

Selecting Music for Liturgies in the *School Setting*

This reference guide is for those who prepare and select music for Masses in the school setting. The same principles apply for the Liturgy of the Word.

The music for Mass should appeal to the community worshipping. At the same time, the nature of Mass makes demands on the music to fulfill certain liturgical requirements.

Not all good religious music is necessarily liturgical music (music suitable for Mass). The challenge is to select *liturgical* music that the gathered community can sing easily and will like.

Who are the primary music ministers?

The primary music minister is the *assembly*. The primary musical instrument is our voice. Voicing the acclamations and responses is a primary means to inward participation. We want to select music that those gathered can sing rather than perform music that the listener will enjoy.

Why is repertoire important?

- People are more likely to sing when the music is familiar. A common repertoire binds communities together.
- Sharing a repertoire with neighbouring parishes helps young people become part of the larger assembly when they attend Mass at the parish.
- Avoid teaching children/youth only newer contemporary music. Young people themselves do not want to be categorised as only appreciating one style. You can change the tempo, add instrumentation, and/or recompose the chords to make a familiar song/hymn more vibrant or more reflective.

How can I engage the assembly with a familiar repertoire?

- Select music young people can grow into not grow out of. There are many beautiful options that young people can sing but that are not child-like.
- Use different arrangements to vary the complexity. For example, use music in unison with young children but add a choral arrangement to the same selection to make it appropriate for a Mass with a high school choir. If the verses are harder to sing for the younger children, use only the refrain (e.g.: *We are One Body* by Dana Scanlon).

How can the school increase student participation?

- Repetition will encourage children to make the music their own. The key to engaging students is to **prepare the assembly** not only the liturgy. Even if one grade is responsible for preparing the Mass, part of their work should be to prepare the whole school for the liturgy.
 - Select music with an easy refrain and verses sung by cantor and/or choir.
 - Students preparing the Mass can work with a teacher to write prayers of the faithful that follow the accepted liturgical pattern but give voice to the needs in the hearts of the student body.
 - Use seasonal hymns and psalm responses in the classroom as prayer.
- Increasing participation does not mean multiplying the number of liturgical ministers. It could mean that every class studies the message of the Gospel for that Mass ahead of time in a grade appropriate fashion. Students can extend the liturgical art and environment throughout the school.

Which parts of Mass should be sung?

The degree of singing depends upon the occasion, nature of the assembly, and degree of solemnity of the liturgy. However, one should always begin by teaching children to **sing the acclamations**. The acclamations are our responses to God's word and actions. Even when nothing else is sung, the **Gospel acclamation/Alleluia**, the **Holy, Holy**, the **Memorial Acclamation**, and the **Great Amen** should be sung. The hierarchy of musical priorities is sometimes referred to as progressive solemnity. The full order is outlined here:

1. Acclamations
 - a. Gospel Acclamation
 - b. *Holy, Holy* | *Sanctus*
 - c. Memorial Acclamation | *Anamnesis*
 - d. *Great Amen*
2. Psalms and Canticles
 - a. Psalm of the day or seasonal Psalm
 - b. *Glory to God* | *Gloria* (when prescribed)
3. Processional Songs
 - a. Entrance hymn
 - b. Communion hymn
4. Other
 - a. Litanies
 - i. *Lord, have mercy* | *Kyrie*
 - ii. Prayer of the faithful | general intercessions

- iii. *Lamb of God | Agnus Dei*
- b. Ritual dialogues, Lord's Prayer, Profession of Faith
- c. Other Processional Songs
 - i. Presentation of the Gifts—may be instrumental
 - ii. Recessional—the recessional is optional

For example, you would not prepare to sing elements under numbers 3 and 4 unless you were also singing the elements under numbers 1 and 2.

How do I choose hymns and Mass parts?

Liturgical Judgement

- Is the music seasonally appropriate?
- Does the music complement the liturgical action?
- Is the selection consistent with current approved liturgical books?
- Is the text theologically sound and does it have a Scriptural reference?

Musical Judgement

- Does the music support the text or distract from it?
- Is the music pleasing and engaging? Is the melody memorable? Is it easy to sing? Is the range accessible? Does the phrasing facilitate participation?
- Does the music have the capacity to move the assembly on a deep level?
- Does the style of music suit the assembly, music ministry, and the instruments available?

Pastoral Judgement

- Does the music suit the mentality, taste, and cultural expression of the assembly?
- Is this selection a valuable addition to the community's repertoire? Can it be used on more than one occasion? Can it be executed in a variety of styles?
- Are the musicians and community capable of executing this piece of music?
- Does the music facilitate the incorporation of children into the regular parish assembly?

How do I know which hymns are best for which part of Mass?

Acclamations

- Choose acclamations that are easy to memorise and if possible, are used by surrounding parish communities.

Entrance Chant

- This hymn unites individuals into one community and focuses our prayer. It should reflect the liturgical season.

Responsorial Psalm

- In addition to the Psalm prescribed for the day, you can choose the Psalm from the Sunday lectionary or use a seasonal Psalm. Using a seasonal Psalm refrain the classroom alternating with spoken verses can prepare students to participate when they are at liturgy and a cantor sings the verses.

Offertory Chant

- If sung, this hymn should reflect the word of God that was proclaimed. It accompanies our gift of bread and wine, our support for the church, and the gift of ourselves.

Communion Chant

- Communion hymns should have short refrains that can be sung without a worship aid and that reflect the Eucharistic action. The hymn begins when the priest takes communion, and continues for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful.

Recessional Hymn

- If used, this hymn should reflect the closing dialogue that commissions all to “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” This hymn reminds us to bring our prayer to the world.

Silence

It is important for those preparing the liturgy to appreciate the purpose of silence in ritual prayer, to know where it is prescribed for Mass, and to prepare the assembly to use it well.

- Silence in liturgy is purposeful. Silence enables individuals to prepare themselves, to offer themselves, to reflect upon what has been given, to receive it, and to respond.
- Silence is called for just before Mass begins, at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word, after the first and second readings, after the homily, after communion, as well as each time the priest invites us: “Let us pray.”
- Noise pollution and personal audio devices mean we rarely have silence and may need to practice keeping it, entering into it, and using it. Silence can be practiced in the classroom but make it meaningful. Explain if the silence is being kept to prepare for something, to reflect upon what has been heard, or to prepare a response. Understanding silence will help students appreciate its observance in the Mass.

How do I know which music is approved for use in Catholic Liturgy?

Select music from collections by well-known Catholic publishers. Look for a statement that the book has been approved by a Conference of Catholic Bishops. The *CBVIII* and *Celebrate in Song* are our national hymnals.

Music from hymnals published by OCP, GIA, and WLP may also be suitable. Take note where the hymnal indicates that certain selections are for devotional use or worship outside of Mass. For example, *Spirit and Song* has a section of music for Mass and a section of worship hymns that are not meant for use in Mass but rather for praise and worship services or other prayer meetings.

How do I know if a hymn is suitable for Mass?

Mass is liturgical prayer and liturgical prayer is public communal worship. Devotional or personal prayer, even when done in a group, reflects more individual sentiments.

Liturgical Music

- Liturgical song generally is directed to God as petition or praise or as a memorial of what God has done.
- Liturgical song expresses authentic Catholic faith and is theologically sound.
- Most liturgical song is Scriptural. The liturgy is God speaking to us and we respond to God using God's own words.
- Liturgical song uses text consistent with the language of liturgical prayer.
- Liturgical song uses corporate language in expressing the prayer of the assembly, gathered as the Body of Christ.

Devotional Music

- Devotional song is often about God or directed to the assembly.
- Devotional song can be more subjective and emotional.
- Devotional song tends to express individual and spontaneous sentiments.
- Devotional song often uses informal colloquial language
- Devotional song expresses the individual spiritual experience.

Can we use original compositions by the students at Mass?

Original compositions showcase the talent of individual students but can detract from communal worship and undermine the benefits of selecting from an established repertoire.

Liturgical composers usually have substantial knowledge in theology, Scripture, and liturgy as well as music. Most amateur compositions do not meet the requirements for liturgical music and tend to be individual or devotional. Such compositions can be used at assemblies, in the classroom, on retreats. Occasionally they may be suitable as a prelude to the Mass.

Original compositions require approval from the National Commission on Liturgical Music before they can be used at Mass in the Diocese of Calgary. The National Liturgy Office outlines the criteria for liturgical song here: <http://nlo.cccb.ca/index.php/nclm/music-protocol>

What do I need to know about copyrights?

In general, any reproduction of text and/or music composed by another requires permission. See the diocesan copyright guideline for more details. Check with your School District's Religious Education department regarding what publishers are covered by the School District's copyright licenses.

What sort of worship aid is appropriate?

- Consider the way ritual functions along with the location, the resources at hand, and the nature of the assembly in making your decision. Worship aids can be in the form of a hymnal, of a disposable pamphlet, or projected on a screen.
- A worship aid aims to encourage participation without taking away the assembly's authentic response. For example, text is not needed for "Amen" or "Alleluia" and generally not for "Lord, have mercy" or for the Responsorial Psalm. However, if these are sung, notation might increase participation. In preparation for liturgy, students can spend time memorising the Lord's Prayer and the Creeds so that they make those prayers their own.
- It is often desirable to include notation as well as text for the music. If a cantor or choir sings verses, the assembly can listen and watch while a printed refrain can help them to participate. Even those who do not read music can follow the shape of the melody and develop a degree of musical literacy. Consider copyright laws in making your choice.

Selection Resources

Below are several resources that give hymn suggestions that match the readings for each Sunday of the liturgical year and may also include seasonal selections that you could use for weekday Masses. Many of the selections are present in several hymnals including *CBVIII* or *Celebrate in Song*.

- *NPM Music Planning Calendar* (National Association of Pastoral Musicians): <http://www.npm.org/Planning/>
- *The Sunday Website of St. Louis University*: <http://liturgy.slu.edu/>
- *Today's Liturgy*. Oregon Catholic Press (OCP): Resources from *Breaking Bread, Choral Praise, Glory & Praise, Spirit & Song* (among others). <http://www.ocp.org/tl>
- *GIA Quarterly*. GIA Publications: Resources from *Gather* and *Worship* (among others). http://www.giamusic.com/sacred_music/resourcepage_mfyv.cfm
- *AIM*. World Library Publications (WLP): Their hymnals are rarely used in our diocese but many of the selections are in hymnals familiar to us. <http://www.wlp.jspaluch.com/3351.htm>

Hymnal & other Resources

- Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholic. GIA. [Link here.](#)
- Rise Up and Sing – Children’s Music Resource. OCP. [Link here.](#)
- Never Too Young – Young People Music Resource. OCP. [Link here.](#)
- Cross Generation. GIA Publications. [Link here.](#)
- Songs & Prayers from Taize. GIA. [Link here.](#)
- John Bell’s music | Iona& GIA. [Link here.](#)
- Michael Mangan’s music | Litmus Australia - <http://www.litmusproductions.com>
- Mark Friedman & Janet Vogt music - <http://www.ocp.org/products/11479>
- Paul Inwood’s music | OCP | <http://www.ocp.org/products/10635#tab:contents>

Liturgical Documents & Guidelines

- Liturgies with Children in Parishes and School. RC Diocese of Calgary. [Link here.](#)
- Masses with Children. CCCB. 1975.
- ORDO. Liturgical Calendar with Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy. CCCB. [Link here.](#)
- CBW III - Guideline for Liturgical Music. CCCB.
- Moore, Gerard. We learn about Mass (2nd Edition). Handbook for Teachers and Catechists. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011. [Link here.](#)
- Nastal, David T., Children’s Choir Basics. OCP. [Link here.](#)
- Singing Our Faith – Leader’s and Catechist Manual. GIA. [Link here.](#)