
The Role of Music in the Marriage Rite

Introduction

Marriage is a time of joy and celebration. Music is an important part of your celebration. In order that the integrity of the Rite of Marriage and the proper role of music in the wedding liturgy are better understood, the following guidelines are presented.

The Order of Service

Gathering

While the community of worshippers is assembling, appropriate music may be performed by instrumentalists, choir, or vocal soloists. The function of this preludial music is to gather up and unite the thoughts of all present and to prepare them for the celebration of your marriage. This is not a time to perform a favorite song that cannot be used during the ceremony.

The goal of the entrance music is to open the celebration as a first act of worship, deepen the unity of those gathered, introduce them to the mystery of the Season or feast, and accompany the procession.

If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses. Meanwhile, the entrance song is sung.

It is strongly recommended that a congregational hymn be sung during the procession in order to engage all those present in this act of gathering. Such singing makes the people participants rather than spectators. The selected song should express joy and be well known by all.

If the Gloria is used, it should be sung. Because of the music that has preceded, it might be advisable to omit the Gloria from the wedding service.

Word

There are two major musical moments during the Liturgy of the Word: the Psalm and the Gospel Acclamation. The psalm should be sung. The responsorial style is very appropriate. This allows for a cantor to alternate with the assembly which sings a simple refrain.

The Gospel Acclamation or Alleluia is also to be sung. If not sung it is to be omitted.

Marriage

There is no designated place for music in the Rite of Marriage. To show community support, affirmation, praise, and thanksgiving for what they have witnessed, a brief hymn or acclamation of assent may be sung by the whole community at the conclusion of the exchange of vows and rings. While this is suggested, it is not necessary.

It should be noted that the lighting of a candle is not part of the Rite of Marriage. If used, it should not be prolonged with sentimental or trite musical accompaniment.

Eucharist

Preparation Rite

The preparation of the altar and the presentation of the gifts is a practical rather than theological moment. Its importance lies in the shift of focus from the place of the Word to the place of thanksgiving over the

bread and wine. This has some ramifications for the scale and style of music and procession.

The procession can be accompanied by song. Yet song is not always necessary or desirable. Organ or instrumental music is also fitting at this time. The song need not speak of bread or wine or offering. The proper function is to accompany and celebrate the communal aspects of the procession.

If a short choral or vocal work is done at this time it would most appropriately be one that focuses on the message of the readings.

Eucharistic Acclamations

The Eucharistic Prayer is the prayer of the entire assembly. The Eucharistic Acclamations (Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, and Great Amen) are to be sung in the familiar settings known by the community. The cantor or choir may lead the people in these sung acclamations.

These acclamations belong to all the people and, as such, should properly be prayed by them. (It should be noted that if the majority of the assembly do not attend Eucharist on a regular basis it would be best if the Rite of Marriage was celebrated outside of Mass. cf. Rite of Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass, Chapter II, The Rites.)

Communion

The Lord's Prayer

As in any Eucharistic liturgy, the assembly may either recite or sing the Our Father. This is not an acceptable time for a vocal solo or a musical setting that would be beyond the musical abilities of most of those gathered.

Breaking of Bread

The Breaking of Bread is accompanied by the litany, Lamb of God. The singing of the litany should last as long as the length of the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine.

This is not a time for "peace songs" or other "love songs." Please note that the Sign of Peace is not a musical moment in the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Communion Song

The Communion Song accompanies the communion procession and expresses our unity in the Body and Blood of Christ; therefore, this song should speak of a wider community of love. Congregational singing, by its very nature, reflects the meaning of Communion. Utmost care should be given to the song of Communion in order that it may express unity. This is not the time to sing a variety of all time favorites. It is recommended that one Communion song be done for the entire Communion procession. Musical variations, vocally and instrumentally, allow for the lengthening of most Communion songs. A refrain that is simple and not demanding may be sung by the assembly. Verses may be sung by cantor or choir and musically embellished.

Hymn of Praise

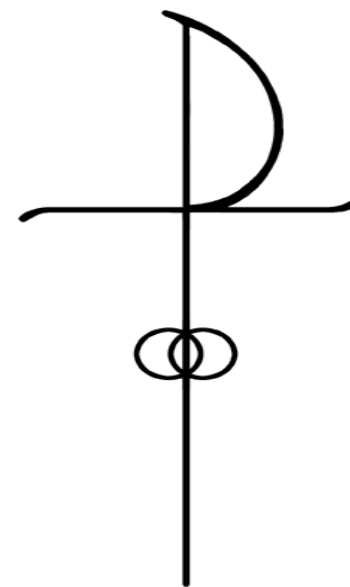
If unusual circumstances prevail and there is no Communion Song, a hymn of praise and thanksgiving may be sung after Communion by the congregation, choir, or soloist. Instrumental music is also appropriate at this time for creating a mood of silence, prayer, and reflection.

Going Forth

The dismissal is followed immediately by strong, joyous recessional music which may be a hymn sung by the assembly or choir or an instrumental selection. This conclusion creates a bridge between the celebration of the marriage liturgy and the remaining events surrounding the liturgy. Music should be planned not with finality in mind, rather sending forth.

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