

## *Do's and Don'ts for Ministers of Music*

FOR THOSE WHO CHOOSE MUSIC FOR LITURGY  
Music and Choir Directors

### *DO*

- ✓ Have and continue to acquire liturgical and musical education.
- ✓ Read and follow what the Church teaches in liturgical documents.
- ✓ Set aside time to prepare music for each season of the Liturgical Year.
- ✓ Begin preparation by praying with the scripture texts for the season, letting them sink into you; note images or phrases that link to music you know.
- ✓ Consider yourself a “proclaimer” of the Word of God. Choose music that proclaims God’s Word well. Ask the Spirit’s guidance in choosing what songs, song texts or settings best proclaim the Word.
- ✓ Allow your music repertoire to influence your prayer, and your prayer to influence your music repertoire.
- ✓ Choose music that fosters an atmosphere of communal liturgical prayer and encourages full, conscious and active participation of the entire assembly.
- ✓ Critique music choices using the musical, liturgical and pastoral judgment outlined in *Music in Catholic Worship*.
- ✓ Look at the service as a whole; it should have its own internal rhythm. Silence is an important element. Know how and when it is to be used.
- ✓ Understand the high and low points in the rhythm of the Liturgical Year, and plan accordingly.
- ✓ Plan for the most important musical elements first:
  - Primary Elements to sing:  
Eucharistic Acclamations,  
Gospel Acclamation,  
Responsorial Psalm,  
Gloria (if applicable),  
Entrance processional,  
Communion processional
  - Secondary Elements to sing:  
Lamb of God,  
Presentation and/or Preparation of Gifts,  
Lord Have Mercy,  
Response to the Prayer of the Faithful,  
Recessional
- ✓ Continue the preparation music through to the presider’s washing of hands.
- ✓ Begin the Communion processional at the priest’s communion.
- ✓ Work toward some shared repertoire for all Masses so that for special celebrations (for example, Christmas and Easter) the total assembly will be able to participate well.
- ✓ Find ways of teaching new music that reflect the assembly’s capacity to learn and their need for new repertoire. Cantors and choirs can be a big help.
- ✓ Provide adequate music resources for the assembly and clearly let them know the music chosen for the service.
- ✓ Have appropriate copyright permissions for all music printed in music aids/worship guides.
- ✓ Get feedback from your assembly.
- ✓ Know your assembly, ensemble, choir, and worship space. Know what is possible and what isn’t. Understand the acoustics and the sound system in your church.

DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO  
OFFICE FOR LITURGY AND SPIRITUALITY

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*DON'T*

- ⊗ Let personal preference overshadow correct liturgical praxis (principles of liturgy or musical judgments).
- ⊗ Be simply a “four-hymn” Mass planner.
- ⊗ Plan “too much” new music for the assembly too quickly.
- ⊗ Fill every silence with music or words. Music is integral but don't overload the service.
- ⊗ Accompany a part of the liturgy with ritual music not appropriate to that element (*e.g.* singing the Gloria during the Entrance Procession or Sprinkling Rite).
- ⊗ Consider the time after communion an opportunity for inspirational solos. This is a time for the assembly's private prayer, which may be concluded with a song of praise sung by all.
- ⊗ Ever feel you know enough. Be a life-long learner of music and liturgy.

## *Do's and Don'ts for Ministers of Music*

FOR DIRECTORS OF LITURGICAL MUSIC

### *DO*

- ✓ Have appropriate musical and liturgical training.
- ✓ Understand different musical styles and techniques.
- ✓ Know the music and the text well enough to pray it.
- ✓ Be aware of your ministerial role in worship (dress appropriately, model how you want the music to be prayed, *etc.*).
- ✓ Be prepared for the service: have music, instruments, sound equipment, *etc.*, ready ahead of time.
- ✓ Participate fully, actively and consciously in the whole worship service.
- ✓ Minimize distractions during the service. Yours is a ministerial role and the assembly is watching you for cues.
- ✓ Remember that once the service begins, there are no mistakes, only prayer.
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice. There is always more to learn.
- ✓ Be prepared for the unexpected.

### *DON'T*

- ⊗ Be a performer. Be a prayerful enabler of prayer. Don't "tune out" when you are not "on".
- ⊗ Allow the accompaniment or trained voices to drown out the voice of the assembly.
- ⊗ Draw undue attention to yourself during the service either by your apparel or posture (swigging water, finding music, daydreaming, tuning instruments, *etc.*). Body language communicates your respect for the liturgy.
- ⊗ Think or speak of the assembly as an audience. They are co-participants in the praise of God at the liturgy.
- ⊗ Have all the music sound alike; musical diversity is a good thing!