

## **Wedding Music Guidelines**

(Insert in Tab R, Handbook for Parish Pastoral Leadership)

*The celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. As such, the marriage ceremony must maintain the norms of good sacramental liturgy. A pre-eminent aspect of good liturgy is the use of liturgical music within the rites of the Church. In order to ensure that church norms are followed, the planning of the Rite of Matrimony and the choosing of appropriate liturgical music should be done by the couple, the presider, and the parish music minister. Visiting priests should observe all church norms as well as established parish policy.*

### **Essential Music**

Music chosen for a wedding ceremony must bring all who attend the wedding into full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy. With this in mind, the following is a list of times when music is essential to the wedding liturgy:

#### **The Liturgy of the Word**

- Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia or Lenten Acclamation)
- Responsorial Psalm

#### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Holy, Holy
- Memorial Acclamation
- Great Amen
- Communion Song

At all these times, the music is to be **sung by all** gathered, not just by a music group, choir or a cantor. In order to foster participation, a rehearsal for the wedding assembly should be held immediately before beginning the liturgy.

### **Other Music**

There are other moments when music can be used prayerfully at liturgy.

#### **The Liturgy of the Word**

- Processional (usually instrumental)
- Gathering Song (sung by all)
- Invocation to the Prayers of the Faithful (i.e. Lord, hear our prayer) (sung by all)

#### **The Rite of Marriage**

- Acclamation after marriage vows and/or rings have been exchanged (sung by all)

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Preparation of Gifts (can be instrumental, sung by cantor, or music group)
- Lamb of God (can be sung by cantor, music group or by all)
- Hymn of Praise (can be sung after communion by all, music group or cantor)
- Recessional (usually instrumental, but can be sung by music group, cantor or all)

### **Appropriate Musical Choices**

The Church offers this guidance when choosing particular music for any wedding liturgy. "Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should grow out of three judgments...

- The liturgical judgment: Is the music's text, form, placement and style congruent with the nature of liturgy?
- The musical judgment: Is the music technically, aesthetically and expressively good, irrespective of musical idiom or style?
- The pastoral judgment: Will it help this assembly to pray?" (Liturgical Music Today #29)

Therefore, rarely is secular music (popular love songs) appropriate for use during the wedding liturgy. Secular music is best sung at the wedding reception, the rehearsal dinner or other wedding and engagement festivities.

The church documents make no provision for pre-recorded music during the wedding liturgy. Live liturgical music with active participation of the assembly is normative. If a parish must use pre-recorded music at a wedding liturgy on rare occasions, that music should meet the liturgical judgment quoted above.

### **Parish Wedding Music Guidelines**

Each parish of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe may develop its own particular wedding music guidelines based on these archdiocesan guidelines. In the parish policy more can be said about which pieces of music are familiar and suitable to the parish as well as to the wedding liturgy and can list musicians who are available to minister at weddings in the parish. It is recommended that parish musicians are the first choice as wedding music ministers since they know the parish, its church, its instruments, the assembly's repertoire, etc.

### **Special Rites and Customs**

Certain cultural traditions may celebrate additional rituals in the wedding liturgy (Native American, Filipino, Eastern European, Vietnamese, Hispanic, etc.) Music may or may not accompany these rites. For particular insight in Hispanic wedding rituals, read the booklet, *Gift and Promise: Customs and Traditions in Hispanic Rites of Marriage*, *Don y Promesa: Costumbres y Tradiciones en los Rito Matrimoniales Hispanos*, written by the Instituto de Liturgica Hispana and published by Oregon Catholic Press (OCP, 1-800-548-8749). For particular questions cultural rites and customs, call the Office of Worship at 831-8194.

**Archdiocesan Office of Worship**

The Office of Worship (831-8194) is ready to assist parishes in developing parish wedding music guidelines. You are free to reprint these archdiocesan guidelines for couples, musicians, wedding planners and anyone else who may be involved in choosing appropriate wedding music.

**Wedding Planning Resources**

There are many Catholic wedding planning resources available from various publishers. Some useful publications are: Celebrating Marriage, ed. Paul Covino (OCP), Parish Weddings by Austin Fleming (LTP), Your Wedding Music, (LTP, 1-800-933-1800). These books are also available for review at the Archdiocesan Ministry Resource Center (831- 8179).