



Guidelines for Music in Mass

1. Acclamations (always sung) & Mass Setting

- Published Mass settings usually contain all or most acclamations & responses for Mass.
- Ideally, choose these parts from the same Mass setting.
- Must be “singable” for the whole assembly.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

- The Gospel Acclamation may be from a different Mass setting to the other parts.
- It contains “Alleluias” in the refrain except in Lent.
- In Lent, choose a Lenten Acclamation e.g. “Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ ...”
- The Book of the Gospels may be processed to the ambo during the sung acclamation.

ACCLAMATIONS FOR THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

(Holy Holy Holy, Memorial Acc/Mystery of Faith, Amen)

- These should be from the same Mass setting forming a single musical unit.
- If one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children is chosen, (recommended for primary school & “Family-focused” Parish Masses), choose a Mass setting that contains the extra acclamations included: Glory to God in the highest, We praise you, Jesus has given.

Other Mass Parts will also usually be included in the chosen Mass setting:

Lord Have Mercy, Glory to God (Gloria), Lamb of God

2. Responsorial Psalm Setting

It is preferable that the responsorial Psalm be sung, at least as far as the people’s response is concerned. (GIRM #61)

- Preferably the whole psalm is sung with a Cantor or Choir singing the verses.
- At least the people’s response should be sung even if the verses are read.
- The response must be easily sung by the whole assembly.
- The psalm is part of the Liturgy of the Word and must be from scripture.
- Another song or hymn should not be substituted for the psalm.

[It is not] lawful to substitute other, non-biblical texts for the readings and responsorial Psalm, which contain the word of God. (GIRM #57)



Common or Seasonal Psalms

[So] that the people may be able to sing the Psalm response more readily, texts of some responses & psalms have been chosen for the various seasons of the year ... These may be used in place of the text corresponding to the reading whenever the Psalm is sung. (GIRM #61)

- An appropriate Seasonal Psalm may be chosen and used at every Mass in the season.
(See appendix below for a list of Common/Seasonal Psalms.)

LEADING PSALMS

1. Play response as introduction
2. Cantor sings response
3. All sing response together
4. Cantor sings verses – all respond

PSALM NUMBERS

Due to differences in the Hebrew & Greek arrangement of the Book of Psalms the psalm numbers differ e.g. Ps 23 (The Lord is my shepherd) is listed as Ps 22 in the Lectionary. Always check that the psalm text matches what is expected.

3. Gathering & Communion Songs (always sung)

GATHERING SONG

The choice of Gathering song is crucial as it sets the tone for the celebration that follows. If the assembly can't participate here it can be very difficult to engage them afterwards.

The purpose of the Gathering 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. (GIRM #47)

To foster unity, the assembly must be able to joyfully participate in the song.

- Does the assembly know the song and can they sing it?
- Is it vibrant, and engaging?
- Does it use language of "unity" – we, us, our rather than I, me, my?
- Does it highlight the particular season or feast?
- Do the lyrics fit the action? e.g. singing of "being sent out" makes no sense here.



COMMUNION SONG

While the priest is receiving Communion, the Communion [song] is begun.

Its purpose is to

- express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voice
- to show joy of heart,
- to highlight ... the "communitarian" nature of the [Communion procession.]

(GIRM #86)

The Communion song is about unity – uniting our voices in song to show our unity as the Body of Christ. It is a song of unity rather than of private adoration.

- Does the assembly know the song?
- Can they sing it (at least the chorus)?
- Does it use language of "unity" – we, us, our rather than I, me, my?
- Do the lyrics make it clear that this is no longer "bread and wine" but Jesus truly present in Body & Blood?
- Is this a Communion song rather than an "Offertory" song?

**The entire Communion Procession is a time for united participation in song.
The time for silent prayer is after, not during Communion.**

Hymns supporting the season, feast or scripture of the day may be sung during Communion however Communion songs will often be hymns of which are "Eucharistic" in nature, focusing on scriptures such as the Last Supper narrative, "one body, many parts," "we are the Body of Christ" or the "Bread of Life" scriptures from John's Gospel.

Ideally, one song would be sung throughout the Communion procession. If necessary, it may be extended by repeating some verses or adding instrumental interludes. If the assembly is large this may not always be practical and a second song may be required.

Spoken Entrance & Communion Antiphons

The Missal contains Entrance and Communion antiphons for every Mass. However, these antiphons are only recited if there is no singing. It is not appropriate to recite the antiphon and then sing the song.

(See MS #32, GIRM #48, GIRM #87)

4. Other songs

OTHER MASS PARTS

If sung, select these from the chosen Mass setting (above):

Lord Have Mercy (in the Penitential Act)

Glory to God (Gloria) (preferably sung) not on Advent or Lent

Response to the Prayer of the Faithful petitions.

Lamb of God (normally sung)



PREPARATION OF THE OFFERINGS

There are a number of options during the Preparation of the Offerings:

- A suitable song for the assembly to sing
- Instrumental music
- A “performance” piece by the choir or a soloist.
- Silence (sometimes used during Lent)

If a song is chosen it could be:

- A general song of praise
- A song which supports the liturgical season or feast
- A song that is inspired by the scripture readings
- An “offertory” song about “bread and wine”.

Offertory songs and Communion songs are not interchangeable.

“Offertory” songs would sing of bringing “bread and wine” which will become Jesus for us.
“Eat this bread,” “This is my body” or “Do this in memory of me” are Communion songs
and are not suitable for Offertory.

SONG AFTER COMMUNION

While it is much more important to sing during the Communion procession, a song may also be sung after Communion. following a brief period of silence.

When the distribution of Communion is finished ... the priest and faithful spend some time praying privately. If desired, a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may also be sung by the entire congregation. (GIRM #88)

This song should be:

- sung by the whole assembly
- a song of praise OR
- a song which reflects themes of eucharist, the season or the scriptures.

RECESSIONAL/SENDING SONG

- A recessional song is not mentioned in the GIRM or other documents.
- Mass ends with the dismissal to go out and live the Good News.
- A Recessional song is usually sung but instrumental music could also be used.
- It may be seasonal, scriptural, or an inspiring song of mission and evangelisation.