

GUIDELINES FOR CANTORS



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

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LIST OF MAIN DOCUMENT ABBREVIATIONS

GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>
LOH	<i>Liturgy of the Hours</i>
LM	<i>Lectionary for Mass</i>
NDRHC	<i>Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Dioceses Of the United States of America</i>
STL	<i>Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)</i>
USCCB	<i>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops</i>



GUIDELINES FOR CANTORS IN THE DIOCESE OF MANCHSTER

“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian Life.”¹

The Eucharist constitutes “the church’s entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ Himself, our Passover and living bread.”² It is the “sacrament of sacraments.”³ Through it “the work of our redemption is accomplished.”⁴ He who is the “living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51) assures us, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” (Jn 6:54-55)

“Singing is for the one who loves.”⁵
St. Augustine of Hippo

Introduction to the Ministry of Cantor

To serve around the table of the Lord, and to lead the assembly in singing God’s love for us and of our love for God, is a special privilege and ministry to which a person has a calling.

<p>“God has bestowed Upon his people the Gift of song.”</p>	<p>“God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source.”</p>	<p>“Indeed, God, the giver of song, is present whenever His people sing his praises.” [STL, #1]</p>
<p>We are blest. . . .</p>	<p>. . . our song is of God. . . .</p>	<p>. . .and the cantor is privileged to lead this song.</p>

¹ Lumen Gentium as quoted in Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican City: St. Paul Books and Bedia, 1994), #1324, p. 334

² Second Vatican Council, Presbyterorum Ordinis as quoted in Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds In the Diocese of the United States of America, (Washington D.C.: USCCB, Inc., 2002) #3, p.2.

³ General Instruction of the Roman Missal [GIRM], #368 as quoted in NDRHC, (Washington D.C.: USCCB, Inc., 2002) #3, p.2

⁴ Sacramentary, Prayer Over the Gifts, Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, as quoted in NDHRC, (Washington D.C.: USCCB, Inc., 2002) #3, p.2

⁵ St. Augustine, Sermon 336, 1 (PL 1855-1855, 38, 1472) as quoted in Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, (USCCB, 2007), pub #7-022, #2

You have been asked to serve in this ministry because God has bestowed on you the gift of song. You have an opportunity to use this gift to present the Word of God to the community in a way that can move the hearts of those who hear it; and to lead the singing of the assembly, because “singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to this people.” [STL, #2]

Because it is an important ministry, you have a responsibility to prepare and properly dispose yourself to present the Word of God and to lead the people of the parish with the utmost dignity and respect. Proper formation of our ministers is important. How we worship conveys the sacredness of what we believe in the mystery that is taking place in the liturgy. This also helps create the appropriate environment of prayer for all.

These guidelines have been prepared to assist all ministers in performing their role in a prayerful, reverent and consistent way. These guidelines are not intended to represent an exhaustive list. Questions about any aspect of serving as a Cantor should be directed to your Pastor, Pastoral Staff, and /or Director of Liturgical Music for clarification.

A) The Role of the Cantor

1. The Disciple and Minister

The cantor is a disciple who has a calling to ministry through music.

The cantor needs to be at home in the Lord’s house.

- Comfortable in the faith and in the teachings of the church
- Respectful and knowledgeable of the church building
- Hospitable to others

“Liturgical ministers are first of all disciples, and only then are they ministers. . . They are ministers who share the faith, serve the community, and express the love of God and neighbor through music. Like other baptized members of the assembly, pastoral musicians need to hear the Gospel, experience conversion, profess faith in Christ, and so proclaim the praise of God.” [STL, #49]

2. Leader of Song

The cantor respects the Christian assembly as primary ministers of music and assists them in bringing to life their sung prayer. The cantor is a collaborator with the organist/pianist/guitarist. For much of the congregational music, primary leadership of singing is from the organist, while the cantor is the primary leader for music intended for the cantor alone, such as the verses of the psalm and the versicle of the Gospel acclamation.

The cantor understands that “the life-giving quality of liturgy depends on the participation of the assembly. . . The people need to sense that the cantor cares for them; they need to have confidence and respect for the cantor’s skills and not be intimidated.”⁶

Use of a Microphone

Microphones are shared among many readers and cantors. Finding the microphone position that enables you to best be heard is something that you should determine outside of Mass time. Know the best placement of each microphone you use, and adjust just one time if necessary either at the cantor podium or ambo. When speaking, keep in mind the tendency to speak too fast and too softly. Have a few people in different pews listen and critique you.

When music is intended for singing by the entire congregation, the leader of song is to sing WITH and not AT the congregation. With new music, more vocal leadership is needed. With familiar music, such as the Eucharistic prayer acclamations, some risk taking is in order, with the cantor giving limited vocal leadership. The goal over time is to encourage the assembly to rise to the challenge and embrace sung prayer as their own, and not have singing remain the purview of the cantor alone.

“As a leader of congregational song, the cantor should take part in singing with the entire gathered assembly. In order to promote the singing of the liturgical assembly, the cantor’s voice should not be heard above the congregation. As a transitional practice, the voice of the cantor might need to be amplified to stimulate and lead congregational singing when this is still weak. However, as the congregation finds its voice and sings with increasing confidence, the cantor’s voice should correspondingly recede.” [STL, #38]

Proper Gestures

Eye contact is most important since it opens communication between the cantor and congregant. Use inviting and encouraging gestures sparingly with consideration of the assembly, the size of the church, and the demands of the music. In smaller churches, facial expression may substitute well for hand gestures. Smile when appropriate.

⁶ *Cantor Handbook*, St. Raphael Church – Naperville, IL, William R. Berg, 2005, p. 1

“At times, it may be appropriate to use a modest gesture that invites participation and clearly indicates when the congregation is to begin, but gestures should be used sparingly and only when genuinely needed.” [STL, #38]

3. Psalmist / Proclaimer of the Word

“When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.” [GIRM, #29]

“After the first reading comes the Responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and holds great liturgical and pastoral importance, because it fosters meditation on the Word of God.” [GIRM, #61]

This is unique role for the cantor. The cantor is part of a team with the Presider, Deacon and Lector, that brings the Liturgy of the Word to life, so that the total effort of proclaiming the Word of God can foster and nourish faith, instead of weakening it.⁷

The cantor has other roles, but while the organist has principle leadership of hymn singing and vocal leadership is not always needed for familiar acclamations and the cantor need only teach new music at select times, the psalm is proclaimed at every Mass and, therefore, requires an investment of time, prayer and textual and musical study.

The cantor becomes the psalmist, bringing to life the songs of sacred scripture.

- Extend a warm invitation to the assembly to assist them in responding to the psalm.
- Sing with good vocal quality.
- “Proclaim the text of the Psalm with clarity, conviction, and sensitivity to the text, the musical setting, and those who are listening.” [STL, #35]

4. Chanter

“Gregorian chant is uniquely the Church’s own music.” [STL, #72] It is an ancient form of liturgical music that was codified beginning in the early eighth century. Chant was originally sung in unison, in Latin and un-accompanied. Compositions based on chant, in Latin and the vernacular, are still composed today, and the use of chant in the liturgy has become more common in recent years since the increased use of the Tridentine rite.

⁷ Ibid.

The cantor should be comfortable with Latin pronunciation (Kyrie in Greek), and be confident singing at least the most familiar chant settings of the Ordinary, keeping in mind that chant has a musical flow quite different than that of more familiar song.

“Each worshipping community in the United States, including all age groups and all ethnic groups, should, at a minimum, learn Kyrie XVI, Sanctus XVIII and Agnus Dei XVIII, all of which are typically included in congregational worship aids. More difficult chants, such as Gloria VIII and settings of the Credo and Pater Noster, might be learned after the easier chants have been mastered.” [STL, #75]. English settings of Kyrie XVI, Sanctus XVIII and Agnus Dei XVIII are the chants included in the Roman Missal III.

5. Teacher of New Music

The cantor typically teaches new music to the congregation.

- Be comfortable with the theology of the text, and the musical elements of the melody.
- Be an inviting, encouraging, patient yet determined teacher who communicates the value of the music and expects musical elements to be sung correctly.
- Teach in a methodical way, perhaps repeating phrase by phrase.
- Be patient with a congregation that might not yet be open to the music, and for a variety of reasons, may even reject it.

“The musical formation of the assembly must be a continuing concern in order to foster full, conscious, and active participation.” [STL, #26]

B) Qualifications and Formation of Cantors

1. Personal Qualifications

Cantors are disciples and liturgical ministers. They are pastoral, collaborative, approachable, hospitable, compassionate, loving, students of the liturgy, and open to critique and coaching.

2. Musical Qualifications

The role of the cantor is one of the liturgical ministers that require a unique skill. Cantors *must* be able to sing well! The desire to be a leader of song must be coupled with an ability that is suited for such an important role. The cantor

needs to have a good, strong voice but not necessarily the best or even the strongest voice. Rather, they must have a voice that is pleasant and inviting.

Cantors are persons who possess “the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction.” [GIRM, #102] They are to have a clear tone, sing in tune, the ability to keep steady rhythm in the various acoustics of churches, chant at least basic tones in English and Latin, be able to sing a’cappella, to sing select repertoire in secondary languages of the parishes, and to teach new music to the assembly.

3. Liturgical Qualifications

Cantors are to know the cycle of the liturgical seasons and the parts of the Mass unique to each season; and be able to make appropriate and informed choices in the event that the organist/instrumental accompaniment is not present, necessitating the substitution or elimination of music, so music can be effectively sung a’cappella.

4. Period of Apprenticeship

It is appropriate for new cantors to apprentice with experienced cantors. It is very different to be the cantor than to sing from the pew, and even apprentices with extensive vocal training benefit from the wisdom of experience. At a minimum, the new cantor should apprentice with an experienced cantor for at least four Masses.

5. Continuing Formation

An effective cantor continues to grow in faith, in musical ability and in understanding of the liturgy. They respect the skills and tools given to them by God to be used in their vocation as ministers in the church through music. They pursue vocal study, practice and avail themselves of workshops and printed and electronic materials.

“All pastoral musicians – professional or volunteer, full-time or part-time, director or choir director, cantor or instrumentalist – exercise a genuine liturgical ministry. The community of the faithful has a right to expect that this service will be provided competently. Pastoral musicians should receive appropriate formation that is based on their baptismal call to discipleship; that grounds them in a love for and knowledge of Scripture, Catholic teaching, Liturgy, and music; and that equips them with the musical, liturgical, and pastoral skills to serve the Church at prayer.” [STL, #50]

C) Considerations for Cantor Ministry

1. Location for Ministry

Psalmist

The psalmist is to sing the Responsorial Psalm from the ambo.

“Since the ambo is the place from which the word of God is proclaimed by the ministers, it must of its nature be reserved for the readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (the Exsultet). The ambo may rightly be used for the homily and the prayer of the faithful, however, because of their close connection with the entire liturgy of the word. It is better for the commentator, cantor, or director of singing, for example, not to use the ambo.” [LM, #33]

Leader of Song

The cantor “should lead the assembly from a place where they can be seen by all without drawing attention from the liturgical action.” [STL, #39]

“When, however, a congregation is singing very familiar responses, acclamations, or songs that do not include verses for the cantor alone, the cantor need not be visible.” [STL, #39]

“The cantor exercises his or her ministry from a conveniently located stand, but not from the ambo.” [STL, #40]

Given the nature and place of the ambo as the throne of the Word in the liturgy, the Alleluia (or other chant during Lent) is ordinarily sung from the cantor podium and not the ambo. The verses are taken from the Lectionary and must reflect the Gospel to be proclaimed. This rite by the assembly welcomes and makes way for the Lord. The cantor should not stand in the way of this welcome by being at the ambo.

“An acclamation of this kind constitutes a rite or act in itself, by which the assembly of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel and profess their faith by means of the chant.” [GIRM, #62]

2. Announcements

The assembly has a **responsibility** to embrace their role as participants in the liturgy. Because of this, it is not appropriate to say “please” when announcing music or to invite people to join in singing. Announce music in a straightforward manner, number-title-number, with welcome and a sense of expectation for participation, but not with pleading or in an announcer’s voice.

Speak clearly into the microphone and avoid having your voice trail off at the ends of phrases. Additionally, the cantor should not “welcome” the priest celebrant (e.g., avoid announcements like “Please rise and let us welcome Fr. N.”). Responsorial psalms should not be announced since the antiphon is intoned by the cantor and repeated by the assembly. Additionally, an announcement at this moment is more distracting than prayerful. Similarly, the communion chant should not be announced. Presumably, the antiphon or refrain, is short enough for the assembly to repeat. Similar to the responsorial psalm, the refrain of the communion chant could be repeated twice at the beginning in order to encourage participation.

If printed worship aids are used, it is not necessary to announce music. If hymn boards are used, it is helpful to announce hymns particularly for those who cannot see the boards.

While hymns are an integral part of the prayer experience at Mass, in the language of the liturgy as used in the GIRM, the entrance, offertory and communion music are referred to as “chants.” These may be understood as “hymns” using the following titles:

Entrance Hymn [GIRM, #47]
Offertory Hymn [GIRM, #74]
Communion Hymn [GIRM, #86]
Concluding Hymn [GIRM, #90]

(The terms: *Processional Hymn*, *Preparation of the Gifts Hymn* and *Recessional Hymn* may also be used since their titles describe and accompany the ritual movement taking place.)

The Mass formally ends with the final dismissal as part of the Concluding Rites. Though a hymn is helpful to end the Mass in a celebratory way following the dismissal, it is not called for in the Order of Mass. An instrumental postlude or choral anthem may take the place of a hymn.

3. All Verses, Verses Some Verses

It is appropriate to sing all the verses of a hymn. However, hymns with an excessive number of verses might be trimmed. In this case, it is best to select and announce the most appropriate verses, which may not be contiguous.

“Care must be taken in the treatment of the texts of psalms, hymns, and songs in the Liturgy. Verses and stanza should not be omitted arbitrarily in ways that risk distorting their content. While not all musical pieces require that all verses

or stanzas be sung, verses should be omitted only if the text to be sung forms a coherent whole." [STL, #143]

The Entrance Hymn [Processional Hymn]

"The purpose of this chant is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priests and ministers." [GIRM, #47]

Offertory Hymn [Hymn During the Preparation of the Gifts]

The procession of the gifts is accompanied by an Offertory chant "which continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar." [STL, #173]

Agnus Dei/Lamb of God

All music ministers should note that an over-extended sign of peace should be avoided [GIRM, #82]. The cantor should be at his/her stand and ready to begin chanting the Agnus Dei, or Lamb of God, at the *beginning* of the fraction rite (breaking of the Bread) [GIRM, #83].

Communion Hymn

"While the priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion chant is begun." [GIRM, #86]

Concluding Hymn [Recessional Hymn]

". . . the procession of ministers should be arranged in such a way that it finishes during the final stanza." [STL, #199]

4. Gestures

A. Singing Cues

"At times, it may be appropriate to use a modest gesture that invites participation and clearly indicates when the congregation is to begin, but gestures should be used sparingly only when genuinely needed." [STL, #38]

B. Sit/Stand/Kneel

For parish Sunday liturgy, it is not necessary to instruct the assembly on proper times to sit, stand and kneel. This may however, be helpful for some weddings and funerals. The priest/celebrant may prefer to make these gestures, so check with him. A gesture is never needed at the Alleluia, since that Rite inherently summons the assembly to stand. All instructions should be brief as possible.

5. Reception of Communion

In the spirit of prayerfulness and maintaining a liturgical flow, the cantor should be mindful of all movement in the sanctuary. The particular mode of receiving Communion for a cantor will vary from parish to parish and should be determined ahead of time particularly so the priest celebrant or other ministers are aware. The pastoral staff should be mindful that “care should be taken that singers can receive Communion with ease.” [GIRM, #86] However, it should not draw any unnecessary attention or be a distraction. There are four suggested scenarios that might be employed.

Scenarios:

- a. **The cantor receives Communion as the hymn begins.**
Utilize two cantors, or have the choir begin as the cantor receives the sacrament. If the organist is also a singer, this is the one time that it *may* be appropriate for him or her to sing a verse or two from the console.
- b. **The cantor receives Communion after the hymn.**
The song is begun right away and concluded in a timely fashion.
- c. **The cantor receives Communion as the organist introduces the hymn.**
The singing begins after the cantor receives the sacrament. The cantor should be among the first liturgical ministers to receive Communion.
- d. **The cantor and organist receive Communion and the music begins afterward.**

NOTE: Often cantors sing at multiple Masses on a given Sunday. Canon Law allows for the reception of communion a second time on the same day.⁸ Parish practice should be discussed with the pastor.

⁸ Canon 921, § 2: The 1983 Code of Canon Law

6. Cantors with Physical Disabilities

The church warmly welcomes into ministry qualified individuals who possess physical disabilities. Giving witness to the acceptance of God's gifts and working publicly through physical challenges can be a source of strength to a faith community at worship. Adaptations to the method of preparation and rehearsal may need to be made, and the location for leadership may need to remain stationary. The parish should provide an adequate cantor podium and microphone.



CANTOR

Liturgical Minister

	<u>Psalmist</u>	<u>Leader of Song</u>
<i>ROLE</i>	Primary responsibility called for in the Rite	Incidental role – As needed
<i>WHO</i>	Persons who possess “the ability for singing and a facility in correct pronunciation and diction.” [GIRM, #102]	Singing, pronunciation, diction. Chant. Teacher of music.
<i>WHAT</i>	Present the Word of God in song. May Intone the Gospel acclamation and versicle.	Sing verses of songs and responses. Take part in singing with the entire gathered assembly. Teach new music.
<i>WHERE</i>	Ambo	A location seen by all without attention from the liturgical action. Not visible when a congregation is singing very familiar responses, acclamations, or songs that do not include cantor verses. [STL, #39]
<i>WHEN</i>	Ministry is challenging and not convenient. It commands flexibility. Scheduling cannot always be at the requested times, though assignments that permit families to worship together are noble. Rotation is often the best policy.	
<i>WHY</i>	God has bestowed on you the gift of song. You have a responsibility to use this gift. The church needs you.	
<i>HOW</i>	Proclaim the text of the Psalm (the Word) with clarity, conviction, and sensitivity to the text, the musical setting, and those who are listening. [STL, #35]	Transitional practice: Cantor’s voice amplified. Goal: Cantor’s voice not heard above the congregation. [STL, #38]

D) Scheduling and Serving

Having a sufficient number of ministers available to serve at each mass is an important dimension in creating the prayerful environment for Mass and attending to the spiritual needs of the community gathered. Each minister is responsible to fulfill the assignments or arrange for substitutes if necessary. Scheduling methods will vary from parish to parish.

- When known in advance, particularly in vacation season, proactively inform the Scheduling Coordinator (Director of Music, Organist, Administrative Assistant, other) about days that you will be unavailable to serve, so that you will not be scheduled on those days.
- If you cannot serve for the time assigned, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Sometimes, the Scheduling Coordinator will want to make the substitutions since they will know which cantors are quick studies and who are the best vocal matches for the particular season of music. The preferred substitute procedure is to be clearly communicated to all.
- Be willing to serve without a “swap” if asked and you are available. It is a ministry and we should be willing to serve when needed and available. You never know when you might be in need of someone to fill in for you in an emergency!
- If the organist or guitarist is not present due to a last minute emergency, be ready to sing a’cappella. Consult with the priest/celebrant to determine any elements that might be best recited. Also, know the readings and the flow of the liturgical seasons, so that appropriate substitutions in the music can be made if that would be more conducive to a’cappella singing. A rule of thumb is to make adaptations based on what will best help people to pray.
- Arrive 20-30 minutes before Mass but check with the Director of Music for the best time to report. Every so often, despite everyone’s best intentions, an oversight in the cantor schedule can occur. A cantor who has a reputation for late arrival creates tension among the other liturgical ministers who are left wondering if this will be another late arrival or a missed Mass. This scenarios is disruptive to the prayer of others and should be avoided.
- The sacristy is a place for the priests and deacons to prayerfully prepare for Mass. To help maintain that spirit of prayerfulness for all ministers before Mass, please limit any social conversation while in the sacristy. The same guidelines apply to the choir area or loft.

E) Minister Preparation

- Sometimes the Director of Music will prepare a binder for the cantor every week, seasonally or for major events. By arriving early you can look through the binder to familiarize yourself with the music. If this is not the case and you are responsible for your own music, place all loose-leaf music that you will sing in order in a binder. If this is the binder that you will use at Mass, it could be in the appropriate liturgical color, or just generic black. Avoid using fluorescent colors or binders with inappropriate pictures or patterns. Often a hymnal will serve fine for much of the music with just a few pieces in a binder.
- At home, prayerfully reflect on the Responsorial psalm that you will sing as well as the other Scripture readings of the liturgy. Seek an understanding of how the psalm is a response not just to the first reading, but to all of the readings as a whole. How is the psalm a bridge carrying the assembly from the first reading to an encounter with Christ in the Gospel?⁹
- Review all of the music that you will sing for melodic, rhythmic and textual challenges. It is good policy to sing through all of the music at least once, but specifically the challenging spots.
- Rehearse with the organist, pianist, guitarist and perhaps the choir. In some churches, this is a weekly or monthly regularly scheduled rehearsal. In others, it may be seasonal, or within the choir rehearsal. Regardless, see to it in advance that you are comfortable with the music. Rehearsing *only* immediately before Mass is not good policy. In fact, rehearsing immediately before Mass should be avoided – most especially if you are in the church – since it poses as a distraction to the assembly gathered for prayer.
- Upon arrival at the church, check your microphone and podium. Make sure the sound system is on before the start of the Mass.
- Consult with the organist/pianist/guitarist one last time. This is an important expectation and needs to be accomplished in a timely fashion before any preludes or pre-service music is begun.
- Update your binder as needed. Some churches may make use of attractive liturgical binders, and music with your notes on it can be transferred into that binder. This may be shared among several cantors. Check for any last minute changes in the liturgy – RICA, baptism, renewal of vows, etc. If the Prayer of the Faithful is to be sung, have a copy in your binder.
- If the cantor makes any pre-Mass announcements, make sure you have the text early in advance to familiarize yourself.
- Never sing the psalm from a loose piece of paper. It is the Word of God and must be respected above a disposable piece of paper. Have it in a binder or have it at the ambo before the Mass.

⁹ The Ministry of Cantors, p. 8

- Spend some time in prayer before Mass begins to prepare and center yourself on being a Minister of God's Word.

F) Proper Attire for Sunday Liturgy

In the language of the liturgy, the ambo (sometime referred to as the lectern or pulpit) is, in effect, the throne for the Word of God. The ambo is the altar of the Word. As such, all that we do and how we approach that throne should speak of the dignity and respect for what is enthroned upon it. As cantors then, our actions and gestures, our demeanor and our appearance should convey that attitude of respect, which helps to create an atmosphere of prayerfulness in the liturgy.

"The sacred garment common to ordained and instituted members of any rank, is the alb, to be tied at the waist with a cincture unless it is made so as to fit even without such." [GIRM, #335]

"In the diocese of the United State of America, acolytes, altar servers, lectors and other lay ministers may wear the alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate and dignified clothing." [GIRM, #339]

If an alb is not worn then dressing appropriately, in all seasons, is important in contributing to this prayerful atmosphere. "You should be drawing attention to the Word of God and not to yourself. You should dress in a simple and respectful manner, which shows that you recognize the dignity of that which you are doing."¹⁰

Although it is not necessary to dress in liturgical colors, be mindful of the liturgical season and the particular occasion, and dress accordingly. For example, it would be appropriate to wear bright, floral dresses during the Easter season, but not Lent. Wear red on Pentecost. Don't wear Christmas ties during Advent. Dress should be suitable for the occasion including weddings, funerals, First Communions, etc.

¹⁰ The New St. Joseph Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word, (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 2003), p. 6

Appropriate

For Women

Modest:
Dresses, skirt suits
(Appropriate length)
Pant suits, dress pants
Sweaters & blouses
Shoes (not sneakers)
(Quiet soles are best)

For Men

Modest:
Dress shirt w/ tie
Sport coats
Suits w/ ties
Collared shirts (not polo)
Shoes (not sneakers)
(Quiet soles are best)

Inappropriate

For Women

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
Tube or strapless tops, spaghetti straps
Bare midriff
Short skirts, shorts
Thong shoes, flip-flops or beach footwear
Tights, spandex leg coverings
Tight or low cut slacks, form fitting clothes or blouses

For Men

Jeans (no matter the cost or label)
T-shirts (with or without writing)
Shorts (dress or otherwise)
Thong shoes, flip-flops or beach footwear
Sneakers

Note:

Although you may not be scheduled for a particular Mass, because of scheduling difficulties you may be called upon to serve to fill in for someone else. With this in mind it would be helpful, where possible, if you come to church dressed for this eventuality. Cantors are liturgical ministers who are called upon to model liturgy for the entire assembly.

G) Good Practices for Cantors in Serving at Mass

“The liturgy of the word must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation.”
[GIRM, #56]

In the recent changes promulgated in the latest issue of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), there is an emphasis on maintaining periods of silence throughout the liturgy to ensure an atmosphere of reverence and prayerfulness. The cantor plays an important role in helping to foster this environment both before and after the responsorial psalm. This may mean a slight modification to the current practices of our cantors to be more intentional about creating these silent pauses.

- Remain attentive members of the gathered assembly and never constitute a distraction.
- The music space (cantor podium, etc.) is to reflect the sacredness of the music ministry. Avoid the appearance of disorganization, and be free from clutter. [STL, #100]
- Drink water in the liturgical space discreetly and **ONLY** if absolutely necessary for effective ministry. Moistness is necessary for good vocal production. It is preferred that the cantor sips water before Mass and does not bring water into the liturgical space. However, hydration may sometimes be needed during Mass, especially when the cantor is struggling with a cold. A cup or non-descript water bottle with a straw is to be used. Water bottles that require head tilting are not to be used. Look away from the assembly when drinking water.
- Prepare the music ahead of time as discussed above.
- Maintain a dignified posture during those times in the liturgy that you are NOT singing. Be attentive to the other parts of the Mass. You are modeling liturgy for the rest of the assembly.
- Sit quietly and respectfully at all times during the liturgy. Avoid chatting and unnecessary conversation with other ministers around you, which can create a distraction for people in the assembly.
- “Walk to the ambo with a dignified, deliberate pace. Do not run.”¹¹ Do not tiptoe. Soft shoes are quieter and more comfortable.
- Once Mass begins, the altar of sacrifice is the focal point of the liturgy and is revered with a bow. When approaching the ambo for the responsorial psalm it is appropriate to bow to the altar particularly if you must pass in front of it. Even if the tabernacle might be in close proximity, you bow to the altar, not the tabernacle, before stepping in front of the ambo to sing the responsorial psalm. See Section ‘H’ for further clarification.

¹¹ Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word, p. 6

- After the responsorial psalm, leave a brief period of silence before stepping away from the ambo. Say a brief prayer to yourself as a way of passing. It may seem a little awkward at first but it will become second nature after some time and the congregation will become accustomed to it.
- If passing in front of the altar when returning to the song leader podium, bow again to the altar. Otherwise, there is no need for an additional bow at the end of the psalm.
- If the priest-celebrant is an enthusiastic participant in the singing, don't compete. While it is the responsibility of each priest to know the moments when his own singing is most appropriate and appreciated as a model for participation, and to know moments when not to sing (Mystery of Faith, etc.) it may be best for the cantor to step away from the microphone when the celebrant is singing into his.

H) To Bow or Not to Bow. . .and Other Postures

In liturgical language, a bow is a sign or gesture of reverence and is appropriate at certain points during the liturgy. Likewise, it can be inappropriate at other times. Some helpful hints on when to bow or not:

- Whenever you pass in front of the altar you should bow to the altar.
- For the cantor at **Sunday Mass**, as covered above, you also bow to the altar before you sing the responsorial psalm.
- Immediately after singing the Sanctus, or Holy, Holy, Holy the cantor should kneel. The cantor should stand at the microphone for Mystery of Faith acclamation and Great Amen, depending on how well the assembly knows these chants. If the assembly knows them well, it may be best for the cantor to remain kneeling. If a kneeler is not easily accessible, the cantor should remain standing during the Eucharistic Prayer while focusing on the altar.
- When serving in ministry during the liturgy, your actions help to model for the congregation the actions and gestures they should also be using during the Mass. For example,
 1. If the *Confiteor* ("I confess") is prayed during the Act of Penitence, you should strike your breast three times at the words "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault".
 2. Bowing during the Creed at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

3. Bowing your head before receiving Communion under both species.
“When receiving Holy Communion, the communicant bows his or her head before the sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister.” [GIRM, #160]
4. Immediately following the Communion hymn, while the Eucharistic Ministers, Celebrant and Deacon are purifying the vessels, the Cantor should join the assembly in kneeling. The Cantor stands at the Prayer after Communion.



Appendices

A) Embracer of the New Translation of the Roman Missal

The cantor has a newly developed role to play – that of embracer of the new translation of the Roman Missal. Although we have had the new missal since Advent, 2010 there is much work that still needs to be done. Renewal of the liturgy continues and with any change, there is debate and often resistance. Many of the texts of the Ordinary and Propers of the Mass are intended to be sung and the cantor will be compelled to embrace these new chants and teach new music associated with. It is imperative that ministers in the church be familiar with the changes and the reasons behind them, so that they can be effective contributors to the strengthening of the faith of the assembly. Anything to the contrary may weaken the faith.

B) Weddings

Cantors at weddings are to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the same manner at all parish liturgies. The roles of cantor and soloist are to be understood in their proper context and guest singers may participate in either or both roles according to their abilities and to specific parish guidelines. It is the responsibility of the visiting singer to provide credentials. If the singer is qualified vocally but credentials as a cantor cannot be provided, then it is best for the guest to serve only as a soloist, while a trained cantor fulfills the liturgical role.

“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].
Soloists may also sing at the prelude.

Please refer to the diocesan wedding guidelines for additional information.

C) Funerals

As for weddings, any visiting singers are to provide credentials before being accepted to serve in the role of cantor.

Families will sometimes have requests born out of emotion and sentimentality, and an effective music ministry will help catechize relatives and friends with due compassion while at the same time upholding sound liturgical practice.

“Funeral music should express the Paschal Mystery and the Christian’s share in it. Since music can evoke strong feelings, it should be chosen with care. It should console the participants and “help to create in them a spirit of hope in Christ’s victory over death and in the Christian’s share in that victory.” Secular music, even though it may reflect on the background, character, interests, or personal preferences of the deceased or mourners, is not appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy.” [STL, #246 / Order of Christian Funerals, #30-31]

“Music should never be used to memorialize the deceased, but rather to give praise to the Lord, whose Paschal Sacrifice has freed us from the bonds of death.” [STL, #248]

Please refer to the diocesan funeral guidelines for additional information.

D) Liturgy of the Hours

“When Christians have gathered in the early morning, at day’s end, just before retiring, the simple prayers for the individual have grown more elaborate. The daily assemblies of Christians gave shape to what became known as the divine office or ‘liturgy of the hours.’ In recent times, these prayers have been restored to some of their original simplicity and are again being prayed in parish churches and Christian households.”¹²

The structure of the liturgy of the hours follows laws of its own and incorporates in its own way elements found in other Christian celebrations. Thus it is so constructed that, after a hymn, there is always psalmody, then a long or short reading of sacred Scripture, and finally prayer of petition. [LOH, #33]

¹² RitualSong Hymnal, #1, GIA Publications, Inc. Chicago, © 2002

There is flexibility in the method of praying the office. Collaboration with the priest/celebrant in the preparation of the liturgy is necessary. Some elements to consider:

1. Breakdown of sung and spoken psalms
2. Method of psalm singing and possible inclusion of spoken antiphons. "Responsorial psalmody" should only be used if "alternatum psalmody" is not possible.
3. Duration of silences
4. Format of the Intercessions

The cantor sings the psalms and canticles at the ambo, but leads other music from a separate podium.

E) School Liturgies

Cantors at school liturgies are to fulfill their role in the same manner as at parish liturgies.

Student cantors need to be fully participating members of the assembly, having received First Eucharist. They are to have a good voice for cantor ministry, to sing with volume, clarity and strength, a proper disposition to serve as a cantor and be regularly practicing their faith.



A CANTOR'S PRAYER

*Everlasting Father,
in the beginning your Word brought forth life
and called us into being.*

*In the fullness of time,
Jesus, your Son, became flesh and lived among us.*

*In the upper room, after the meal,
He and his apostles sang a hymn
before their journey to the Mount of Olives.*

*In an act of everlasting love
He opened his arms on the cross
And by his death,
He intoned the primordial song of the liturgy,
The canticle of victory over sin and death.*

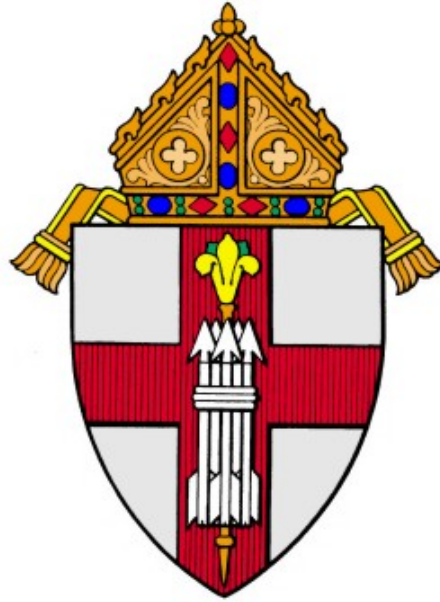
*Lord, you dwell in each human person
in the place where music takes its source.*

*Open my lips,
that my mouth may declare your praise.
Open my ears,
that I may know the song of your people.
Open my heart and strengthen my mind,
that I may live the holy words we sing.*

*Amen.*¹³



¹³ Adapted from *The New St. Joseph Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word*, (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 2003) p. 6 and *STL*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007), #1, 4 and 7.



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