

Music for the Catholic Wedding



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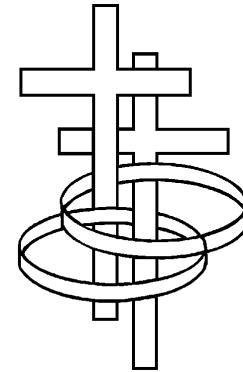
*Prepared by
the Diocesan Liturgical Music Committee
Diocese of Salt Lake City
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PURPOSE

The Diocesan Liturgical Music Committee offers the following information and suggestions contained in this pamphlet for planning music in Catholic weddings.

We sincerely hope that pastors, music ministers, liturgy planners, wedding coordinators, and the faithful will find this material helpful in preparing and celebrating the richness of the marriage rite of the Church.

It is our hope that those responsible for liturgical leadership will provide music that expresses the paschal mystery and empowers the full, conscious, and active participation of the assembly.
The music should convey the dignity in accord with the sacramental life of the Church.



**The documents listed below have been cited to support
the text of the guidelines.**

Catechism of the Catholic Church
second edition 1997 (CCC)

The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, 1963 (CSL)

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 2002, 2003 (GIRM)

Liturgical Music Today, 1972 (LMT)

Music in Catholic Worship, 1972 (MCW)

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,
“Gaudium et Spes”, 1965 (GS)

Rite of Marriage, 1970 (ROM)

Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, 2007 (STL)

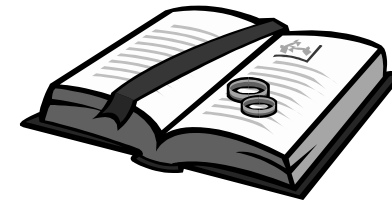
Resources

Anderson, Mary Beth Kunde and David. *Handbook of Church Music for Weddings*. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1992

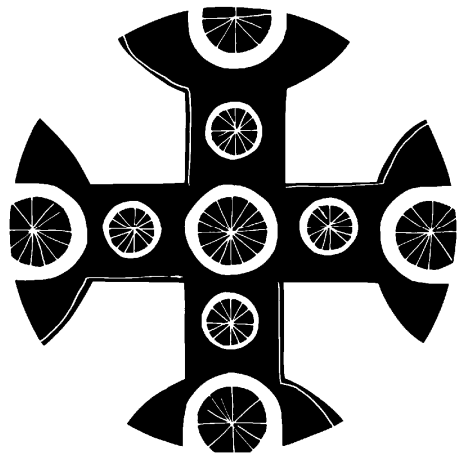
Covino, Paul, ed. *Celebrating Marriage*. The Pastoral Press, Laurel, MD, 1994

Fleming, Austin. *Parish Weddings*. Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL, 1987.

Liturgy Training Publications, *Your Wedding Music* (pamphlet), Chicago, IL, 1993.



Such participation aids should also include proper copyright notices for permission to use copyrighted music in the program (STL #224).



CSL #2 The liturgy . . . is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others this mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.

CSL #14 The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. . . for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit...

CSL #26 Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church, which is the “sacrament of unity.”

CSL #48 The Church earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators.

CSL #112 The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value . . . as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy. . . having regard to the purpose of sacred music which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful. . .

CSL #113 A liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing . . .

MCW #11 The power of a liturgical celebration to share faith will depend on its unity . . . flowing from the skillful

and sensitive selections of options, music, and related arts.

MCW #23 Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to words it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.

CSL #114 The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care.

MCW #16 Music chosen with care can serve as a bridge to faith as well as an expression of it.

MCW #82 Great care should be taken especially at marriages . . . 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.

GIRM #39 The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed . . . to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs . . . Singing is the sign of the heart's joy.

GIRM #111 Among all who are involved with regard to the rites, pastoral aspects, and music there should be harmony and diligence in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accord with the Missal and other liturgical books.

Option Two – Welcome at the altar

Option two is most suitable for a Marriage outside Mass, but can be used in other cases (like a small worship space). The ministers gather at the altar with the wedding party assembled. After the greeting and welcome, a gathering hymn is sung by those assembled.

Option Three– Procession without a Greeting

Option three is similar to option one, except that the greeting is omitted. At the appropriate time the gathering song is sung. The procession follows the same order as option one.

The gathering hymn is normally not omitted. If instrumental music accompanies the entrance process, then the gathering hymn is sung once everyone is in place.

19. Worship Aids or programs?
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Since the celebration of marriage is a communal celebration, participation aids should be provided to the congregation so that they might follow the ritual with understanding. This, in turn, allows them to have full and active participation in the celebration. Participation aids should include especially those elements of the Liturgy unique to the marriage rite, as well as translations of any songs not sung in the vernacular.

In the United States the practice has evolved into a non-liturgical component, which has been supported by the secular media. A procession is a liturgical gesture. The Rite of Marriage (#19-20) provides a few options.

Option One – Welcome at the Door and Procession

Like the Rite of Baptism, those who will celebrate the sacrament are greeted at the door of the church and welcomed by the priest/deacon. The ritual text does not provide a text for this so the priest/deacon will have to create the text for this liturgical act of welcoming. This is not a friendly, “how are you,” but an act of the Church receiving you for this sacrament. After the welcome, the entrance song, sung by the entire assembly, begins. During the gathering hymn, the procession takes place in this order:

1. Liturgical Ministers
 - a. Cross bearers
 - b. Candles
 - c. *optional* other liturgical ministers
 - d. Deacon/Lector carrying the Book of the Gospels
 - e. Priest/Deacon (if he will preside)
2. The Wedding Party (couples together)
3. The Bride and Groom – they are the celebrants of this sacrament
 - a. The bride and groom may be accompanied by parents.

GS #48 The intimate partnership of life and the love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator...

CCC #1601 The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and woman establish between themselves a partnership . . . has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

CCC #1603 The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the marriage state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws ... God himself is the author of marriage. Marriage is not a purely human institution.



INTRODUCTION

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* which came from Vatican II in 1963 directed that the Church undertake a general reform “in order that the Christian people may more surely derive an abundance of grace from the liturgy.” This document states that the Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which belong to the whole Church, which is the “sacrament of unity.” It is significant to keep in mind that every liturgical celebration is centered in the paschal mystery of Christ, his passion, death, and resurrection.

The Rite of Marriage includes the ritual for the Catholic marriage celebration, which is carried out in one of the following three forms:

- The **Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass**, which is the usual and recommended form, especially if both the bride and groom are Catholic.
- The **Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass**, which is frequently used if either the bride or the groom is not a Catholic.
- The **Rite for Celebrating Marriage between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person**, which is celebrated when someone in the catechumenate wishes to get married or a Catholic person is marrying someone unbaptized. This form is not sacramental, but it is a valid Church wedding. This marriage becomes sacramental as soon as the unbaptized person is baptized.

17.

May *Here Comes the Bride* be used for the processional?

The use of Richard Wagner’s *Bridal Chorus* from *Lohengrin*, popularly known as *Here Comes the Bride*, is discouraged. The reasons for this are the following:

- o This instrumental piece originated from theatrical, operatic repertoire.
- o This secular opera portrays marriage in a way that differs from the Church’s understanding.
- o The impression created by this piece is that the focus is on the bride alone.

18.

**Who should be in the procession?
Is a gathering song necessary?**

If the Rite of Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the norms for music within Mass as described in nos. 137-199 of this document apply. The entrance procession—consisting of the ministers, attendants, witnesses, bride, and groom—is accompanied by a suitable song or instrumental music. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places (STL #222).

If a couple desires this secular ritual, then it can be incorporated at the rehearsal dinner or the reception. It is not appropriate in the Rite of Marriage.

A song of praise or thanksgiving may be sung after the exchange of rings. This song should be communal and express the community's praise of God or thanks to God for the gift of love.

16.

What might be an appropriate monetary compensation for the pastoral musicians?

Musicians deserve some remuneration for service at a wedding. That fee should be paid directly to the musicians before the wedding unless other arrangements are the norm of the parish. There are different levels of competency among musicians and therefore most parish musicians will have already arrived at a fee. The Diocese has a guide for **Just Compensation**, which can be accessed at this web address:

<http://www.dioslc.org/images/liturgy/Just%20Compensation%20Guidelines.pdf>

or via the Office of Liturgy website:

<http://www.dioslc.org/ministries/liturgical>

It is important for those preparing the celebration of the Rite of Marriage to keep in mind that the Catholic wedding is more than just a social event celebrating the love and commitment between two individuals. It is a celebration of the covenantal relationship reflecting the mystery of the union between Christ and his bride the Church. Marriage has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. The wedding ceremony is part of the sacred liturgy of the Church.

Christian marriage is a faith event. Our Church has expectations about how the marriage is to be celebrated because it is the Church family's way of celebrating an event that is crucial to its very life. The goal is to help all who gather to celebrate well and with dignity.

Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance. As sacred song united to words it forms a necessary and integral part of the solemn liturgy. Music chosen with care can serve as a bridge to faith as well as an expression of it. (CSL #112)

The following question and answer format will hopefully help the engaged couple to further appreciate and understand that the celebration they are preparing is a grace-filled opportunity. It is an opportunity for them as well as for their friends, family, and parish community to offer thanks and praise for the love God has now

manifested in the love and promise they make to each other.

1.

What day and time should a wedding be celebrated?

A wedding can be celebrated on any day of the week except during the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday). In our culture, the most common time is a Saturday afternoon. This liturgy, if it occurs before 4:00 PM, does not fulfill one's Sunday obligation.

“If the marriage is celebrated on a Sunday or solemnity, the Mass of the day is used with the nuptial blessing and the special final blessing according to the circumstances” (RM #11).

2.

What music is appropriate during the Catholic rite of marriage?

A good place to begin choosing appropriate music is the regular parish Sunday repertoire. Music for the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist should express the paschal mystery. *The full active participation by all the faithful is the aim to be considered before all else* (CSL #14). The music should also meet the standards of the three judgments explained in *Sing to the Lord: Music*

If vocal soloists are to be employed in the celebration of the sacrament, they should be instructed on the nature of the Liturgy and trained in the unique aspects of singing in a liturgical context. Either the soloist should be trained to carry out the ministry of psalmist and cantor, or else another singer should be secured for this liturgically important role. In all cases, soloists should be aware that their talents are offered at the service of the Liturgy. Vocalists may sing alone during the Preparation of the Gifts or after Communion, provided the music and their manner of singing does not call attention to themselves but rather assists in the contemplation of the sacred mysteries being celebrated. Soloists should not usurp parts of the Mass designated for congregational participation (STL #221).

15.

What about music for the lighting of the “unity candle”?

The “unity candle” is a rather recent commercial product that is not a part of the Church's Rite of Marriage. Experience shows that its use detracts from the flow of the rich symbolism in the marriage rite. The primary liturgical symbols of unity are the couple, the exchange of rings, and the sharing of Eucharist.

couple and family should observe this devotional practice after the rehearsal, before the wedding liturgy, after the wedding liturgy, or at some other appropriate time. Marian hymns can be incorporated into this devotional practice as long as it does not occur during the liturgy itself.

13.
When *Ave Maria* is requested what is the most fitting placement?

If the *Ave Maria* is requested it should be placed at a time when meditative music is appropriate since it precludes participation of all those present. It is not appropriate during the liturgical processions. Perhaps it could be sung as a prelude or following the Communion Rite just before the Prayer after Communion.

14.
Is it appropriate to have the Lord's Prayer sung as a solo during the wedding liturgy?

The reforms called for by Vatican Council II emphasize that the full, conscious, and active participation by all the people is to be considered before all else. Therefore all the assembly should have the opportunity to join in the Lord's Prayer whenever it occurs in the liturgy.

in Divine Worship 126-136 (liturgical judgment, pastoral judgment, and musical judgment).

When preparing music for the celebration, the couple and music planner should reflect on the Scriptures that will be proclaimed during the wedding. The Scriptures are a guidepost. When the wedding is celebrated on a Sunday or solemnity special rules apply so please refer to **RM #11** or the pastor.

3.
What is meant by the term "paschal mystery"? Why is it important that the Church's Rite of Marriage express this mystery?

The term paschal mystery refers to the mystery of the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the essential aspects of Christian redemption. It is through Christ's dying that all death is destroyed, and through his rising that all life is restored. We are immersed in the paschal mystery through the sacraments, especially through baptism and Eucharist. Every Christian liturgy is a celebration of the paschal mystery and the Rite of Marriage is part of the liturgy of the Church.

Leitourgia, from which we get the word liturgy, means "the work of the people."

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations. Such participation by the Christian people “as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” is their right and duty by means of their Baptism (CSL #14).

It is through the paschal mystery that we are saved, and it is our salvation in Christ that we celebrate always in our liturgies. Likewise, the vocation of marriage sees the couple as a means to each other’s salvation.

The lifelong bond established by the marriage covenant between a man and a woman derives its force from creation. Jesus Christ has raised this natural covenant to a higher dignity as a sacrament of the new and eternal covenant. Above all else, the “grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ’s cross, the source of all Christian life” (STL #216).

4.

Will you explain the “three judgments”?

As explained in *Music in Catholic Worship* (#25-41) and *Sing to the Lord* (#126-136), the threefold judgment (liturgical, pastoral, and musical) should be taken into consideration when determining the value of a given musical element in a liturgical celebration.

10.

When may favorite secular music be used?

The appropriate place for songs of sentiment and joy whose texts and melodies are of an obvious secular nature may be used at receptions, lunches, or dinners celebrated at this time.

11.

May recorded music be used during the rite of marriage?

In their document *Liturgical Music Today*, the United States bishops reminded us that “the liturgy is a complexus of signs expressed by living human beings.” The voices and instruments of the gathered assembly should not be replaced by recorded music. Again, the aim of fostering full, active, and conscious participation by all the people is to be considered before all else (*also see STL #93-94*).

12.

What about music for the custom of “making a visit” to the image of the Blessed Virgin?

It is better that moments of personal piety not be the focus of attention at public worship, therefore such a gesture during the wedding liturgy is discouraged. The

8.

Would any song that speaks of love be appropriate for the wedding ceremony?

The suitability of texts is an important consideration. The Christian concept of “love” is characterized by commitment and fidelity, and supported by the love of Christ. Popular song texts often stress only the couple, excluding the origin of love and God’s role in a Christian marriage. Suitable texts should speak of the Christian, religious dimension of love in relationship to God. The text of the songs we use should support the particular action of the liturgy, for example, a communion song at Communion. Secular songs are never allowed during the liturgy.

9.

Is it appropriate to sing favorite secular songs in the wedding ceremony?

Liturgical music should always express the paschal mystery theme (MCW #23). Secular songs are not appropriate at any time during the sacramental rites. The function of liturgical 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 (MCW #82).

The *liturgical judgment* is to be made by taking into consideration the nature of the liturgy itself. It calls for choosing music that is properly suited to the meaning and the structure of the ritual, that is textually sound, and that contributes to the overall rhythm of the liturgical action.

Pastoral judgment is also needed to choose music that will enable the people of a particular worshipping community to meaningfully express their faith in the concrete circumstances of the time and place.

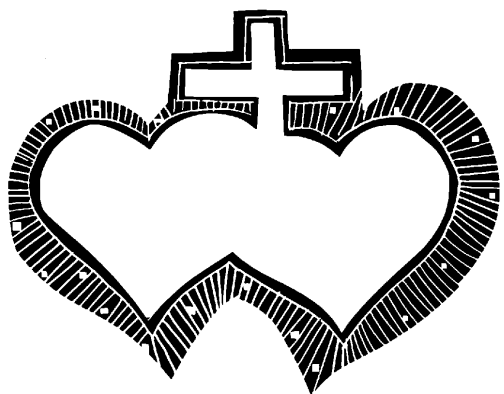
To make the *musical judgment*, one needs to take into consideration the quality of the piece. Is it technically, aesthetically, and expressively good? Music that is not artistically sound is not appropriate for use in the liturgy. *Sacred music will be the more holy the more closely it is joined to the liturgical rite, whether by adding delight to prayer, fostering oneness of spirit, or investing the rites with greater solemnity (CSL #112).*

5.

Who should plan the music for the Rite of Marriage?

Parishes usually have pastoral musicians and a liturgy preparation team in place who works with the pastor and the couple to provide appropriate music for the Rite of Marriage.

Usually a meeting will need to be facilitated with the parish musician to select appropriate music for the celebration of the marriage. Thought should be given to including bilingual music in situations that call for it. Often the parish will have a short list of suitable music or perhaps a CD that includes possibilities of the musician's repertoire.



**6.
What should we sing?**

Because of the nature of liturgical celebration and because of the joy of the occasion it is recommended that the congregation, led by a cantor, join in singing:

- Gathering Song
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gospel Acclamation
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- Memorial Acclamation
- Great Amen
- Lamb of God
- Communion Song
- Closing Hymn (*if one is used*)

If Mass is not celebrated, the following is recommended.

- Gathering Song
- Responsorial Psalm
- Gospel Acclamation
- Closing Hymn (*if one is used*)

To facilitate congregational singing it is helpful when a worship aid is provided.

**7.
Where can we find lists or suggestions for appropriate wedding music?**

Your own parish hymnal will contain a topical index that offers many choices of suitable music as well as Mass settings with which your own congregation should be familiar. Publishing companies also provide lists and suggestions for appropriate wedding music. Included in the *Resources* of this pamphlet is a brief list of publications that are helpful when selecting wedding music.