

Why Choose Music for Mass?

Music fulfills its role in liturgy when: (1) the amount of singing aptly corresponds to the solemnity of the occasion, (2) the selected music provides for the unanimous participation of the assembly at the designated moments, and (3) the beauty of the compositions and their performance is expressive of prayer (cf. CCC 1157).

The amount of singing should correspond to the degree of festivity and solemnity of the particular celebration of the day, feast or season (MS 7). For example, weekdays are more subdued than Sundays; the major Sunday community Mass is more festive than other Sunday Masses; major feasts such as Trinity Sunday or Pentecost are more festive than other Sundays; the seasons of Lent and Advent are more subdued; the seasons of Christmas and Easter are more festive.

“In the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, however, preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those to be sung by the presider or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding, or by the presider and people together” (GIRM 39-40; cf. MS 6, 7, 16, 28-36). See table on page 6 for priority ratings of parts.

When choosing music and songs, “the criterion that must inspire every composition and performance of songs and sacred music is the beauty that invites prayer” (John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, 3; cf. Chirograph, 3).

Music preparation involves the liturgy team, the musicians, the presider and the assembly. All need to work in collaboration, respecting the particular expertise each one brings to the process (cf. MS 5)