



Immaculate Conception Church Liturgical Guidelines

Music Ministers

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. 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. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively. The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way. It imparts a sense of unity to the congregation and sets the appropriate tone for a celebration. (Music in Catholic Worship, paragraph #23.)

The entire worshipping assembly exercises a ministry of music. Some members of the community, however, are recognized for the special gifts they exhibit in leading the musical praise and thanksgiving of Christian assemblies. These are the pastoral musicians, whose ministry is especially cherished by the church. (Liturgical Music Today, paragraph #63.)

What motivates the pastoral musician? Why does he or she give so much time and effort to the service of the church at prayer? The only answer can be that the church musician is first a disciple and then a minister. The musician belongs first to the assembly; he or she is a worshipper above all. Like any member of the assembly, the pastoral musician needs to be a believer, needs to experience conversion, needs to hear the Gospel, and so proclaim the praise of God. Thus, the pastoral musician is not merely an employee or volunteer. He or she is a minister, someone who shares faith, serves the community, and expresses the love of God and neighbor through music. (Liturgical Music Today, paragraph #64.)

All liturgical ministers are registered parishioners and should be in good standing with the Catholic Church. The guidelines that follow conform to the theological and liturgical principles in the diocesan guidelines.

Attire and Behavior

Ministers, regardless of age, dress in **business casual attire**. Sneakers/athletic shoes, flip-flops, jeans, T-shirts, sweat/jogging suits, shorts, and skimpy clothing (e.g. spaghetti straps or strapless tops/dresses) of any type are not appropriate, as well as buttons/pins advertising personal agendas, (e.g. political/sports). Always come to the church dressed

in case you are needed to serve as a replacement. **Wearing of the liturgical color of the day is encouraged.**

Training and Formation

Technical and practical training are a necessary part of every ministry. Initial orientation and training are required before the new minister enters service. Periodic formation events held to benefit all parish liturgical ministers.

Scheduling/Substitution Procedure

Ministers are required to find their own substitutions; only trained liturgical ministers serve during a liturgy. Scheduling is handled through the Ministry Scheduler Pro (MSP) App. This app is downloaded for free through your app store. Schedules are made at three-month intervals when you will be prompted to enter your unavailable dates. The app will notify you by email two days prior to your scheduled service date. If you are unavailable for your scheduled time then you request a substitute through the MSP App, which will notify you when the position is filled.

All Liturgical Ministers check-in at the kiosk located in the back of the church.



Photo 1. The Liturgical Ministers Closet.

- A. *Ministry Scheduler Pro Kiosk.* The MSP App will prompt you through the check-in process.
- B. *Second Collections List.* For Ushers.
- C. *Alert Messages for all Liturgical Ministers.* Special instructions will be posted here as needed.
- D. *Ushers' Attendance Chart.* To record number of people in attendance at weekend and special liturgies.
- E. *Lector Notes.* Lists which Readings(s) to use when there are options.
- F. *Liturgical Minister Codes.* For identifying which position a Liturgical Minister is serving.
- G. *Weekday Lector Schedule.* For those serving as Lector at weekday liturgies.

General Preparation

1. It is crucial that each music minister be prepared for the liturgy for which they are serving. This preparation includes not only attendance at rehearsals, but also regular individual music practice, scripture study, and personal prayer. It involves true commitment.
2. Music practice is held each week. Everyone must attend. Be on time and be prepared. Music lists are typically made available before the rehearsal. Everyone should have a copy. Review any music that is unfamiliar before practice.
3. Be prepared to serve at the liturgy. It is difficult to minister effectively at the liturgy if you did not attend the choir practice the week before. Be more than familiar with the music. A cantor who spends the first reading thinking about singing the psalm, or the person who reads through the general intercessions during the homily, is not properly prepared. Likewise, an hour before the liturgy is not the time to be learning a new song.

Rehearsals and Ministry Development

1. Rehearsal attendance is essential to leading the music well at our liturgies. Our liturgical celebrations deserve the best music and music leadership we can give them. This involves committed, ongoing training. If you cannot attend a rehearsal, it would generally be best to sit with the rest of the Assembly that weekend. If possible, give the music leader at the liturgy at which you are serving a courtesy phone call to let them know if you cannot make the rehearsal and/or service. Try to be prompt, and if you must be late, enter as unobtrusively as possible so as not to interrupt the flow of the rehearsal or service.
2. During rehearsal time give the director the respectful attention due him/her. Show quiet patience and respect for others while they are learning their part. Rehearsals can be enjoyable while remaining focused!
3. If you are serving as a music minister (e.g., a cantor), but are not a choir member, you must still take the time to **prepare yourself and your music well**. Preparing before you go to the church for the actual service will pay off by allowing you to lead with confidence, with the right spirit, and with the best musicality which you are capable of.
4. Learn what your strengths and your weaknesses are as a musician and as a liturgical minister. What about you allows you or leads you to exercise your ministry well? Is this the area in which you can best exercise your talents within our parish community? How can you best use your strengths in a helpful way for the music ministry team, and how will you strengthen your ministerial and musical weaknesses? How is your “team attitude?”
5. Always strive toward competency in your art and skill and in your understanding and sense of the liturgy. Your ministry reflects your life whereas you model and

inspire Christian faith. As often as you are able, attend development sessions when they are offered.

At Home (before worship service):

1. Reflect on your call to music ministry: the talent you've been gifted with and your call to share it in service to God and God's people; the responsibility and commitment that come with this calling; a sense of humble service as a steward of this talent; the faith-filled way that you are trying to live your life as the backbone witness to this ministry.
2. Drink plenty of water during the hours before the service. If you are a vocalist, make it a daily habit so that your body and the organs you use for singing as well hydrated.
3. Although first and foremost a member of the assembly, you are also leaders of the assembly.
4. Dress appropriately. If you are the cantor, try to wear the liturgical color of that celebration.
5. Preview the scripture readings for today's worship celebration. They are the basis for the event at which you will serve. Personal reflection on them before the service will help you to better communicate the message of the Word of God through your music. Especially important for the cantor is reflection on the Responsorial Psalm.
6. Warm up your vocal apparatus with vocal exercises you have learned or with familiar songs. Using songs of prayer for this may help you focus on your ministry.
7. Take the responsibility to know rehearsal and service days and times. Take time to review/practice your music, and to put it in order for the service.
8. Allow time to get to the Church without rushing and come with an eager spirit of service and readiness.
9. Pray that God may use your gifts to the best of your ability, to His glory, and in service to the people of the assembled community.

Day of the Liturgy

Prior to the Liturgy

If you are the cantor, be available to review any music or instructions no less than 15 minutes before the service, or as needed. Instrumentalist and choir members should arrive at the time requested. In general, be ready with your music no later than 15 minutes before the start of the service.

1. Greet one another! We are the Family of God! Make yourself visible to the music leader for that liturgy, who is counting on your commitment.
2. Keep personal items in an inconspicuous place (perhaps under your chair), allowing for foot room and walking space. Because the choir area is in close vicinity to the altar, it should remain visually uncluttered, especially during the worship service.
3. Check to see that your music is in order.
4. Give your leader your attention for any changes or additional instructions for that service. Be sure you know the pathway and timing for reception of Communion.
5. Remember that your focused attitude, reverence for God during worship, and respectful, hospitable conduct toward other liturgical ministers are very visible, and give witness to what you are singing and praying about.
6. Rehearse with the assembly as needed.
7. Before the welcome announcement, take a few minutes of quiet to focus on what is about to be celebrated, and again, pray humbly to be used well in your particular ministry. Then, give your attention to the reader as he/she welcomes the gathered community.

During the Liturgy

1. Watch for standing and sitting cues from the director. Movement can be distracting if it does not have order to it.
2. Have your music ready for each part of the liturgy that is to be sung. Your readiness shows your attitude about your ministry and helps to keep the undistracted flow of the liturgy.
3. When not singing, focus on the liturgical actions and prayers taking place. When singing, focus both on the music, its message, and the director! It is the director who will help you to stay unified and to be as musical as possible.
4. After the Second Reading, there is always a period of silent reflection before the Gospel Acclamation is begun. This period should last a minimum of 30 seconds and should continue until latecomers from the gathering room have been let inside the doors. Cantors can help by cuing the accompanist when latecomers are inside. Cantors remain seated until the music begins.
5. At the Preparation of the Gifts, allow instrumentalist to play some of the song quietly before announcing it, to allow the assembly to get their offerings ready for the basket. Then when you invite them to sing, they are more ready to focus.
6. At Communion time, the instrumentalist should start the music as soon as the presider takes his Communion. During a quiet introduction, the cantor can announce the song.
7. At all liturgies, the cantor, choir, and instrumentalist(s) should receive Communion when the Minister of Holy Communion comes over to the choir area after having distributed Communion to the rest of the assembly, unless special liturgies dictate otherwise. In most cases, the last Minister of Holy Communion from the back of the church will distribute to the musicians.

After the Liturgy

1. Listen for any responses and instruction from your director. If you perceived any problems relative to your ministry during the liturgy, take the time to talk with your music leader or the Music Director about it - though not necessarily immediately after the service. Allow your music leader time for fellowship after the service and enjoy some yourselves - both within your ministry and with the larger parish community.
 2. Check that you have all your materials to take home with you.
 3. Help to return ministry-related furnishings (music stands, keyboard, microphones) to their stored places or in position for the next service. This would be a responsible and appreciated action!
 4. Pick up any new schedules, calendars, song agendas, etc. that have been put out for you.
 5. Check the area for cleanliness and neatness.
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Dealing with Emergencies

The motto of the Boy Scouts is, “Be prepared.” It is a good one for the music ministers also. True emergencies during the Liturgy are rare, fortunately, but a good music minister is prepared.

- A First Aid kit is in the hallway outside the kitchen in the closet on the right. There is also a defibrillator in the same closet. Only trained parishioners should provide assistance with this machine when needed. A list of certified parishioners is on the door.
- The telephone is located on the wall between Ladies and Men’s rooms. No need to push buttons for outside line, just pick up and dial. For 911 and local calls only.
- The fire extinguishers are in wall cabinets in either end of Gathering Room, inside kitchen door, and across from Pastor’s office.



About Our Pineapple: The pineapple was a staple of Indian feasts and rites. The pineapple was once an uncommon and coveted commodity. King Charles II of England designated receiving the pineapple as royal privilege and gift. In time, the pineapple became a symbol of Southern hospitality. For this reason, Immaculate Conception Church chose the pineapple as its hospitality emblem. When a new household is officially welcomed to our community, we present this symbol of hospitality and welcome.