



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

WORSHIP OFFICE

TO: Pastors, Music and Liturgy Coordinators
CC: Very Rev. James A. Misko
FROM: David Wood, Director of Office of Worship, and Andrea Ramos, Associate Director for Sacred Music
SUBJECT: Temporary Music Guidelines
DATE: 5/8/20

The following is a set of suggested temporary guidelines for Music Ministry in the Diocese of Austin. It is offered in light of documented cases where choirs have experienced rapid spread of COVID-19 when singing. Pastors and Music Directors should work together to ensure the safety of music ministers and parishioners and apply these guidelines as they best fit their resources and worship spaces. These guidelines fall on the side of protection in an environment which still has many unknowns.

It is important to remember that as important as singing is for the participation of the faithful in the liturgy, it is not the only means. The Bishops of the United States noted in *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*:

12. Participation in the Sacred Liturgy must be “internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear, and cooperate with heavenly grace.”¹ Even when listening to the various prayers and readings of the Liturgy or to the singing of the choir, the assembly continues to participate actively as they “unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God.”² “In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural.”³

¹ Sacred Congregation for Rites, *Musicam Sacram (Instruction on Music in the Liturgy)* (MS), no. 15, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*; see SC, no. 11.

² *Ibid.*

³ Pope John Paul II, (Address to Bishops of the Northwest Provinces of the USCCB), in *Ad Limina Addresses: The Addresses of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States, February 1998–October 1998* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998), no. 3.



- To avoid the spraying of droplets, congregational singing should be temporarily discouraged.
- Because the Eucharistic Acclamations are key parts for the participation of the faithful, they, along with the Gloria, should be temporarily recited.
- Remove hymnals and missalettes from pews.
- When you feel that it is safe for congregational singing, consider printed worship aids that can be placed in recycling bins after mass. (Please note that the music in any worship aids should be music from your hymnals, for copyright purposes).
- Consider instrumental music for the next few weeks.
- If music ministers are present, limit the number of ministers to one cantor and accompanist.
- Social distancing rules apply to ensembles and scholas. A small schola may be present only if the music space is large enough to spread singers with 8'-10' in every direction.
- Music ministers, as is the case with all parishioners, are encouraged to wear face masks and remove them when singing.
- The choir loft/area and rehearsal space should be sanitized before and after each rehearsal and Mass (this includes keyboard, instrument(s), music stands, books, chairs, mics, mic-stands, and anything else that is used or exposed).
- Singers should take personal items like water bottles and Kleenex with them at the end of rehearsal and Mass, and not leave anything in music areas.
- The music area, when located near congregational sitting, should be roped so that parishioners do not come in close contact with ministers or walk into the music space (this is to avoid conversations and spraying of droplets, or cross contamination).
- Music ministers should be placed far away from the congregation. Seating parishioners near the choir at Mass should be avoided. The assembly should be seated no closer than 20 feet from the choir. An option would be to rope off the pews near the choir area. Also, consider re-configuring the choir area to meet safety protocols.
- Always respect copyrights for printed or mechanical reproduction. Contact publishers for annual licenses.
- Consider the need for longer or multiple hymns at the Communion Rite, as the communicants will be spaced further apart in procession.
- At appropriate parts of the Mass, consider texts and tunes which bring comfort.
- When in doubt, err on the side of caution and health.

Please remember these strategic actions:

- Remind people to wash hands frequently.
- Do not touch mouth, nose and eyes.
- Facemasks assist in hindering respiratory transmission. Encourage all to wear them.