



The Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Thunder Bay

Liturgical Musicians  
Guidelines

# Liturgical Musicians

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful 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 purchased people”... is their right and duty by means of their baptism.

CSL no. 14

## Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide practical help to musicians, pastors, and liturgy committees in planning and celebrating Sunday Eucharist and other parish liturgies.

Music adds delight to prayer, fosters oneness of spirit and invests the rites with greater solemnity. Liturgy is prayer; therefore the music we use must be prayerful, leading us to praise and prayer. It is recommended that Catholic Book of Worship III (CBWIII) be a primary source of music in the parish.

In order that the integrity of liturgical music be preserved and fostered, and to ensure that whenever the liturgy is celebrated, the entire assembly of God's people may be able to contribute to that active participation which is rightly theirs, great efforts need to be made:

1. to provide competent leaders
2. to educate them in the knowledge of sacred liturgy. Music chosen with care serves to build faith, as well as express it.
3. to assist them in the development of their musical gifts according to the needs of the parish community

## Music Ministers

Music reflects the beauty, harmony, glory and the perfection of God. Music ministers must therefore strive for excellence and use music which clearly reflects the beauty of God.

Music ministers include; choirs, cantors, leaders of song and instrumentalists. A clear statement of responsibilities should be put in place for each to follow.

## General Qualifications

### Musical

It is necessary that a music minister be:

- a) a graduate of a recognized conservatory or university school of music, or have obtained a formal music education which can be established through certification, demonstration, or experience; and be engaged in continuing development of her/his music skills;

OR

- b) actively engaged in developing a particular music skill, even though no certificate has been obtained.

### Liturgical

It is necessary that a music minister have a good knowledge of the Church's liturgical tradition and current practice. This can be established by:

- a) a degree in liturgical studies or a certificate of achievement from a program of liturgical studies;

OR

- b) participation in regional or diocesan liturgical workshops and appropriate readings.

### Pastoral

The music minister should participate as fully as possible in the faith life of the community in which he or she serves.

The musician should exhibit the basic relational qualities necessary for wholesome dialogue and interchange within the liturgical planning structures of the parish: pastoral team, liturgy committee, and other musicians.

### Location:

- ❖ Musicians are a part of the assembly of the faithful and their location within the church should clearly reflect this.
  - a) A location near the front will facilitate congregational singing.
  - b) A position behind the assembly is discouraged.
  - c) If a loft is the only alternative for the choir, then great effort must be made to include the assembly in the singing (the use of a song leader at the front should be considered)
- ❖ Vocalists and instrumentalists need to be located in the same area so they can function as an ensemble.
- ❖ The organ, or other instruments, are placed in such a way that they can sustain the singing of the choir and congregation and be heard with ease when they are played alone.
- ❖ The musicians should be facing at least part of the assembly and the sanctuary and should be located so as to receive communion without inconvenience.
- ❖ Hymn numbers should be clearly posted for the assembly and also should be announced.

## Responsibilities of the Parish

- ❖ The responsibilities for the parish musicians will vary in each parish.
- ❖ Encourage and support the musician as a responsible minister of the liturgical life in the parish.
- ❖ It is necessary that a music minister have a good knowledge of the Church's liturgical traditional and current practice. The music minister should participate as fully as possible in the faith life of the community in which he or she serves.
- ❖ Maintaining open dialogue and communication with the musicians and clergy regarding liturgy planning and organizational procedures within the parish.
- ❖ The Parish should provide a sufficient number of hymn books so that individuals of the assembly have access to a book.
- ❖ Published music is protected by copyright laws. Music used by both assembly and choir must comply with the law. This is a moral and justice issue. Illegal photocopying deprives composers and others of just income.
- ❖ Provide a place for rehearsal and planning.
- ❖ A statement of responsibilities should be made available for each position and should indicate remuneration according to their qualifications.

### Parish Staff

Musicians should work closely with the parish staff to establish general music policies, such as the choice of music for weddings and funerals as well as to plan sacramental celebrations.

Musicians will require the assistance of the parish secretarial on occasion.

### Co-ordination

Co-ordination with the Liturgy Committee and presider of the liturgy is important.

It should be clear, before the celebration begins what parts are going to be sung.

The presider should have a list of hymns and a hymn book at the presidential chair for his full participation (altar servers should also have books).

### Remuneration

- ❖ Each parish should acquire a specific remuneration plan with the approval of the parish finance council.
- ❖ For parish's with limited funds, a gift/honorarium at Easter and Christmas may be a suggestion instead of an actual sum of money.
- ❖ The time commitment for music ministers will vary according to the pastoral needs and the responsibilities assumed by the musician. A clearly defined statement of responsibilities should be put in place for the musician(s) to follow.

- ❖ The level of qualifications of liturgical musicians are to be determined according to the accredited standing of their musical and liturgical achievement. Once this has been decided remuneration will be paid based on the remuneration plan put in place by the parish and approved by the parish finance council.

### Director of Music

The description of responsibilities will vary in each parish, particularly where professional musicians are not available. The role of Director of Music Ministry is to facilitate a good working order between all parish musicians, liturgy planning committee and the parish team. In parishes where a Director of Music is not employed, the responsibilities of a director should be assigned according to the personal gifts and musical ability of the individual music ministers.

### **Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the Director of Music Ministry should normally include:

- a) assuming overall responsibility for the parish music program;
- b) coordinating the planning of music, and scheduling musicians for all liturgical and parish celebrations;
- c) serving on the parish liturgy committee;
- d) exercising one of the music ministries;
- e) working closely with the parish staff:
  - i) to establish general music policies, such as the choice of music for weddings and funerals,
  - ii) to plan sacramental celebrations;
- f) encouraging the development of various musical styles and forms in the community's worship;
- g) calling forth other talented people to share in the music ministry of the parish;
- h) overseeing the maintenance of all instruments, worship aids, and music library;
- i) preparing the annual music budget, to be approved by the parish finance committee;
- j) encouraging ongoing spiritual and education formation for all music ministers;

- k) participating in the development of appropriate liturgical music within the separate school system by:
  - i) serving as a resource person for those schools within the parish boundaries,
  - ii) facilitating the teaching of appropriate liturgical music within those schools
  - iii) assisting in the preparation of music for school celebrations taking place in the parish church.

### Choir Director

The responsibilities of all parish choir directors should normally include:

- a) promoting and developing one or more choirs;
- b) researching and selecting music (in collaboration with the music director when such a position is occupied);
- c) personal preparation of the selected materials;
- d) rehearsing music with the choir;
- e) directing the choir during the liturgical services agreed upon;
- f) encouraging or coordinating social activities with the choir members;
- g) overseeing the music library (when the parish does not employ a Director of Music).

### Organist and Guitarist

The responsibilities of this primary instrumental position should normally include:

- a) leading the congregation and accompanying the choir and cantor for all parish liturgies and rehearsals as agreed upon;
- b) selecting, practicing and presenting music from the repertoire appropriate to the feast or season;
- c) collaborating with other music ministers in preparing and presenting music for parish celebrations;
- d) maintaining the instrument (when the parish does not employ a Director of Music)



## Cantor (Leader of Song)

The responsibilities of the cantor should normally include:

- a) singing the responsorial psalm and other official chants of the liturgy appropriate to the role of the cantor;
- b) leading the assembly in song;
- c) introducing new music to the assembly and leading them in rehearsal when needed;
- d) preparing, in collaboration with other music ministers, the music for the liturgical services agreed upon.

## The Parish

The responsibilities of the parish to the liturgical musician should normally include:

- a) encouraging and supporting the musician as a responsible minister of the liturgical life of the parish;
- b) maintaining open dialogue and communication with the musician regarding liturgy planning and organizational procedures;
- c) providing adequate space for rehearsal and planning;
- d) providing secretarial assistance when needed;
- e) acknowledging that time used for practice, planning and preparation is financially remunerable.

