



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF
CONFIRMATION WITHIN MASS

NOTES ON LITURGICAL MUSIC



INTRODUCTION

In selecting liturgical music for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation within Mass, the following guiding principles should be followed.

Liturgical Music is for the Glorification of God and the Sanctification of His People

The primary purpose of liturgical music is to give God glory and praise. This is why we sing. We come to lift up our hearts to the Lord. In exchange, God gives us His grace so that we may grow in holiness. These vertical and horizontal dimensions must be kept in the proper proportion and relationship as liturgical music is selected.

Liturgical Music Must be Authentic and Organic to the Ritual

Liturgical music does not exist separately from the liturgical action. Rather, it is part of the Sacred Liturgy. Liturgical music must always reverence the Rite of which it is a part and which it accompanies. For the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Liturgical Music must reflect what is taking place: the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the Baptized as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Confirmation is to be understood by its intimate connection to the Sacrament of Baptism.

Liturgical Music Must Accurately Articulate the Faith

Liturgical music has the awesome responsibility of catechesis and formation in the faith. Words mean something. We need to make sure that we are singing what we believe.

Liturgical Music Builds Full, Conscious, and Active Participation of the Faithful

Liturgical music assists the faithful to truly lift up their hearts and to enter into the mystery being celebrated. It should never be or give the impression of a performance.

Liturgical Music Helps Add Solemnity

Liturgical music and its execution contribute to the solemnity of the Sacred Liturgy. The Sacrament of Confirmation is an important moment in the life of the sons and daughters of God. Therefore, every effort should be made to make it as noble as possible. This includes instruments and the way they are played as well as the use of a choir.

Liturgical Music Reflects the Celebration

Whenever the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred on a Sunday in Lent, Easter, or on a Feast or Solemnity, and the Ritual Mass for Confirmation is not used, the music should reflect that celebration of the Universal Church. Care should be taken not to introduce music of Confirmation into the propers of these Masses, which bear their own character and message.

PRELUDE

Music at this time can help quiet and focus the gathered assembly for the sacred rites that are about to be celebrated. Please note that before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence also be observed in the church so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner. It may be sung music or instrumental music.

PROCESSION OF CANDIDATES

Confirmandi should be in their seats before the liturgical procession starts. This means that the procession of confirmandi should begin at least a few minutes before the time Mass is scheduled to begin. This means that if the ceremony is at 10:00 a.m., the procession should begin at 9:55 a.m.

ENTRANCE CHANT

“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 priest and ministers” (GIRM 47). Music that is known by most of the participants is the best option for the Entrance Procession. Of course, the texts for the chants provided in the *Roman Missal* and *Roman/Simple Gradual* are to serve as inspiration for any alternative chants. These are listed on the suggestion sheet included here.

When the Ritual Mass for Confirmation is used, the two Entrance Chants provided in the *Roman Missal* for Confirmation give excellent inspiration for music planning. The two texts provided (Ezekiel 36:25-26 and Romans 5:-5; 8:11) speak not only of the Holy Spirit but give clear allusions to the Sacrament of Baptism, as the Spirit is “poured” into our hearts. When occurring on a Sunday in Lent or Easter, or on a Feast or Solemnity, music proper to those celebrations should be chosen.

THE GLORIA

The Gloria is to be sung at all celebrations of Confirmation *except* on the *Sundays of Lent*. The text of the Gloria must be the official text from the Roman Missal. Please note that this principle also applies to the other acclamations of the Mass (the Sanctus, Memorial Acclamations, Lamb of God, etc.) Preference is given to sung-through settings of the Gloria, although refrains may be used if necessary at this time. It is not necessary that one of the Diocesan suggested settings be used, provided the Assembly is able to properly participate.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

When using the Ritual Mass for Confirmation, the responsorial psalm should be taken from the Conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation section of the Lectionary for Mass: Ritual Masses (Volume IV). Confirmation Ceremonies held on Sundays, during the Octave of Easter, or on Feasts and Solemnities must use the Responsorial Psalm proper to the specific liturgical day. Only proper settings of the provided text may be used. *Paraphrased Psalms are not acceptable and strictly prohibited.*

THE ANOINTING WITH SACRED CHRISM

Music during the Anointing with Sacred Chrism should not over power the liturgical action taking place. Music at this time should be subtle and subdued. The volume should be low so that the Bishop and the confirmand can hear each other in the dialogue during the anointing. Hymn texts should reference the Holy Spirit. Instrumental music is an option at this time, although, music which engenders the active participation of the Assembly is encouraged. Please note that the Litany of the Saints is not properly to be sung at this time.

OFFERTORY CHANT

The texts for the chants provided in the *Roman Missal* and *Roman/Simple Gradual* are to serve as inspiration for any alternative chants. These are listed on the suggestion sheet included here. Offertory is an appropriate time for the Choir to sing an anthem that is textually appropriate and of an appropriate length.

COMMUNION CHANT

Communion Chants should be consistent with our Catholic theology and belief about the Eucharist. Inappropriate texts or unclear articulations of Eucharistic theology will not be approved. Psalms are an excellent choice for the Communion procession. Pride of place is to be given to those antiphons inspired by the given liturgical texts as noted on the music suggestion list (Hebrews 6:4 and Psalm 34:6, 9).

SONG OF PRAISE AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

Songs of Praise after Holy Communion (nor “meditations”) will not be used for Confirmation ceremonies.

MUSIC DURING THE INCENSATION OF THE ALTAR & GIFTS

The Bishop will use incense at the beginning of Mass for the altar and cross, at the Gospel, and at the Preparation of the Gifts. Singing or instrumental music should continue during the incensation at the beginning of Mass and during the preparation of the gifts.

SELECTION OF THE SUNG ORDINARY OF THE MASS

It is not necessary that the proposed Diocesan settings of the *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei* be used at parish confirmations. Although, when several parishes are joined together, care must be taken to use a setting familiar to those assembled. Extreme pastoral consideration should be given to singing the Ordinary in Latin, given the mixed assemblies of family and friends who are gathered for the celebration of this Sacrament.