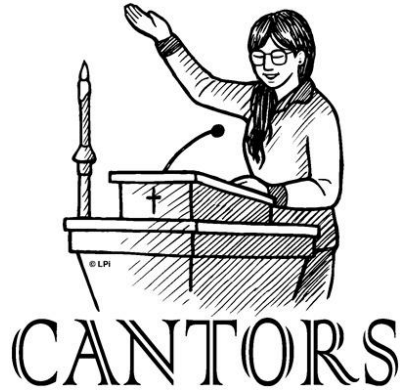


St. Michael Catholic Church

Guidelines for the Parish Music Ministry (Instrumentalists, Choir and Cantor (Psalmist))



Liturgy is the work of the people to give glory, praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Ultimately, it is also the work of God drawing us to union with the divine. It is the action of God transforming us more perfectly into being the Body of Christ. Our participation in the Church's liturgical action is part of the transformation process.

Pure and simple, *liturgy* is ritual immersion in the Paschal mystery; which unfolds and is realized constantly in our daily lives, as we choose fidelity to Christian discipleship; by dying to self so that we, and others, may have fuller life and communion with Our Lord.

Music has a constitutive role in liturgy. The role of music is meant to complement the liturgy, not to be intrusive or to amuse, as if to keep the faithful "interested" or "entertained". The music ministry is not an end to itself either—it supports liturgy—it does not reduce, reform or obstruct the Church's established liturgical rite(s).

Some years ago, during a Chrism Mass homily, a U.S. bishop stated: *"Music is a form of prayer at Mass and should be directed to praising God. In some Christian traditions, music is primarily for inspiration, and is directed toward the "feelings" of the congregation. This is not the case with us [in the Catholic Church]. For us, the center or primary focus of the Mass is God, and the music at Mass invites the community to become involved in responding to Christ's action in the Eucharistic celebration. Singing, playing the organ, piano and other suitable instruments are means to lift the human heart in prayer. Each of these actions is active and conscious participation in the [liturgy of the] Mass."*

The purpose of this Parish Music Ministry handbook is to consolidate into one document, most of the universal, national, diocesan and parish-level music norms affecting liturgy within the Roman Catholic Church.

(Revised: 08/28/2021)



St. Michael Catholic Church

574 Eighth Street
Calhan, CO 80808
(Mail: P.O. Box 199
Calhan, CO 80808)
Office: (719) 347-2290
www.saintmichaelcalhan.com

Memorial of St. Augustine
August 28, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Please accept my congratulations and sincere gratitude for your decision to assist the St. Michael Catholic Church and parish community by volunteering your time, talent and love of music to the Music Ministry.

As you will soon read in the attached parish-level handout, concerning the historic and traditional Music Ministry, it is a vibrant, worthwhile and tremendous ministry that directly affects the quality of our parish's divine liturgical celebrations.

Please know that I am available to assist you and/or answer any questions you may have regarding this long-standing austere and important ministry.

May God bless you abundantly in this ministry at the service of Our Lord and His People.

Respectfully
Yours in Christ,

Fr. R.G. Newbury Jr.
Parochial Administrator

1 Atch:
Parish Music Ministry Handbook

Table of Contents

Overview / Introduction	4
What is a Mass Ministry within the Universal Church?	4
The Imperative Need for the Use of Appropriate Terminology	5
Norms of Liturgical Music	6
Singing Hymns and Songs	7
The Role, Purpose and Function of the Choir	8
Training of the Choir	8
The Place for the Choir and the Musical Instruments	9
The History of and Liturgical Role/Function of a Cantor	10
Cantor Role and Required Skills	10
Role	10
Vocal Skills, Diction and Consonants	11
Gestures/Liturgical Awareness	11
Preparation	12
Communication Skills – Verbal	12
Communication Skills – Microphone	12
Non-Verbal Communication	12
Dress Attire	12
Knowledge of the Mass Parts	12
The Ministry of Cantor	13
Position/Location of the Cantor	13
Training of the Cantor	13
When the Assembly Needs the Cantor as a Song Leader	14
Key Points to Remember	14-17
Conclusion and Closing Remarks	17
Reference Sources and Suggested Reading	18-19

Overview and Introduction

“The Christian faithful who come together as one in expectation of the Lord’s coming are instructed by [Saint] Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (cf. Colossians 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart’s joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus, St. Augustine said rightly: ‘Singing is for one who loves,’ and there is also an ancient proverb: ‘Whoever sings well prays twice over.’” (GIRM, #39)

All liturgical ministers are, first and foremost, members of the Body of Christ. Through their baptism, they are the “holy people and royal priesthood” whose right and privilege it is to participate in the ministry of Christ. How the lay faithful exercise this ministry in the world varies, but the fullest and most fundamental expression of it has always been “conscious, active and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist” (GIRM, #5).

Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the “action of the whole Church” (GIRM, #5), everyone in the assembly has “an individual right and duty to contribute their participation” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, #14, 29, 114 and Canons 224-231). Some of the faithful are called to serve God’s people in a more particular way through one of the many liturgical ministries that have flourished in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. This diversity of roles, functions and ministries enriches our liturgical celebrations and assists us in our prayer.

Serving in one of these roles in the music ministry is both an honor and a responsibility, and those who commit to it need nurturing, ongoing training and support. This handbook has been prepared to help the reader to grow in a deeper understanding and love for the Church, its liturgy, their ministry role and ultimately the Lord whom we all serve.

The liturgical norms of the Church, state: only one ministry, per person, per liturgical celebration please. In other words, if a person is scheduled to fulfill the reader ministry during a Mass, they shouldn’t be fulfilling any other ministry during the same Mass—unless it is an emergency (i.e., non-scheduled) situation. Many people attempt to fulfill dual roles (i.e., Reader and Extraordinary Holy Minister of Communion, etc.), but no one should serve in multiple liturgical positions during the same Mass, unless it is *absolutely necessary* to do so.

What is a Mass Ministry within the Universal Church?

Baptized Christians, as the People of God within the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, actively participate in their call from God through the dynamic of an organic communion in accord with their diverse, God-given gifts, talents and charisms.

The roles and responsibilities of the ministerial Office of Pastor are to: ***teach, sanctify and govern***. Authority to assist in these areas may be delegated by the Pastor to members of the non-ordained laity at times to fulfill the Church’s mission; however, the canonically imposed responsibility is always retained by the incumbent, ordained (minister) office holder.

With this in mind, not every activity or organized singular or recurring event within the day-to-day life of any typical Catholic Church (i.e., parish) is accurately categorized as a “*ministry*”.

Referring to the Holy See's Instruction entitled, *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (The Mystery of the Church), dated August 15, 1997, it states: "*The source of the call addressed to all members of the Mystical Body to participate actively in the mission and edification of the People of God, is to be found in the mystery of the Church.*"

From the early years of the Church – but especially noteworthy today in the 21st Century – activities have been borne within the life of the lay Church faith community, which have been incorrectly or erroneously referred to or categorized as, a "*ministry*". Historically, it's very meaning ("*ministry*") is authorized by and delegated from the ordained "minister" and therefore restricted, limited to and derived from, the established, Church liturgy.

During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy or Order of the Mass, for example, the ordained priest is the principal and only celebrant—responsible for leading the faithful in the church's prescribed liturgical rites—which is proper to his ordained, ministerial office and responsibility.

Chief among the various aspects of the participation of the non-ordained faithful in the Church's mission considered by the Second Vatican Council documents is that their direct collaboration with the ministry of the Church's pastors is essential. Indeed, "... *when necessity and expediency in the Church require it, the Pastors, according to established norms from universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful certain offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry, but do not require the character of [sacramental or ordained] Orders*". ... "*This collaboration was regulated by successive post-conciliar legislation and particularly by the Codex Iuris Canonici [Code of Canon Law].*" (cf. *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*)

The Code, having referred to the rights and duties of all the faithful, treats not only those which are theirs by virtue of their secular condition, but also of those tasks and functions which are not exclusively theirs. Some of these latter refer to any member of the faithful, whether ordained or not, while others are considered along the lines of collaboration with the sacred ministry of cleric. Regarding these last-mentioned areas or functions, the non-ordained faithful do not enjoy any right or privileges to such tasks and functions. Rather, they are "capable of being admitted by the sacred Pastors ... to those functions which, in accordance with the provisions of law, they can discharge" or where "[ordained] ministers are not available ... they can supply certain of their functions ... in accordance with the provisions of [church] law" (cf. Canon 228).

Where the existence of abuses or improper practices has been found, Pastors must promptly employ those means judged necessary to prevent their further use or dissemination, and to ensure that the correct understanding of the Church's teachings is not impaired. In particular, the pastor will give the appropriate catechetical instruction to promote knowledge of and respect for distinction and complementarity of ministerial functions, which are vital for ecclesial communion.

The Imperative Need for the Use of Appropriate and Correct Terminology

In his address to participants at the Symposium on "*Collaboration of the Lay Faithful with the Priestly Ministry*", St. Pope John Paul II emphasized a need to clarify and distinguish the various meanings, which have accrued to the term "*ministry*" in theological and canonical language.

1. "For some time now, it has been customary to use the word *ministries* not only for the *officia* (offices) and non-ordained *munera* (functions) exercised by Pastors in virtue of the Sacrament of [Holy] Orders, but also for those exercised by the lay faithful in virtue of their baptismal priesthood. The terminological question becomes even more complex and delicate when all the faithful are recognized as having the possibility of supplying – by official deputation given by the Pastors – certain functions more proper to clerics, which, nevertheless, do not require the character of Orders. It must be admitted that the language becomes ... confused, and hence not helpful for expressing the doctrine of the faith whenever the difference 'of essence and not merely of degree' between the baptismal priesthood and the ordained priesthood is in any way obscured". (cf. *ibid*)

2. "In this original sense the term *ministry* (*servitium*) expresses only the work by which the Church's members of the faithful continue the mission and ministry of Christ within her and the whole world. However, when the term is distinguished from and compared with, the various *munera* and *officia*, then it should be clearly noted that only in virtue of sacred ordination does the work obtain that full, univocal meaning that tradition has attributed to it." (cf. *ibid*)

3. The non-ordained faithful may be generically designated "extraordinary ministers" when deputed by competent authority to discharge, those offices mentioned in Canon 230§3 and in Canons 943 and 1112 [for example: such as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)]. Naturally, the concrete term may be applied to those to whom functions are canonically entrusted (by act of verbal or written delegation) (e.g., catechists, acolytes, lectors, cantors, choir members, instrumentalists, etc.).

Norms of Liturgical Music

“Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate our faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy. Yet, the function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them, and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. The quality of joy and enthusiasm which adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imports a sense of unity to the congregation and sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration” (MCW, 23).

A great deal of music exists today which, although religious in theme or nature, is wholly inappropriate for liturgical use because it is not conducive to Church ritual communal celebrations and/or matters of the Christian Catholic faith.

Of note, liturgical music stands in a category all its own. Acclamations, responsorial psalms, chants, and litanies are unique musical forms intended explicitly for Catholic liturgical use.

Liturgy utilizes numerous forms of music, each having its own importance in the rite. In order of relative importance, these forms are:

- **Acclamations;**

- **Processional hymns** (i.e., Entrance* and Communion);

(* If there is no singing for the Entrance procession, the antiphon given in the Roman Missal is recited either by the faithful ... or, it is recited by the Priest himself ...” (GIRM #47, 48).)

- **Responsorial Psalm;**

(It “... should correspond to [the prescribed] readings and should usually be taken from the [reading of the day in the] Lectionary” ... “It is preferable for the Responsorial Psalm to be sung, at least as far as the people’s response is concerned” (GIRM, #61).)

- **Litanies** (i.e., the Kyrie, Prayer of the Faithful and Agnus Dei*);

(* The cantor needs to be ready to begin chanting the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) at the *beginning* of the fraction rite (breaking of the Bread) (GIRM, #83). In other words, the chant is to coincide with the celebrant priest starting to break the larger, presider’s host on the altar.)

- **Ordinary Chants** (i.e., the Gloria; Our Father, Alleluia*);

(* “The *Alleluia* is sung in every time of [the liturgical] year, other than Lent. ... During Lent, instead of the *Alleluia*, the verse before the Gospel is given in the Lectionary is sung” (GIRM, #62).)

- **Supplementary Hymns/Songs** (i.e., Recessional);

- **Instrumentals;** and

- **Presidential** (i.e., the Presiding Priest’s) **Prayers.**

Most commonly at weddings and funerals, the parish church may routinely find itself with requests from the family to utilize and/or incorporate “secular” music (such as Country and Western music; Bette Midler’s “Wind Beneath My Wings”; etc.) into the liturgy. These cannot be used in any parish liturgy—and are better left to post liturgy receptions.

“Secular music, even though it may reflect on the background, character, interests or personal preferences of the deceased or mourners, is not appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy [for funerals, vigils, etc.]” (STL, #246 / Order of Christian Funerals, #30-31).

“Music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death” (STL, #248).

Singing Hymns and Songs

Hymn singing at the processional portions in the Mass is part of our common practice. In short, a hymn is a religious poem meant to be sung congregationally. At its roots, the authenticity of a

connection to real faith experience enables the community to believe what they are singing. A central idea or narrative is developed, and each stanza has its part to play. A hymn, then, needs to be given full scope to deliver its meaning. One should not easily or quickly eliminate stanzas without due consideration of the possible threat to the integrity of the text.

- The Roman Catholic Church's Sunday worship service is the Mass; where the Liturgy of the Word flows toward and is completed in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Therefore, the structure, the flow and the rhythm of the rite all closely integrated for the purpose of allowing this enactment of the Paschal mystery to take place.
- For planners, choosing hymns/songs which the assembly can easily sing and well is key.

The Role, Purpose and Function of the Choir:

“The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches, but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that [actual] participation which is rightly theirs...” (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, #114)

What is the role, purpose and/or function of the Catholic Parish Choir?

Commonly, the answer heard today is “to lead the congregation in song.” While correct, that is only a part of the role and ministry of a choir.

The primary role of the choir is to pray the Mass in song. Traditionally and historically in the Roman Catholic Church, choirs were clerical groups. Today (as in decades past) however, the choir sings the Mass, just as the priest celebrates (he does not “say”) the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Sacred Music is an integral part of the liturgy, and the role of the choir is to pray them through singing. Leading others to pray is the secondary role and it only happens when the choir members themselves are praying. Ultimately, God should be the center of the liturgical action(s). The instrumentalist, choir member, and cantor are called to step-back and let the Holy Spirit guide them. The ultimate purpose of a choir is to praise and give glory to God – by singing and praying well – and leading the assembled faithful to do the same.

“Among the faithful, the choir exercises its own liturgical function, ensuring that the parts proper to it are properly carried out and foster the active participation of the faithful through the singing. What is said about the choir also applies, in accordance with the relevant norms, to other musicians, especially the organist” (GIRM #103).

Training of the Choir:

Participation in the Sacred Liturgy must be "internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear and cooperate with heavenly grace." Even when listening

to the various prayers and readings of the liturgy or singing of the choir, the assembly continues to participate actively as they "unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God." (cf. *Musica Sacram*)

Participation must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by exclamations, responses and singing. The quality of our participation in such sung praise comes *less* from our vocal ability, than from the desire of our hearts to sing together of our love for God. Participation in the Sacred Liturgy both expresses and strengthens the faith that is in us. (cf. *STL*)

As with other Church liturgical ministries, the Choir (including the Cantor and instrumentalist) requires formal training, practice, openness to feedback and critique, dedication and commitment. That demonstrated dedication and commitment, however, is not just "showing up for the Mass", but being invested in frequent and recurring practice and ministry formation development.

A competent and well-trained choir takes work to add beauty and solemnity to the liturgy and assist and encourage singing by the gathered faithful assembly.

In accord with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth, promotion and participation in the diocesan/parish Safe Environment Training (SET) may be required – especially if children and/or youth are active participants in the parish's Music Ministry.

The Place for the Choir and the Musical Instruments

"The choir should be so positioned with respect to the arrangement of each church that its nature may be clearly evident, namely as part of the assembled community of the faithful undertaking a specific function. The positioning should also help the choir to exercise this function more easily and allow each choir member full sacramental participation in the Mass in a convenient manner.

The organ [the Church's primary musical instrument of utmost preference] and other lawfully approved musical instruments should be placed in a suitable place, so that they can sustain the singing of both the choir and the people and be heard with ease by everybody, if they are played alone.

During Advent, the use of the organ and other musical instruments should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.

In Lent, the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions, however, are *Laetare* Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities and Feasts" (*GIRM*, #312, 313).

The History and Liturgical Role/Function of a Cantor:

In the ancient Jewish tradition, the cantor (a solo singer) offered sung prayers on behalf of the assembled faithful during temple or synagogue worship. With the end of persecutions in the Church (in the early fourth century CE), the cantor became more formally a part of the Christian liturgical worship practice.

Later, as choirs became prevalent, the original role of the cantor was suppressed. In the tradition of historic Roman and Gregorian chant, a solo voice or cantor (most often a cleric) would intone various chants for the Mass, before the entire chant would be taken up by other singers. It is important to remember that until more modern times, our liturgical celebrations were almost entirely sung, especially in monastic and cathedral communities.

The term *cantor* in Christian liturgical practice, dates to around the fifth century CE and referred to the person who sang the psalms.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) indicates: “There should be a cantor or a choir director to lead and sustain the people in singing. When in fact there is no choir, it is up to the Cantor to lead the various liturgical songs, and the people take part in the way proper to them” (GIRM, #104).

Music in Catholic Worship (MCW) elaborates on the important role of the cantor in the modern Roman Rite. Quoting from the *Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* (1966), it notes that although a cantor “cannot enhance the service of worship in the same ways as a choir, a **trained** and **competent** cantor [emphasis added] can perform an important ministry by leading the congregation in common sacred song and in responsorial singing.” The cantor is not to replace the choir, but the service of this minister is indeed appropriate at a celebration of the Mass, when a choir is not present.

Cantor Role and Required Skills

Role: To lead and sustain the singing of the gathered assembly of faithful. The cantor needs to be aware that the ministry to be fulfilled is Christ’s, and that He has planted the ability for its doing in our hearts and bodies.

The cantor is expected to:

- Be able to read music (on at least a rudimentary level), so that they can learn new music relatively quickly and can continue practicing it on their own (outside scheduled practices).
- Collaborate and work with the organist/instrumentalist (who possesses the principle leadership role of the music).
- Be a disciple to the Church’s liturgy; open to critique, coaching and improvement.
- Possess “the ability for singing [well!] and a facility for correct pronunciation and diction” (GIRM, #102).

- Be aware of their posture, movement and clothing; all of which should reflect the prayerful nature of the ministry. Nothing should detract from the ministry by drawing unnecessary and/or undue attention to the minister.
- Be part of a team with the Presider, Deacon and Lector, that brings the Liturgy of the Word to life, so that the total effort of proclaiming the Word of God can foster and nourish faith in the hearts and ears of the listeners, instead of weakening it.
- Lead the psalm at the ambo; since it is a selection derived from sacred scripture.
- Lead the Gospel acclamation from the lectern.
- (Along with the choir) Lead the other musical selections, such as the Alleluia, the Lamb of God, etc.
- Maintain an exemplary level of professionalism, proficiency and prowess in singing abilities; especially when singing traditional meditation or devotional hymns (such as the Ave Maria, Pange Lingua Gloriosi, etc.).
- Be mindful of all movement in the sanctuary; so as not to draw any unnecessary attention or distraction.

Vocal Skills, Diction and Consonants. Aside from good and consistent tone, the fundamental vocal skills most cantors need to learn is how to breathe correctly and clarity of consonants. If the words cannot be understood by the listening assembly, the cantor has not effectively communicated the full message of the text. Additionally, cantors need to discover and maintain themselves within their competent range of vocal prowess. Off-key and out-of-range singing needlessly distracts and prevents the listeners’ reception of the intended message content. Routine practice or attempts to sing at ranges beyond one’s competent and gifted abilities are **strongly discouraged.** Additionally, the cantor and instrumentalist must choose musical selections, which are also within the normal range and vocal skills of the gathered faithful assembly—passing over those that exceed it, to find more suitable selections, if/as needed.

Gestures/Liturgical Awareness. It is important to know the official structure of the Order of the Mass very well. If something goes wrong (i.e., the Order is changed, a prayer is skipped, power failure, etc.), the cantor needs to make good decisions on the spot about how to proceed; to maintain a smooth flow of the liturgical celebration—not bring undue attention to the error.

The cantor’s appearance is part of their gesture. How they are dressed, how they carry their music, and how they walk to the ambo or lectern all communicate something to the assembly. Hands-on practice of gestures is important and critiquing one another is invaluable.

Eye contact is most important since it opens communication between the cantor and the listener. Use inviting and encouraging facial and hand gestures.

“At times, it may be appropriate to use a modest [in other words, not an exaggerated or theatrical] gesture that invites participation and clearly indicates when the congregation is to begin; but gestures should be used sparingly and only when genuinely needed” (STL, #38).

Lastly, leaving the ambo/lectern, walking back to our seat and sitting down are also important. We are called to maintain an upright body posture, calm pace, and graceful walk and sitting down. We need to keep our attention focused on the Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist.

Preparation. It is important to prepare well for each liturgy. Practice (before the Mass and attendance at choir practice(s)) is critical and absolutely necessary.

Communication Skills – Verbal. On those limited occasions, when song or hymn page numbers or other change announcements need to be verbally communicated to the assembly, do them clearly and concisely, with sufficient volume. Additionally, give people sufficient time to find a page before beginning.

Communication Skills – The Microphone. Speech and song done with proper projection and appropriate amplification will sound more natural than a soft tone, which implies a lack of self-confidence, improper use of the sound amplification system or lack of preparedness.

The cantor is not to sing *for* the assembly. The cantor should assist in establishing a collective confidence within the assembly that will encourage their full participation.

When speaking with the aid of a microphone, please keep in mind the tendency to speak too fast and too softly. When music is intended for singing by the entire gathered assembly of the faithful, the cantor or leader of song is to sing **WITH** and not **AT** the congregation. In other words, on such occasions, the cantor's voice should not be heard above the congregation's; the cantor's voice should recede, blend in with and not overpower the voice of the assembly.

Non-Verbal Communication. A comfortable, standing-up straight posture is the norm. An open, pleasant expression will convey hospitality, self-confidence and sincerity. People will be influenced by how you are perceived as welcoming and express yourself. Eye contact with the congregation assists in developing and maintaining a rapport. Hand and arm gestures are basic tools of the ministry; probably the clearest ways to signal to the congregation when to sing.

Dress Attire: Members of the music ministry (i.e., the instrumentalist, choir and/or cantor) are very visible to the gathered assembly, therefore "Sunday best" is the appropriate, expected and acceptable norm. Less than appropriate dress attire includes such things as: wearing shorts; a very short skirt or dress; secular sports team attire; a Christmas tie during Advent or an Easter tie during Lent, etc.

Knowledge of the Mass Parts: There are specific parts of the Mass proper most appropriately sung by members of the Music Ministry. They are:

- ❖ Entrance Hymn;
- ❖ Penitential Rite (Kyrie);
- ❖ Responsorial Psalm;
- ❖ Gospel Acclamation;
- ❖ Holy, Holy, Holy;
- ❖ Fraction Rite (Breaking of the Bread (*Agnus Dei*)); and
- ❖ Communion Antiphons or Hymns.
- ❖ (Recessional (optional)).

The Ministry of the Cantor:

The cantor is not an officially *instituted* minister and therefore the canonical, sacramental requirements of Extraordinary Ministers, Acolytes and Lectors are not appropriate. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for any member of the Music Ministry to also function as an Extraordinary Minister of the Holy Communion (EMHC), altar server, serve as a lector or reader, or read the petitions within the same Liturgy of the Mass (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium and GIRM). In short: one ministry, per person, per Mass is the norm and ideal of every parish Church—understanding the unique challenges encountered by small, rural church communities.

Because it is an important ministry, the cantor has the responsibility to prepare and properly dispose themselves to present the Word of God and to lead the people of the parish with the utmost dignity and respect.

Position/Location of the Cantor:

In the *Built of Living Stones*, November 2000 guidelines, from the USCCB on building and renovating churches, the paragraphs pertaining to the placement of musicians indicates that: “... cantors need visual contact with the music director [or instrumentalist] while they themselves are visible to the rest of the congregation” (#89). While this is the *ideal* situation, this may not be possible in some churches.

Since the Word of God should be proclaimed from the ambo and the psalms are from sacred scripture, the psalm should be sung from there also. *Built of Living Stones* states: “Apart from the singing of the responsorial psalm, which normally occurs at the ambo, the stand for the cantor is distinct from the ambo, which is reserved from the proclamation of the Word of God” (#89). This statement indicates that it is strongly encouraged to have a separate stand for the cantor [i.e., the lectern or in/near the choir] from which he or she leads the assembly in the hymns, acclamations, etc.

Training of the Cantor:

The Church’s liturgical documents emphasize the need to have *trained* cantors (MCW, #35) and musicians to lead worship. Trained singers have a variety of gifts, skills and charism. While a pleasing voice is necessary to be an *effective* cantor, there is much more needed as well.

The cantor must be extremely knowledgeable and comfortable with the order and structure of the Mass. Cantors must be individuals who can think quickly on their feet, and always be flexible.

It is likewise advisable for cantors to have a routine for their own mental, musical and spiritual preparation. This is invaluable for a more meaningful worship experience for the community. Some aspects of the cantor’s training may be established by the parish’s Pastor and/or Music Director or Music Coordinator (if available), such as rehearsals, workshops and/or retreats.

When the Assembly Needs the Cantor as a Song Leader:

There are actually only two situations when the needs of the assembly *per se* call for the cantor to function as a song leader:

1. When they have just been introduced to a new song or a new setting of the Mass and they are not yet confident about singing it, and/or
2. When the assembly lacks a competent organist or keyboard player to leader the singing.

(NB: First and foremost, it is the responsibility of the organist or keyboardist to lead the assembly's singing of the hymns, songs and Mass parts. While these situations of having no instrumentalist should be rare, the real dangers for the cantor to remain cognizant of are: (a) Becoming too dominant a figure in the liturgy in such instances; and (b) Safeguarding the cantor's more important role, that of psalmist, by, in a sense, reserving yourself for it.)

Key Points to Remember:

- Use of seasonal colored, 3-ring liturgical binders is highly encouraged universally within the music ministry (choir members, choir director and cantors) for storing music sheets to be used during a liturgy. Binders may be pre-positioned or carried by hand.

(NB: Choir members and cantors should hold their binder (containing music sheets) up, to avoid their looking and singing downward – into the binder, instead of above it.)

- Drinking water bottles are permitted in the liturgical space provided they are stored and used discretely, and only if absolutely necessary.
- To promote uniformity and standardization: (a) All of the weekend Masses, should utilize the same musical selections; and (b) The music ministry as a whole, should participate in regularly, scheduled practice/preparation sessions.
- The announcement of page numbers is generally unnecessary, distracting and potentially insulting to the listening assembly, if/when the page numbers are already posted or available to the gathered faithful in a worship aid, Order of Service, or otherwise posted on a wall mounted hymn/song board.
- Liturgy intentionally has clearly designated periods of silence. For example: After the responsorial psalm has been completed, please pause for a brief period of silence (5-10 seconds) before stepping away from the ambo. During liturgy, nothing is rushed.
- Within the worship space (nave) of the Church, to help maintain a spirit of prayerfulness before the Mass, any pre-Mass choir and/or cantor practice is to be completed *outside* the nave (i.e., in the designated, downstairs Music Ministry practice room)—so as to minimize distractions to those wishing to engage in private or devotional prayer for a self-reflection and personal recollection of venial sins before the start of the liturgy.

Additionally, please limit any social conversation while entering/leaving the nave or within the choir area. Promoting or maintaining periods of silence encourages and promotes an atmosphere of reverence and prayerfulness.

- Likewise, rehearsing *only* just before Mass is not an acceptable or embraced practice or policy. While occasional or serious (emergency) exceptions may need to be considered, those who consistently are unable to attend scheduled Music Ministry practices, should earnestly consider another parish activity or ministry; better suited for their gifts, needs and schedule.
- The length of the entrance procession hymn normally depends on how long it takes those in the procession (along with the assembly) on a given Sunday to become liturgically present (e.g., to move from the entry doors of the worship space into the sanctuary and to their assigned chairs).
- After the second reading that immediately precedes the Gospel, the Alleluia or another chant indicated by the rubrics is to be sung, as required by the liturgical season. (NB: The Gloria and Alleluia are omitted during the Advent and Lent seasons. Advent is an excellent time to sing the *Kyrie* with added tropes. Additionally, Lent is the appropriate season to pray the Confiteor as the communal Act of Penitence, with a simple form of the *Kyrie* following.) The Gospel acclamation is sung by all while standing is led by the choir or a cantor. (GIRM, #62, 63)
- Likewise, the length of the Presentation of the Gifts' song or hymn needs be coordinated with the timing of the principal celebrant (e.g., after the Jewish Berakah prayer, when he is ready to proffer the Prayer Over the Gifts (i.e., when he is ready to say "Pray brethren [my brothers and sisters], that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable ...").
- The procession bringing the gifts of bread and wine forward to the altar is accompanied by the offertory chant (GIRM, #37, 74), which continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar.
- The priest breaks the consecrated host and puts a piece of the host into the chalice of Precious Blood to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the work of salvation, namely, of the living and glorious Body of Jesus Christ. The supplication *Agnus Dei*, is, as a rule, sung by the choir or cantor with the congregation responding, or it is, at least, recited aloud. This invocation accompanies the fraction rite and, for this reason, may be repeated as many times as necessary, until the rite has reached its conclusion (by the action of the priest celebrant), at which, for the last time, ends with the words *dona nobis pacem* (*grant us peace*). (GIRM, #83)
- "While the priest is receiving the Sacrament [of the Eucharist], the Communion chant/hymn is begun. The singing is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful." (GIRM, #86) Therefore, in its present liturgical form, members of the music ministry are asked to come forward to receive Communion after the assembly and Communion chant/hymn has concluded.

- Additionally, after Communion, the assembly is to be afforded a brief period of time to spend in silent prayer or they may sing a psalm or hymn or hear meditational music to give thanks to God for his undeserved gift and grace in the sacrament. A post-Communion musical piece is to enhance the assembly's sense of Eucharist as a communal act and should be meditative in nature (i.e., soft instrumental only, if possible) (GIRM #88).
- **Use of Liturgical Proclamations** (Christmas and Epiphany) **and the Sequence** (on Easter Sunday and on Pentecost Day) are included throughout the liturgical year. Additionally, the Exultant **MUST** be proclaimed at/during the Easter Vigil.

(* If there is no competent cantor present to sing them, they may be verbally recited.)

Their placement in the prescribed (norms/rubrics) Order of the Holy Mass states:

* **Christmas**: (per liturgical norms, preferably at night)

- Sung or said after the Penitential Rite and before the Gloria at the ambo by cantor.

* **Epiphany**:

- After the proclamation of the Gospel, is sung or said at the lectern by cantor.

* **Easter Vigil** (only): (Short form/version is preferred)

- The Exultant (Easter Proclamation) is sung or said (e.g., proclaimed) by the Deacon after the initial entry into the sanctuary and before the Liturgy of the Word at the ambo.

(in the absence of a Deacon at the Easter Vigil, a competent cantor may be utilized)

* **Pentecost**:

- The Sequence is sung or said after the Second Reading and before the Gospel Acclamation at the ambo by the cantor.

(cf. GIRM, #64 and Paschales Solemnitatis)

- Use of prerecorded (i.e., CDs, MP3s, etc.) within liturgy is **prohibited**. Liturgical norms state, for example: “Only instruments which are personally played by a performer are to be used in the sacred liturgy, not those which are played mechanically or automatically ... The use of automatic instruments and machines, such as an automatic organ, tape recorder or other similar [devices] is absolutely forbidden in liturgical functions and private devotions, whether they are held inside or outside the church” (Musca Sacra, #60c, 71). [They **may** be acceptable to be used as a Prelude or Postlude – which is

outside the order of the prescribed liturgy. Please contact the parish priest in such instances for clarification and further liturgical guidance.]

- Consideration should be given for introducing new or unfamiliar Mass parts or musical selections to the gathered assembly before the Mass start time (especially if seasonal Mass settings are to be changed).

Conclusion and Closing Remarks:

“The nature of the ‘presidential’ (priest) parts [of the liturgy of the Mass] requires that they be spoken in a loud and clear voice and that everyone listen to them attentively. Therefore, while the priest is pronouncing them, there should be no other prayers or singing, and the organ or other musical instruments should be silent” (GIRM, #32).

NB: Additionally, on days when the liturgy is celebrated for Solemnities (i.e., the High Mass) and traditionally, incense is used, throughout the process of incensations, but most importantly after the prayers offering of the species to God (much like the Jewish Berakah temple prayers) but before the presider’s washing of hands, there is a series of purification incensations (i.e., over the gifts and around the altar, and of the presider and assembly) the liturgically appropriate music or only an instrumental piece is to be played throughout (i.e., there is to be NO silence until the incensations have been completed, please).

The Liturgy of the Mass formally ends with the final blessing and dismissal as part of the Concluding Rite. Predominantly within the U.S., while a hymn is helpful to end the Mass in a celebratory manner following the dismissal, it is not required or otherwise stipulated in the liturgical Order of the Mass. An instrumental postlude or choral anthem may take the place of a recessional hymn. Likewise, a recessional procession in silence during the Seasons of Advent and/or Lent, may be appropriate – to distinguish the season as “different”, “set apart” or “toned-down” from the more celebratory times of the year, such as Christmas, Easter, etc., since they are seasons of penitential reflection and preparedness for the Lord’s coming (i.e., His Birth and His Resurrection).

“Effective participation in [the] parish’s music ministry requires participants who are open to continued growth in faith, musical ability and in understanding of the liturgy. In that the community of the faithful has a right to expect that the music ministry will be provided competently, musicians [who need to receive appropriate, initial and recurring formation] ...” (STL, #50).

Any additions or alterations to these established norms of the St. Michael Parish Music Ministry must be presented to and approved by the parish’s incumbent Pastor or Parochial Administration.

REFERENCE SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READING

De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia: Instruction Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy,
Second Vatican Council, Vatican City, © September 3, 1958.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium,
Second Vatican Council, Vatican City, © December 4, 1963.

Instruction: On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest,
(*Ecclesiae de Mysterio*) Multiple Dicasteries' Letter of Instruction, Second Vatican Council,
Vatican City, © August 15, 1997.

Paschales Solemnitatis: The Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts,
Congregation of Divine Worship, Vatican City, © January 16, 1988.

Music in Catholic Worship (MCW),
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC,
© 1972.

Bishop's Committee on Liturgy (BCL) Newsletter (BCLN),
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC,
© April 18, 1966 (et al).

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM),
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC, © 2011.

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC, © 2002
(Latest review and revision in 2020).

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (STL),
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC,
© November 14, 2007.

Order of Christian Funerals,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC,
© April 29, 1987.

Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Washington, DC,
© November 16, 2000.

The Spirit of the Liturgy, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,
Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, © 2000.

Harmon, Cathleen, Ministry of Music,
Order of St. Benedict & Liturgical Press, Collegeville. MN, © 2016.

Harmon, Cathleen, Ministry of Cantors,
Order of St. Benedict & Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, © 2016.

Diocese of Colorado Springs, Teller County Catholic Community, Cantor Guidelines,
Woodland Park (Teller County), CO, Undated.

Diocese of Lansing, MI, Guidelines for Cantors, © 2002.

Diocese of Manchester, NH, Guidelines for Cantors, Undated.



St. Michael Catholic Church
574 Eighth Street
Calhan, CO 80808
(Mailing: P.O. Box 199, Calhan, CO 80808)

Office: (719) 347-2290
Parish Website: www.saintmichaelcalhan.com