

The Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does. At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

What the Church says about...

The Importance of Singing

Singing is the sign of the heart’s joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus St Augustine says rightly, ‘Singing is for one who loves.’ There is also the ancient proverb: ‘One who sings well prays twice.’

Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.

In the choosing of the parts to be sung preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding, or by the priest and people together.

Liturgical song should correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and foster the participation of all the faithful.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal
(GIRM) 39-41

The ministries of musicians and singers

A psalmist, a cantor, an organist, other instrumentalists, a choir, and a director of music assist the assembly’s full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations which are constitutive elements of the liturgy. These ministers of music exercise a liturgical function within the assembly and by their role help to add beauty and solemnity to the celebration.

Celebrating the Mass 43

The psalmist’s role is to sing the Psalm or other biblical canticle that comes between the readings. To fulfil this role correctly, it is necessary that the psalmist have the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction.

The schola cantorum or choir exercises its own liturgical role, ensuring that the parts proper to it, in keeping with the different types of chants, are properly carried out and fostering the active participation of the faithful through the singing. This also applies to other musicians, especially the organist.

It is fitting that there be a cantor or a choir director to lead and sustain the people’s singing. When in fact there is no choir, it is up to the cantor to lead the different chants, with the people taking part.

Preparing to sing

In preparing to sing or play the music for any particular Mass

- Look at the readings and prayers of the Mass which will have been used in choosing the music for the Mass. Use them for your prayer.
- Reflect on how the music chosen relates to what the readings and prayers express
- Ask yourself how this music will best lead you and all of those gathered for the liturgy into prayer together.
- Spend time in prayer, praying for yourself, and the other ministers of the parish's music—that the service you will offer will truly help the whole congregation given voice to the Church's prayer.



Lord God,
your beauty is ancient yet ever new,
your wisdom guides the world
in right order,
and your goodness gives the world
its variety and splendour.

The voices of the redeemed
join in a chorus of praise to your holiness
as they sing to you in mind and heart.
Grant that in our music-making we may
express our prayer and praise in melodies
that are pleasing to you.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

BOOK OF BLESSINGS adapted

*Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has worked wonders.
His right hand and his holy arm have
brought salvation.*

*The Lord has made known his salvation;
has shown his justice to the nations.
He has remembered his truth and love
for the house of Israel.*

*Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp
with the sound of music.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord.*

*Let the sea and all within it, thunder;
the world, and all its peoples.
Let the rivers clap their hands
and the hills ring out their joy.*

Psalm 97 (98) 1-2, 5-8



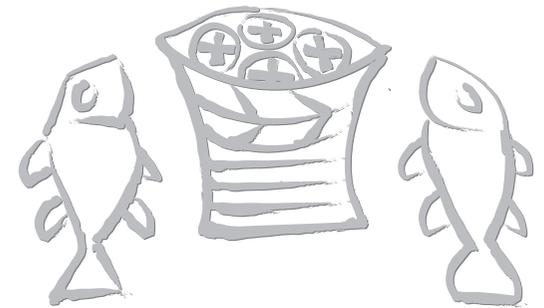
**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES

Excerpts from *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* © 2004,
Book of Blessings © 1987 International Commission on English
in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.
From *The Psalms: A New Translation* © 1963 The Grail (England)
published by HarperCollins.

Excerpts from *Celebrating the Mass* and all other texts and
layout © 2004 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and
Wales.

This leaflet is one of series for liturgical ministers on the *Year of
the Eucharist* produced by the Liturgy Office, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PL.
www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources M013

Musicians and their ministry at Mass



*One cannot find anything
more religious and more joyful
in sacred celebrations
than a whole congregation
expressing its faith
and devotion in song*

MUSICAM SACRAM 16