

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF MUSIC
IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

The following guidelines have been developed by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. They are set forth to help all those who work with the preparation and celebration of wedding liturgies in parishes of the Archdiocese of Adelaide. These guidelines offer guidance and uniformity with regard to music, which is integral to all Catholic liturgies.

A wedding in the Catholic Church is celebrated according to the Rites of the Catholic Church. Catholic Weddings are usually celebrated with two events

- The religious ceremony in the church, and
- The reception when family and friends gather to congratulate the married couple and to share in the wedding banquet.

Music can be a part of both events.

Music for a Catholic marriage rite must be sacred music that fits appropriately into the Liturgy. While some sung parts of the service may be done by a soloist, the soloist should never dominate, singing all of the music. The church values singing together because the liturgy is meant to express the unity of the people gathered. However, as the assembly at a wedding is generally diverse it would be wise to recommend well known music and if possible to have an experienced musician leading the singing.

Secular music is appropriate at the reception.

Copyright regulations must be respected.

The Music used in the Church should be specifically written for Catholic liturgy, that is, it is liturgical music. The music must “serve the liturgy” so that the music fits the purpose, length and assigned texts for each particular moment.

Thus, the compositions that are sung, the persons who sing them and the times they are sung are to be in accord with the liturgy that is being celebrated and with the general principles of the liturgy.

The following judgments are involved in selecting music:

1. **The musical judgment:** Is the composition good and artistically sound, whatever the style?

2. **The liturgical judgment:** Is the selection appropriate for the particular part of the liturgical celebration?

- Do the words speak of Christ, community worship, the mysteries of faith and love?
- Are the people enabled to fulfil their role in singing the parts especially pertaining to them?
- Is the music religious in its associations?

To help determine the appropriateness of any given piece of music, the following question should be asked:

- Does the music in question bring to mind associations of the theatre, opera, movies, commercials, television shows, or other secular connections?
- If so, it is probably not a suitable choice for the liturgy, although it might be very appropriate at the rehearsal or reception.

3. **The pastoral judgment:** Will the piece of music help those in attendance to pray and express their spirit of joyous worship? If persons of other faiths will be attending, will the hymns selected include some in which all faiths are able to participate?

Theological adequacy must also be used in the selection of music.

Any guidelines for the selection of suitable wedding music, in encouraging couples to take an active part in the preparation of their wedding liturgy, recognizes that the Sacrament of Matrimony is both a public testimonial and a personal commitment.

Each marriage ceremony is a unique event in the lives of two people- in deed, in the lives of all present. The liturgy should reflect this uniqueness – it should be a reflection of all those present. Great care should be taken, especially at marriages, that all the people are involved at the important moments of the celebration, that the same general principles of planning worship and judging music are employed as at other liturgies, and above all, that the liturgy is a prayer for all present, not a theatrical production.

In all liturgies, each person who takes part in the service must be considered. In a wedding ceremony, the following persons or groups of persons are present:

1. The bridal couple.
2. The official witnesses, wedding party, and/or immediate family.
3. Guests.
4. Ministers, servers, musicians, singers, et al.

There must be a harmonious blend of meaning for all these people as well as for the bridal couple itself.

The bridal couple should consult with the presiding celebrant to insure a liturgy that is both expressive and appropriate.