

DIOCESAN GUIDELINES ON MUSIC IN THE LITURGY

Introduction

1. In the Liturgy, the glorification of God and the redemption and sanctification of humanity is accomplished through ritual memorial. The Liturgy is the source and summit of Christian life - it is from where the faithful get their power and inspiration and it is the goal toward which all activities are directed.^[1] It is through Sacred Liturgy that salvation history continues today, for whenever Liturgy is celebrated, God's salvation is made present for His Church. The Paschal Mystery is remembered and made present through ritual memorial and effects the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the celebrating faith community.
2. Music plays an important role in this ritual memorial. It is a significant component of Christian worship for it is through our Liturgy that we celebrate, express and nourish our Christian identity and faith; and music is one of the ways we express who we are and what we believe.
3. It is the law of worship which founds or establishes the law of belief. "Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it."^[2]
4. Given this important and delicate role of liturgy in Christian life, it is important that it is celebrated properly and meaningfully. In accordance with SC22 and with the thrust of this Ministry to provide formation and guidance in liturgical matters in the Diocese, these guidelines for music in the liturgy are set:
 - in order that the faithful may be helped to participate in sound and meaningful celebrations of liturgy
 - and to guide ministers of music in the liturgy in the proper and effective exercise of their ministry

Nature of the Liturgy

5. Liturgy is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ wherein public worship is performed and the sanctification of humanity is effected by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members. It is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in ways appropriate to each of these signs.^[3]
6. As something that the Church does as the Mystical Body of Christ, the liturgy is by its very nature communal and participative. "All the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism."^[4] This full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else.^[5] "The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration."^[6] "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence."^[7]

Music in the Liturgy

7. It is useful to differentiate sacred music from secular music and to identify more precisely what is liturgical within sacred music. Sacred music is music created for the worship of God, endowed with a certain holy sincerity of form^[8] while secular music is music created for the world, that is, music that were created for secular things i.e. romance, movies, radio, etc. Within the sphere of sacred music, there is a particular kind of music that may be used in the Church's liturgical celebrations, i.e. liturgical music.^[9] It is the only music that properly belongs to the liturgy.

8. Just like other liturgical ministers, music serves a function in the liturgy, which pertains to its office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the Liturgy. Form always follows function, thus music that would be used in the liturgy should conform to the meaning and proper nature of each part. It should serve and never dominate.

9. The ministerial function of music in the liturgy can be summarized as:

- to glorify God and sanctify man^[10]
- to add delight to prayer (i.e. the liturgical text)^[11] or to express it [the liturgical text] in a more attractive way^[12]
- to show the mystery of the liturgy, imparting a particular atmosphere or tone to the celebration and its hierarchical and communal nature,^[13] and thus, to teach
- to unify hearts by the union of voices^[14] thus giving a sense of unity to the gathered community
- to raise the mind to heavenly things^[15]
- to make the celebration a clear prefiguration of the heavenly liturgy.^[16]
- to assist in expressing, nourishing, strengthening and sharing the faith of the gathered community

10. This implies that liturgical music and the manner by which it is generated do not call attention to itself but rather point back to the liturgy and the mystery being celebrated that serve the worship experience of the faith community.

11. Music used in the liturgy should be planned ahead of time. In choosing what songs to sing in the liturgy, liturgical planning committees and music ministries should take into consideration the following:

1. The spirit of the celebration.^[17] This refers to the general atmosphere or tone of the celebration. The spirit of the celebration is based on the theme of the celebration and of the liturgical season. The theme of each particular celebration may be deduced from the Scripture readings (especially from the Gospel and the First Reading; the Second Reading offers an alternative theme), the text of the celebration (oftentimes from the Entrance Antiphon and the Opening Prayer), and from the mystery, feast or solemnity being celebrated.
2. The nature of each individual parts of the celebration.^[18] Music used in the liturgy should correspond to the nature and meaning of the individual parts. The idea here is appropriateness. Each part has its proper function in the liturgy and since music is a constitutive element of the celebration, it

should also follow the function, nature and meaning of each part. (A more detailed discussion of the parts of the Mass is given below.)

3. The participation of the community. Since the role of music in the liturgy is for the participation of the people, the choice of music should also consider if the people have the capacity to comprehend and join in it. "Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators."[\[19\]](#)

Progressive Solemnity

12. The choice of sung parts and the amount of singing is determined by the degree of solemnity of the particular liturgical celebration. Although all liturgies are important, there is still a hierarchy or varying degrees of importance. A Sunday Mass is of greater importance than that of a Weekday Mass. A solemnity or feast of the Lord is of greater importance than that of a feast of a saint. Some parts in the Mass are of greater importance than that of others. The principle of progressive solemnity thus teaches us that the kind and amount of music used in a particular liturgy should be proportionate to the degree of solemnity of a particular celebration or part. The precedence of importance of seasons, solemnities, feasts and other liturgical days is found in the Ordo, the Table of Precedence of Liturgical Days and in the General Norms of the Liturgical Year and Calendar.

Music in the Eucharistic Celebration

13. The sacrament of the Eucharist is the center of the whole Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually.[\[20\]](#) In it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit.[\[21\]](#) In it, moreover, during the course of the year, the mysteries of redemption are recalled so as in some way to be made present.[\[22\]](#) Furthermore, the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it.[\[23\]](#)

14. Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when they are celebrated solemnly in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the active participation of the people.[\[24\]](#) When there are sufficient ministers who have the capacity to lead the singing well, all parts that may be sung should be sung as much as possible.

15. It is proper that the presider sings the liturgical prayers and texts with the people answering also in song. However, if the singing would be more of a distraction rather than a help, it is best that the presider says the prayers and the text in a loud and clear manner.

16. In a celebration lacking ministers to lead the singing, the mass may be celebrated with no singing at all.

17. If there would be limited singing, the more important parts of the mass, namely, the acclamation for the Gospel, the Sanctus, the Memorial/Eucharistic Acclamation and the Great Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer, should be given first priority in considering parts that should be sung.

18. As common practices in our local churches dictate, songs for the entrance and recessional processions, and the Lord's Prayer seem to receive a very high regard from those who celebrate the Eucharist. But they remain to be of second priority from those above.

19. Music in the individual parts of the Mass should correspond to the nature and meaning of each part.

I. Introductory Rites - The purpose of these rites is to reinforce the fact that Christ is present in the community, to introduce the theme of the celebration, set the mood for the celebration and prepare the community to receive Christ in Word and Sacrament.

- Song at the Entrance - The Entrance Rite is the time for gathering. This opens and introduces the celebration. The purpose of this song is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.**[\[25\]](#) It creates the mood and atmosphere of the celebration. Ideally, the song should begin immediately when the entrance procession starts and ends when the presider is ready to begin the celebration. **When the procession takes too long, instrumental music at intervals may be played.** If there is no singing, the Entrance Antiphon is recited by the presider, commentator or the faithful.[\[26\]](#)

- Act of Penitence - This rite is an acknowledgement of God's mercy and love for sinful humanity. There are three forms that can be used (refer to the Sacramentary). The text must be faithful to those provided by the Sacramentary.**

- Kyrie - The Kyrie is a litany of praise to the risen Christ, thus, it is not an enumeration of sins. If it is sung, it should be sung by all.**

- Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Holy Water - This rite may take the place of the Act of Penitence. This rite is a reminder of our baptism and how much we have failed to live up to it, thus we are led to penance. The song during the sprinkling may have a penitential or baptismal theme. Songs that have the theme of baptism, washing or asking forgiveness or even the Kyrie may be used.**

- Gloria - The Gloria is a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb. The text of this hymn may not be replaced by any other text. The Gloria is intoned by the priest or, if appropriate, by a cantor or by the choir; but it is sung either by everyone together, or by the people alternately with the choir, or by the choir alone. If not sung, it is to be recited either by all together or by two parts of the congregation responding one to the other. It is sung or said on Sundays outside the Seasons of Advent and Lent, on solemnities and feasts, and at special celebrations of a more solemn character.**[\[27\]](#)

II. Liturgy of the Word - The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. The homily, Profession of Faith, and Prayer of the Faithful, however, develop and conclude this part of the Mass. For in the readings, as explained by the homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation and offering them spiritual nourishment. Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word. By their silence and singing the people make God's word their own. They affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith. Finally, having been nourished by the Word, the assembly prays for all - for the needs of the entire Church and for the salvation of the whole world.[\[28\]](#)

- Responsorial Psalm - The Responsorial Psalm fosters meditation on the Word of God. It is to be taken from the Lectionary. It should be proclaimed at the**

Ambo. [\[29\]](#) It is preferably sung in its entirety; if not, at least, the response is sung while the verses are proclaimed by the lector. A psalm-based song may be used as long as it is in keeping with the theme of the celebration.

- [\[30\]](#) **Gospel Acclamation** - The Gospel Acclamation welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak in the gospel. It accompanies the procession of the Gospel Book and should thus last until the priest or the deacon who will proclaim the Gospel reaches the Ambo. In all seasons except Lent, the Alleluia is sung. During Lent, the Alleluia is replaced with another text as Alleluia in any form during any part is not supposed to be heard during Lent. The ideal form of the Alleluia has the verse before the Gospel in between two rounds of Alleluias (Alleluia - Verse - Alleluia). As much as possible, this verse should be taken from the Lectionary. If there is no singing, the Alleluia is omitted. [\[30\]](#)

- [\[31\]](#) **Profession of Faith and Prayer of the Faithful** - If the Credo would be sung, the text should be loyal to the prescribed text in the liturgical books. The Prayer of the Faithful may be sung in its entirety or just the response of the people. However, if it is more effectively proclaimed than it is best that it be proclaimed in a clear and loud manner.

III. Liturgy of the Eucharist - By performing a ritual, the assembly remembers and makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross in the form of the sacramental offerings of his body and blood. The same actions of Jesus during the Last Supper (Take, Give Thanks, Break and Give) are the same actions that we have during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. [\[31\]](#)

- [\[32\]](#) **Song at the Presentation and Preparation of Gifts** - The procession bringing the gifts is accompanied by a song, which continues until the rite is finished (including the ablution and the incensation). Singing may always accompany the rite at the offertory, even when there is no procession with the gifts. [\[32\]](#) The choice of song should reflect what is happening in the rite, that is, the offering of bread and wine which will become the body and blood of Christ. A song of praise and rejoicing may also be sung. Outside the seasons of Advent and Lent, instrumental music may be used instead of singing.

- [\[33\]](#) **Sanctus** - The Sanctus is a joyful acclamation of the assembly in union with the heavenly hosts. This is the people's participation in the Eucharistic Prayer. The word *hosanna* is an acclamation that is equivalent to "Long live!" ("*Mabuhay!*"), and it means "Lord, come and save us."

- [\[34\]](#) **Memorial/Eucharistic Acclamation** - This acclamation expresses the centrality of the Paschal Mystery of Christ which is the object of the Church's memorial, made present in the celebration and provides hope for future fulfillment. The text of this acclamation should be faithful to those provided by the Sacramentary. This is the people's participation in the Eucharistic Prayer.

- [\[35\]](#) **Great Amen** - The Great Amen expresses the assent of the people to the entire content of the Eucharistic prayer, from the thanksgiving of praise, to the offering of Christ's sacrifice, to the prayer in communion with the saints, and the prayer for the Church. With the Great Amen the assembly owns for themselves the prayer said by the presider.

- [\[36\]](#) **Lord's Prayer and Doxology**- The assembly prays in the words of Jesus Christ. The version of the Lord's Prayer here should sound masculine because the Father is masculine. As a rule, if the Lord's Prayer is sung, its doxology (For the kingdom.../Sapagka't iyo...) is sung also.

- [□□□□](#)**Agnus Dei** - This litany accompanies the breaking of the bread and it may be repeated as many times as necessary as long as it concludes with "grant us peace." Its melody and rhythm should fit the action that corresponds to Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

- [□□□□](#)**Song at Communion** - In communion, the broken body of Christ, which we all receive, makes us one body of Christ, thus the song in communion is for the joyful expression of this unity through a unity of voices. [\[33\]](#) The choice of music may be meditative in nature to foster reflection, contemplation and prayer on the reception of Christ. The song should as much as possible be appropriate to the theme of the celebration of the day. In general, songs should be Eucharistic in character. If there is no singing, the communion antiphon is recited by the presider after he communicates and before he gives communion to the faithful. [\[34\]](#) Sacred silence may also be observed.

- [□□□□](#)**Song of Praise - After communion**, if desired, a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation. [\[35\]](#) Votive songs may be sung.

IV. Concluding Rite - The people are blessed and sent on mission to live out the Eucharist.

- [□□□□](#)Song after Dismissal - Strictly speaking, this song is not anymore part of the celebration. But if a song is chosen for the dismissal it should provide an appropriate end to the celebration. Only sacred music is allowed.

Music in the Context of Liturgical Time and the Liturgical Year

20. "Christ's saving work is celebrated in sacred memory by the Church on fixed days throughout the year. Each week on the day called the Lord's Day the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection. Once a year at Easter the Church honors this resurrection and passion with the utmost solemnity. In fact through the yearly cycle the Church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ and keeps the anniversaries of the saints. During the different seasons of the liturgical year, the Church, in accord with traditional discipline, carries out the formation of the faithful by means of devotional practices, both interior and exterior, instruction, and works of penance and mercy."[\[36\]](#) "Each day is made holy through the liturgical celebrations of the people of God, especially through the eucharistic sacrifice and the divine office. The liturgical day runs from midnight to midnight, but the observance of Sunday and solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day." [\[37\]](#)

21. Advent is the time of preparation for the commemoration of Christ's first coming in the Nativity and his second coming at the end of time. It is a period for devout and joyful expectation.[\[38\]](#) It has a penitential spirit but is still unlike Lent. It has a sober and subdued atmosphere. The Gloria, which opens with the song of the angels at the Nativity, is not sung during Advent. Also, musical instruments may only be played to support singing.

22. Simbang Gabi (Misa de Aguinaldo or Misa de Gallo) is a unique liturgical tradition of the Philippines. It is a celebration of votive masses in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary held at dawn from December 16 to 24. It is an anticipation of Christmas in a very festive way (white vestments are used; Gloria is sung even on Sundays of Advent; the Church and sanctuary are festively decorated; approved musical instruments are played). Christmas songs that are fit for the liturgy may be sung in keeping with the guidelines in no. 19.

23. Christmas is the Church's joyful memorial of the Lord's incarnation and early manifestations. [\[39\]](#) Music should be festive. It is permissible to use traditional Christmas songs as long as they are religious in nature.

24. Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter, disposing both catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery: catechumens, through the several stages of Christian initiation; the faithful, through reminders of their own baptism and through penitential practices. [\[40\]](#) The Gloria, which is a song of joy, and the Alleluia (even as part of songs sung in other parts of the liturgy), which is proper for Easter, are not sung. Musical instruments may only be played to support singing.

25. "Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery: dying he destroyed our death and rising he restored our life. Therefore the Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. Thus the solemnity of Easter has the same kind of preeminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week." [\[41\]](#) "The Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday." [\[42\]](#) As the most important celebration of our faith, the Easter Triduum should be celebrated in its entirety and with the fullest amount of music.

26. The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost are celebrated in joyful exultation as one feast day, or better as one "great Sunday." These above all others are the days for the singing of the Alleluia. [\[43\]](#) Music should reflect the joy and festivity of the season of Easter. This should be more joyful and festive than Christmas.

27. Ordinary Time is devoted to the mystery of Christ in all its aspects. [\[44\]](#) Each Sunday has its own theme.

Music in Other Liturgical Celebrations

28. For a liturgical celebration to have a more noble form, it is fitting that it be celebrated with music. Just as the Eucharist is celebrated with song, so too should the other sacraments (i.e. Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Holy Orders) and sacramentals (Consecration of Religious Men and Women, Dedication of Churches, Funerals, etc). especially when celebrated with a big number of participants.

29. It is fitting that whenever there is a litany of the saints in the rite, it should be sung and it should not be abbreviated for the sake of convenience as it is a rite in itself and it manifests the Church here on earth and that in heaven in one communion of saints.

30. If the Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated within the Mass, the general norms for the liturgy and the eucharist still apply. Traditional instrumental music may be used during the procession of the bridal entourage and during the preparation of gifts. It is not permissible to sing secular love songs within the liturgy. A sacred song with the theme of love may be sung as the Song of Praise after the Rite of Marriage or during Communion, if marriage is celebrated within Mass. Popular love songs may be sung only after the celebration.