

A teacher's guide to

Music at Mass

Why is music important?

Music - and especially singing - brings a richness to our worship. St Augustine said 'singing is for one who loves', for the different energy required to sing makes the action of singing a sign of personal commitment, and the beauty and dignity of the song makes ever more apparent the importance of what is taking place.

To use a secular example we would think something was wrong if we said the words of the 'Happy Birthday' song instead of singing it. We should also feel there is something out of sorts if the key songs of the mass are said and not sung.

Make your singing real.

In order for our worship to be truly authentic the Church urges us to avoid the use of pre-recorded music.

If the school does not already have staff or students capable of **accompanying** the song of the Assembly, serious thought should be given to employing an accompanist for Mass and preparation (often local parishes will be able to suggest someone.) In the meantime it is generally more honest and true to the liturgy to sing unaccompanied rather than to use pre-recording backing tracks.

Using pre-recorded music to **replace** the song of the assembly is not acceptable practice.

Less can be more

- Not everything that can be sung, should be sung. Focus on the key elements that are expected to be sung.
- Not every song needs lots of words. Taize chants and shorter World Church songs are easy to learn and have the advantage of coming in a range of languages. Use them to express the multi-national nature of your school.

What are the priorities for singing at Mass?

The most important things for us to sing are the key acclamations of the Mass.

In the Liturgy of the Word we should sing:

- The Alleluia

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we should sing:

- The Sanctus (Holy, Holy))
- The Memorial Acclamation
- The Great Amen
- The Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

There is an old saying that we should sing the Mass, rather than sing at Mass. This means that in the first place we should focus on singing the given songs of the Mass, before we think singing anything else.

Other texts that have priority over hymns include the Gloria, and the Responsorial Psalm, and the Dialogues between priest and people.

However, particularly for those who have not yet got these central songs into their repertoire, carefully selected other songs and hymns have their place. In other words don't stop singing just because you realise you may still have work to do in learning the core repertoire of songs for Catholic Mass!

Schools & parishes can help each other

It is a great help if schools and parishes have a shared repertoire of the core songs.

- Schools generally sing these songs less regularly than parishes do, so children attending the local parish will already know the songs
- Schools often have more rehearsal time available than parishes do, so schools can help parishes prepare to introduce new settings
- Collaboration shows that Church is bigger than school or parish alone!

A teacher's worksheet for **Music at Mass**

Music for Mass

for

on

at

in

Coordinator for Mass is.....

Priest is

Themes for the Mass

Note here the themes from the occasion of the celebration, or from the readings or antiphons that you might like to be expressed in the music choices (especially hymns) you make.

Settings for the Ordinary of the Mass

| | |
|--|--|
| Kyrie | |
| Gloria | |
| Alleluia | |
| Prayer of the Faithful | |
| Sanctus | |
| Memorial Acc. | |
| Great Amen | |
| Agnus Dei | |
| <i>NB Items in black box/white print are the priority sung items at any Mass</i> | |

Settings for the Proper of the Mass

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Entrance Antiphon or Entrance Song | |
| Psalm | |
| Communion Antiphon or Communion Song | |
| Final Song | |

- The Psalm should be sung, if possible. It is good to sing an appropriate Psalm from the collection of Common Psalms if you have not learnt a setting of the Psalm of the day.
- Antiphons will rarely be sung at school. Most often they are substituted by a hymn or other song. The theme of the antiphon might suggest a song, as might the readings of the day.
- The Roman Rite of Mass does not envisage a concluding song. The dismissal is taken seriously! On the other hand music here can help maintain prayer and reverence as people leave. Why not experiment and see what works best for you.

The proposals for Music should be passed to.....
for approval before.....