



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Standard Operating Procedures for Music Ministers

. . . a faith-filled community for all cultures and ages dedicated to building the Kingdom of God

– OLPH Parish Mission Statement

The first and most obvious role of music ministry is to assist the assembly with finding its own voice—to teach the people with whom we worship how to express their faith with the music they carry within them. Music ministers do whatever to break down any sense of “us” and “them”—the sense that music is something for musicians to do, while the rest of the people sit and listen.

– Guide for Music Ministers by Jennifer Kerr Breedlove and Paul Turner, pp.24-25

The function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate.

– Music in Catholic Worship, #23 (1972/82)

The music ministry leads the assembly in worship through music. It helps them to participate and lift their voices up in song. Liturgical music in the Mass promotes union of the faithful and inspires them to become “of one heart in love”. Singing, more than mere reciting, gives extra importance to those special moments in the liturgy when the faithful are allowed to give evidence of their consent to praise the Lord. For when we sing, we are praying twice

– St. Augustine - Sermons 336

This SOP applies to all music ministers: choir members, cantors, musicians, etc. and applies to music at Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

REQUIREMENTS OF A MUSIC MINISTER

Anyone meeting the following qualifications and who believes they are being called to serve as a music minister may approach any Music Minister or contact the parish office.

- ♪ Some music literacy desirable but not required
- ♪ Have a pleasant personality and work well with others
- ♪ Be familiar with the rites of the liturgy
- ♪ Be available to serve at regular Masses and special liturgies and services (i.e. holidays, Holy Days of Obligation, etc)
- ♪ Attend weekly practices and arrive promptly at scheduled time.
- ♪ Have a decent, trainable voice.
- ♪ Willing to serve at the Parish’s Ministry Fairs, parish fundraisers, etc.

- ♪ Participate in liturgical workshops, spiritual enrichment programs, and retreats as may be deemed necessary by the Pastor or Diocese

Music Ministers are expected to be skilled in their instrument well enough in order to compliment the choir smoothly and with an even balance of sound and dynamics. Musicians must be able to instantly modulate keys and notes during mass in order to adjust to the different vocal ranges of the various choirs. Musicians are responsible for their own practice/training to meet these criteria apart from the regular choir practice which focuses on the voices.

A Music Committee, composed of leaders of each choir and/or their designates, will be responsible for (i) selecting the songs and psalms for Mass; (ii) distributing schedules; (iii) providing material for any new song that is not in the hymnals; (iv) typing the lyrics on PowerPoint for Mass; (v) scheduling Ministry fellowship; (vi) updating the SOP as necessary; and (vii) other duties as assigned by the chairperson, pastor, associate pastor, or Liturgy Committee. The Music Committee will select a Chairperson to (i) conduct meetings and choir practice, (ii) act as a liaison to the pastor, and (iii) work in close collaboration with the pianist/musicians.

The Music Committee will plan fellowship nights with refreshments, assigning each choir to be responsible for a specific night on a rotating schedule.

Each choir will have a leader who will (i) monitor attendance at practices, workshops, spiritual retreats, etc.; (ii) ensure that each member of their choir has schedules, hymnals, and handouts; (iii) assign current members to work with new members; (iv) ensure the SOP is followed by their choir members; and (v) other duties as assigned by the Music Committee Chairperson.

The Music Committee and Choir Leaders must be fully initiated and in full communion with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

Music Ministers should reach out to new members and welcome them. They should make sure they are Introduced to the Choir Leader and other Music Ministry members.

The Choir Leader will assign a contact person for the new member whom they can contact for questions or concerns about Music Ministry. The Choir Leader will make sure that new members are provided with current schedules and SOPs and arrange for the purchase of a hymnal.

PREPARATION

The Music Committee will select the liturgical music based on the readings for the Mass at least three weeks prior to the Mass date. They will include music for:

- ♪ Gathering
- ♪ Responsorial Psalm
- ♪ Preparation of Gifts
- ♪ Communion
- ♪ Leave-taking
- ♪ and other service music required by the Pastor or Associate Pastor

Any new hymn should be introduced by rehearsing it for at least three Sundays with the assembly and three practice nights with the choir before it is implemented.

Each Music Minister will purchase a hymnal and other means of storing and organizing music handouts, and will be responsible for bringing these to each practice and Mass. Each Music Minister is responsible for keeping all their handouts in an organized manner. Handouts will only be distributed the first time that song is introduced to the choir. Choir leaders are responsible for reminding their choir members to bring their needed songs to practice and Mass.

Choir practice will begin with the reading of the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday. This will help Music Ministers understand the connection between the songs and the readings. Choir practice will also end with prayer. Between choir practice and Mass, Music Ministers should continue to pray over the Gospel and practice the songs.

MASS RESPONSIBILITIES

Each Choir shall have the following:

- ♪ Song Leader – to lead the choir/assembly in singing and to work with the pianist as to the order of the music. The Song Leader and pianist should watch the presider and not begin another verse or refrain that will cause the presider to wait before continuing Mass.
- ♪ Cantor (or Cantors) – to sing the Responsorial Psalm during Mass as part of the readings
- ♪ Visual Tech – to manage the PowerPoint - some PowerPoint experience is required

All Music Ministers should arrive at least 30 minutes before Mass to test equipment and warm up. At least ten minutes before Mass, the Cantor and Song Leader should rehearse the Responsorial Psalm and any new songs with the assembly. More time can be added if needed when there are a lot of songs or parts of mass that need to be practiced with the assembly (e.g. a new mass setting). There shall be time for quiet reflection after music practice and before mass starts.

Unless there is an extraordinary reason to be absent, all music ministers should be at choir practice or sit with the congregation during Mass. The Choir member should notify their Choir Leader if they will be missing practice, with the reason for that absence.

Music Ministers need to fully appreciate that the hymns they are singing are based on the Readings. They need to sing these hymns prayerfully and with the appropriate feeling, especially if they are to encourage the assembly to do the same.

Music Ministers should be models in showing reverence for the Lord. Dress should be appropriate. There should be no unnecessary talking, laughing, joking, etc. The microphones are very sensitive and will pick up any sound.

You may serve in more than one liturgical ministry, but you may serve in only ONE liturgical ministry at each Mass. Liturgical ministries include: Altar Servers, Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW), Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC), Lectors, Music Ministers,

Sacristans, and Ushers. Be certain your ministry coordinator (Music Committee Chairperson) knows on which ministries you serve and at which Masses. That coordinator will provide this information to the persons creating the liturgical ministry schedules so there will be no scheduling conflict.

CONCLUSION

The preceding pages may seem to be overly detailed to those who have been active in the ministry for many years, but it serves both new and established ministers to help create a more standard process. More procedural consistency among Music Ministers will help the assembly feel more at ease, enabling them to be free from distractions and enter more deeply into the celebration.

At times you will make mistakes in these procedures. What is most important is to maintain an attitude of reverence and worship toward the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and to be warm and hospitable members of the assembly.

Revised 07/2011