



10 June 2018

Dear Musicians and Choir Members in our Parishes, Schools and Communities,

Thank you for the music ministry you give to enhance the celebration of the Eucharist in your parish or school. With the fifth module of *With Hearts Burning* I want to write to all musicians throughout the Diocese to reflect on the use of music throughout the Diocese so that this might be enhanced for the greater glory of God.

In writing this letter to you, I am not attempting to give an in-depth study of liturgy, drawing deeply on the documents of the Church. Rather, I want to offer some guidelines to assist you and to enhance your musical or liturgical ministry within your parish or school so that the music is in harmony with the Mass and the Liturgical seasons of the Church and in doing so, correct some issues that are occurring in some communities.

Some Basic Liturgical Principles

The Mass is primarily the work of Jesus

The Mass is Jesus' great hymn of praise to the Father, in which is made present His death and resurrection. As we offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, according to his command, we, the people of God, are invited to offer ourselves and our praise to the Father. Our whole understanding of the Eucharist is shaped by the fact that the Mass is Jesus' prayer in which we participate. The music, then, must be at the service of Jesus' action and prayer.

The music is at the service of the Liturgy

The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus St. Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves." There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice."

Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal 39-40).

Our celebration of the Eucharist should lead us to silence

Sacred silence is to be observed at the designated times. Its purpose, however, depends on the time it occurs in each part of the celebration... After Communion, they (the people) praise and pray to God in their hearts. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal 45).

The Liturgy informs the choice of hymns and music

The selection of hymns and music must be informed by the Mass itself. For example the entrance and recessional hymns should have a rousing nature. The music or hymns at Communion time should be more reflective and gentle in nature.

The Liturgical Season of the Church or Feast Day should be reflected in the choice of music, hymns or silence. For example, in Lent the music should be more penitential and there should be less hymns and more silence. In the Easter season the music and hymns should be joy-filled.

Singing with Active and Full Participation

The entire celebration is planned in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful both in body and in mind, a participation burning with faith, hope, and charity, of the sort which is desired by the Church and demanded by the very nature of the celebration, and to which the Christian people have a right and duty by reason of their Baptism (General Instruction of the Roman Missal 18).

The congregation needs to be able to sing. Musicians, music groups and choirs need to get regular feedback that they are successfully facilitating this.

The Order of the Mass

The Mass Parts

The Mass parts (the Gloria, the Gospel Acclamation, the Holy, Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen and the Lamb of God) have primacy. They should always be sung at a Sunday Mass.

It is desirable that all parishes know the following settings so that when we gather for a Diocesan or national event we are all able to sing...

English : Douglas Mews' Mass AND Maria Guzzo's Mary, Queen of Peace Mass
Maori : Richard Puanaki Mass
Latin : The Chants as in the Roman Missal

Mass settings that do not use the current translations as in the Roman Missal should be withdrawn from use.

School Masses should also have sung Mass parts. Priority should be given to singing the Mass parts used in the contributing parishes.

Some parishes use different settings for different seasons... for example one setting for Lent, another for the Easter season. This is a good way for parishes to learn different settings. Parishes should have an agreed policy in each parish as to which Mass settings are used.

Only Mass settings approved by the National Liturgy Office may be used.

The Entrance Hymn

The entrance hymn is informed by the entrance procession. We are processing in to offer praise and worship to God. **Thus, the entrance hymn must offer praise and worship to God** as opposed to singing a gathering hymn. Gathering hymns tend to focus on us and we end up singing about ourselves. Such hymns do not belong at the time of the entrance procession.

The entrance hymn needs to be rousing. **Everyone should be singing the entrance hymn.** It needs to have the energy and ability to sweep people up into the celebration of the Eucharist. There is nothing worse as a priest than coming into Mass with a dirge or when the choir or music group is singing lustily and the congregation is not.

The entrance hymn should end shortly after the priest arrives at his chair. This may mean the priest needs to start the procession during the second verse. **If incense is being used at Mass the hymn or music needs to continue to be played until the priest has finished incensing the altar.** In other words, the hymn covers the entire procession until the priest reaches his chair.

The Psalm

The Psalm is part of the Liturgy of the Word of the day and is set by the Church by its connection to the first reading. As it is part of the inspired word of God, it has a dignity and importance above a hymn.

As such, **the psalm of the day should definitely not be replaced by a hymn.** Occasionally there are hymn versions of the psalm, for example, the traditional "The Lord is my Shepherd." However, Bonniwell's "The Lord is My Shepherd and I want to follow" is clearly not the psalm and should not be used as such.

As the psalms were and are the great hymns of Israel, by their nature, they should be sung. This may take some work for parishes. There are numerous ways this could be done, with a cantor and a communal response, using simple chant tones, or using psalm settings. A key consideration is helping the people to sing the psalm and to grow to know and love the psalms.

The General Instruction on the Lectionary allows for the use of Common Psalms. The singing of one psalm for a month or one or two psalms for a season helps facilitate the congregations' appreciation of and love for the psalms. Also, when the cantors do not read music it is difficult for them to learn new psalms each week.

The Gospel Acclamation

The Gospel Acclamation is sung not only to welcome the Gospel but also to accompany the Gospel procession to the lectern. **The singing of the Gospel Acclamation should continue until the priest or deacon arrives at the lectern as is ready to begin the reading of the Gospel.**

The Offertory Hymn

The offertory hymn is informed by the presentation of the gifts. **It is about us offering to God the gifts of bread and wine and/or of the gift of ourselves as we ask the Lord to change us.** The hymn should help dispose us to offering ourselves with Jesus' self-offering.

What we consider Gathering hymns might be appropriate at this time as they often focus on us being made more fully into the one body of Christ.

Musicians need to be aware of two important considerations about timing.

The first is when the hymn finishes too soon just after the priest has started the preparation of the gifts. When that happens music needs to be played until the priest has finished with his washing his hands. Please note, if incense is being used at Mass the music (at least) needs to continue throughout this until the priest has washed his hands.

The other is when the hymn keeps going on too long and the priest has to wait until the hymn finishes. The music should not interrupt the flow of the Mass.

Memorial Acclamation

The memorial acclamation is about the mystery of faith, the death and resurrection of Lord. There are three approved memorial acclamations in each of Te Reo, English and Latin.

"Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" , "He is Lord" and "I mate e Hehu Karaiti, I ara e Hehu Karaiti, Ka hoki mai ano e Hehu Karaiti. Tihei Mauri Ora" are not approved and should not be used as acclamations in the Roman Missal. They can be used as hymns elsewhere in the Mass.

The Lamb of God

The Lamb of God is sung after the sign of peace. The sign of peace is just a simple part of the rite... the main focus we are preparing for is to receive Holy Communion. **The pause for the sign of peace should be long enough for us to exchange a sign of peace with just a handful of people.** The sign of peace is simply a sign and it should not interrupt the flow of the Liturgy as we prepare to receive Holy Communion. **The organist or lead musician should be watching the priest and be ready to start the Lamb of God** rather than the priest waiting for the lead musician to give the sign of peace to all the music group.

The Communion Hymn

The communion hymn is informed by the procession to receive Holy Communion so it **has Eucharistic or thanksgiving themes**. The hymns or music should be slower, quieter and leading people to be more reflective.

The GIRM states, *While the Priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being 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.* (General Instruction for the Roman Missal 86)

At a large Mass there are often a number of Communion hymns. If choirs or music groups are singing by themselves, it is preferable that this happens earlier during communion so the final Communion hymn is congregational. The GIRM *The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful* (GIRM 86) but as New Zealand, unlike many other parts of the world, has communion under both kinds, I would suggest the last hymn starts as the last people receive communion so that it finishes as the priest or deacon purifies the sacred vessels returns to his seat allowing a good period of silence when there is no movement or distraction in the church. At the same time, the purification of the sacred vessels should not interrupt the flow of the Mass. The period of silent thanksgiving without distraction must be the priority. If the sacred vessels cannot be purified in a timely fashion they should be purified after Mass.

The Recessional Hymn

The final hymn is informed by the recessional procession - we are being sent forth to announce the Gospel of the Lord, glorifying the Lord by our lives. The recessional hymn is about us sharing in the mission of Jesus. Like the entrance hymn, everyone should be singing. So, like the entrance hymn, it should be a hymn that everyone knows and sings, not just the music group or choir.

Other Factors

Marian Feast Days

Marian Feast Days follow the same guidelines as above. Mary, like us, focuses on her Son. So the entrance hymn is about him, not Mary. The Magnificat is a beautiful hymn which is appropriate as an Offertory or Communion Hymn. The appropriate place for other Marian hymns is as the final hymn.

Liturgical Seasons and the Readings of the Day

Liturgical seasons and the readings of the day need to be taken into account. So in Advent one would expect Advent Hymns particularly for the entrance hymn. Or in Lent should have less music – perhaps an entrance and communion hymn only with no recessional music and no incidental music. Easter then becomes a bursting forth in joyful singing. If it is Pentecost or a Confirmation Mass I would expect a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit.

Multiple Musicians or Music Groups

Some parishes are blessed with multiple musicians or music groups. The danger with this is that each group can do their own hymns. If the group is only playing once a month the congregation don't feel as if they know the hymns so well and so don't sing and they get out of the habit of singing. Musicians and Music Groups are there to enable the people to sing so it is important you get independent feedback from the priest and from some parishioners who will give objective feedback. Ask about speed, volume, suitability, whether people are joining in etc. Of course, getting feedback is one thing but it takes humility to listen, learn and improve!

What constitutes a good hymn?

In selecting hymns, consideration needs to be given as to whether it is theologically sound, it is suitable for congregational singing and it has musical merit. Please be careful of Pentecostal hymns. Often they are "I"-focussed and sing about what I am going to do. Our Catholic tradition focuses more on Christ and what he does! It's his Mass! Also, some of the Pentecostal hymns can over-focus on sin and impart a certain guilt on our part. Popular songs should not replace hymns. At times the choice of music reflects the musician's spirituality and likes. Musicians need to be able to hear what the reaction is to the choice and style of music and cater for a wide range of good traditional and contemporary hymns. Again, the choice of music should be made so as to enable the people to sing.

Schools and Parishes

When a School is leading the singing at a Sunday Mass they need to be aware that it is the Parish Mass not a School Mass. The entrance and recessional hymn at least should be hymns that both school and parish know so that everyone can sing.

Copyright

Work is continuing to ensure Copyright compliance. This is an important social justice issue so that composers get recompense for their work. Please ensure your parish or school is compliant in this regard.

I hope you will find these guidelines helpful and that they will be a point of discussion for you with your Parish Priest and Liturgy Committee. The Mass is something we are all passionate about and I am happy to receive your thoughts about what I have written. It is my hope that at some time in the near future we will have Diocesan music workshops to further enhance music in the Liturgy.

Yours fraternally in Christ the Good Shepherd

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Steve Lowe," with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

✠ Steve Lowe
BISHOP OF HAMILTON