



Liturgical Music in the Parish

Theology, Selection, and Ministry for Adult Learners

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this session:

- You will be able to evaluate the theological foundations of liturgical music and apply the threefold judgment (musical, liturgical, pastoral) to music selection.
- You will also understand the Australian context of official guidelines and develop strategies for collaborative leadership in music ministry.

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Key Vocabulary



Liturgy - The Church's official public worship, specifically the Eucharist.



Active Participation - 'Actuosa participatio': the conscious, devout, and fruitful involvement of the faithful.



Ordinary of the Mass - Fixed parts of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei).

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The Hook: Is Music an Extra?

Imagine a Mass where every word is spoken without any inflection or pause. Now imagine a Mass where the music is so loud it feels like a concert.

Which one is 'better' liturgy?

Liturgical music is not an 'add-on' or 'interlude' to the prayer; it is the prayer itself. How does singing change our encounter with the Divine?



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Why is there Music in the Mass?

Music ministry is not an add-on but an essential part of the Mass.



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Theological Foundations



KEY CONCEPT

The Church teaches that sacred music is a **sacramental sign**, manifesting Christ's presence. Music serves the 'Logos'; its primary purpose is the **glory of God** and the **sanctification of the faithful**.

Key point

St Augustine said: 'The one who sings, prays twice.' This reflects the transformation of our whole being into prayer.

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MAIN IDEA #1: Defining Active Participation

KEY CONCEPT

The Second Vatican Council introduced *Actuosa Participatio* (Active Participation) as the 'aim to be considered before all else'. It is not just about 'doing' things, but about internal engagement with the Mystery of Christ.

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Section 114 states that the 'treasury of sacred music' must be preserved, but always to promote the **full, conscious, and active participation** of the people.

Musica Sacram

This 1967 instruction clarified that participation is first **internal** (devotion of mind) and then **external** (gestures, responses, and singing).

Remember

Active participation is not a 'performance' by the congregation. It is the community's response to God's Word through the medium of sacred song.

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Forms of Active Participation

Active participation engages the whole person, beyond singing.

Internal: Listen to music for contemplation.

External: Join dialogues and acclamations.

Silence: Use music to frame prayerful reflection.



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Choir and Assembly: A Shared Ministry

Active participation is symbiotic; each role enhances prayer.

The Congregation

Primary singers manifesting unity. Participation in dialogues, acclamations, and hymns is essential.



The Choir

Choirs sustain and enrich assembly song. They provide leadership and perform sacred pieces to foster prayerful listening.



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MAIN IDEA #2: Degrees of Singing

Use 'progressive solemnity' to prioritize singing during Sunday Mass.



Priority 1: Dialogues
Essential parts like the Preface dialogue take precedence.

Priority 2: Acclamations
The Alleluia, Holy Holy, and Memorial Acclamation follow.

Priority 3: Hymns
Entrance, Offertory, and Recessional songs are lowest priority.

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MAIN IDEA #3: Core Criteria



KEY CONCEPT

According to *Musica Sacram*, music must correspond to the **spirit of the celebration** and the nature of its individual parts.

It should never block 'active participation' but rather facilitate the assembly's prayer.

Key point

The primary sources for liturgical song texts should be Scripture and liturgical sources (like the Antiphons).

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The Three Judgements

USCCB's *Sing to the Lord* criteria for liturgical music selection:

1. Musical Judgement
Is the music technically and aesthetically sound?

2. Liturgical Judgement
Does it align with the rite, readings, and season?

3. Pastoral Judgement
Does it foster prayer and active participation?



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Applying the Judgements

A musically perfect performance by a professional soloist is always the best choice for the Liturgical Judgement.

TRUE

FALSE

Now it's time to explain why...

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Applying the Judgements

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Why is that?

a) The Liturgical and Pastoral judgements require that music fosters the participation of the whole assembly, not just a performance.

b) Professional music is too complex for the sanctity of the Mass and should be avoided entirely.

Answers on the next slide...

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MAIN IDEA #4: Seasonal Character

Music for a specific season (like Advent or Easter) should serve that season's **distinct theology**, not just reference it vaguely.

Entrance and Communion songs must be checked against the 'Proper' texts of the day to ensure they match the liturgical action.

Example

An entrance hymn for Lent shouldn't just mention 'sorrow'; it should help the assembly gather for penitential worship.



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Seasonal Selection



APPLICATION

Hymns must match the Liturgical Cycle:

- Advent: Expectation (minor keys).
- Lent: Penitential; no 'Alleluia'.
- Easter: Joy, triumph, full organ.

Example

During Lent, use the organ only to sustain singing, reflecting the season's somber nature.

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The Australian Context

In Australia, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and ACBC guidelines provide the 'rules of the road'. We are encouraged to use the **Catholic Worship Book II**, reflecting the liturgical needs of the Australian Church.

Remember

Music should reflect our diverse cultural identity while maintaining universal Catholic unity.



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CWB II: Selection Criteria

AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

The *Catholic Worship Book II* (CWB II) is the official resource for the Australian Church. It integrates the three judgements into a cohesive framework for parish selection, ensuring music is both theologically sound and culturally resonant.

Key point

The ACBC emphasises that music must be chosen based on its ability to express the specific mystery of the day, the cultural identity of the local assembly, and the structural requirements of the Roman Rite.

Interrelated Criteria

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CWB II: Selection Criteria

Interrelated Criteria

Scriptural Integrity:

- Does the text theologically sound?
- Is it in harmony with the Roman Missal?

Ritual Suitability:

- Does the music match the 'action' (e.g., is the Communion song processional in nature)?
- Do the various elements complement each other?
- Does the music enrich the text without overpowering it?

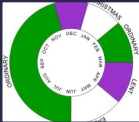
Congregational or Ecumenical Sensitivity:

- Does it foster unity while remaining distinctly Catholic in theology?
- Will this music help people express their prayers more fully?
- Can this music be used on more than one occasion during the liturgical year?

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Simplifying the Selection Process

Follow this four-step pattern when planning your next seasonal music list:



Identify Confirm the liturgical season and Mass part.

Verify Text Ensure lyrics are doctrinally sound.

Serve the Rite Match music to liturgical action.

Test Participation Confirm the congregation can sing.

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Managing the Ministry

Practical strategies include:

- **Regular Planning:** Meeting months in advance for seasons.
- **Formation:** Not just practicing notes, but studying the Sunday readings together.
- **Recruitment:** Creating a welcoming environment for new musicians.

Music ministers are first and foremost disciples who happen to have musical gifts. — Anonymous



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Plenary: Pastoral Discernment



Imagine your parish has a high percentage of elderly parishioners. You find a contemporary hymn that perfectly matches the Gospel text, but has a very syncopated, difficult rhythm. Should you use it?

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Plenary: Pastoral Discernment



You might have said...

Consider the pastoral suitability test.

Active participation is required by Musicam Sacram.

If the congregation cannot sing it, it may hinder the liturgy.

Have the choir sing it as a reflection, or find a simpler setting.

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Final Review: Pastoral Challenge



- Your parish has a long tradition of a specific hymn that everyone loves, but the lyrics are theologically incorrect regarding the Eucharist.
- Using the 'Three Judgements', how would you handle this situation with the choir and the congregation?

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Final Review: Pastoral Challenge

✓

You might have said...

- Explain the Liturgical Judgement: why the text matters for the 'Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi' (as we pray, so we believe).
- Acknowledge the Pastoral Judgement: the emotional connection people have to the song.
- Propose a Musical alternative: finding a song with a similar melody or feel that is theologically sound.
- Focus on Education: teaching the choir why the change is being made rather than just imposing it.

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Next Steps

Towards a Singing Church

Your role in the parish is to be a bridge between the liturgy and the people. Always remember: we don't sing *at* the Mass; we sing *the* Mass.



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VOLUNTEERING IN THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF MELTON

Safeguarding requirements for all volunteers, including choir members, 18 years and over:

- A current Working With Children Check card
- Read and signed a Code of Conduct Declaration
- Completed the Safeguarding Essential Training Module

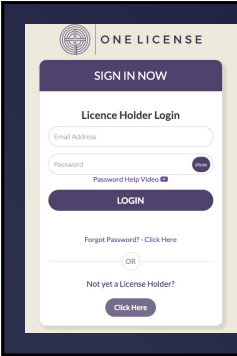
A copy of each to be handed in for the parish register.

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https://tinyurl.com/SafeguardingEssentials

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Parish reporting checklist

- ✓ Confirm whether the song is **copyrighted** and covered by ONE LICENSE member publishers.
- ✓ Record the **title** of each song used.
- ✓ Record the **composer/lyricist**.
- ✓ Record the **copyright owner/publisher**.
- ✓ Note how the song was used, such as **reprinted for worship** or used in a service.
- ✓ Include your **ONE LICENSE** number.
- ✓ Report only copyrighted music; **Public Domain** titles do not need to be reported.

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ONE LICENSE

SIGN IN NOW

Licence Holder Login

Email Address

Password

Password Help Video

LOGIN

Forgot Password? - Click Here

OR

Not yet a License Holder? Click Here

PARISH FORM FIELDS

- Date of liturgy.
- Mass or service name.
- Song title.
- Composer/lyricist.
- Copyright holder.
- Usage type.
- ONE LICENSE number.
- Reporter name.

Practical tip

Keep a master music log for all parish liturgies so reporting is quicker each month and easier to audit later. ONE LICENSE says reporting only takes a few minutes when done regularly.

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QUESTIONS?

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