Liturgy. Additionally, it is to be rendered in a manner that does not draw attention to the music ministers, but rather, fosters prayer within both the newly married couple and the gathered faithful.

## **RECESSIONAL HYMN**

Just as with the Entrance Procession Hymn, the *Recessional Hymn* is sung by all. It is once again drawn from the parish's standard repertoire that is used on Sundays, sustained throughout the entire recessional procession, and is repeated as necessary.

At the conclusion of the hymn, an instrumental or sung postlude can be rendered, especially if there is a large number of people in attendance. Although the Liturgy has ended at this time, it is highly recommended that the postlude be of sacred nature due to continued presence within the House of God.

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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](mailto:vwheeler@la-archdiocese.org).

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

The next two articles in the upcoming newsletters will cover topics regarding sound in the church. They have been written by Mr. Wheeler – he is also a former audio engineer who has mixed sound for various small to large music events through the years. The topics will be as follows:

- *Microphone and Amplification Techniques*
- *Analog Vs. Digital Mixing Consoles*