

Wedding Music Guidelines

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

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.

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

To help you become familiar with some musical options before your initial meeting with the church musicians, here is a list of music to help you.

PRELUDE MUSIC

Special prelude music can be chosen from the many selections listed below. Typically we can begin playing prelude music when the guests arrive; between fifteen and twenty minutes before the wedding begins.

SEATING OF MOTHERS

About three to five minutes before the wedding is to begin, the mothers of the groom and bride, respectively, are seated. This takes about two minutes. If there is a Unity Candle, then once both mothers arrive at their seats, they then go up to the back altar, light taper candles and then proceed to light the two candles beside the one Unity Candle. This process takes about four minutes. Appropriate musical selections are found below.

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	Bach
Air	Bach
Canon in D	Pachelbel
Ave Maria	Schubert
Air from 'Water Music'	Handel
Sheep May Safely Graze	Bach

Bridesmaids & Bridal Procession Music

If you would like, please chose one piece for the BRIDESMAIDS PROCESSION and one for the BRIDE. You may also chose one piece of music for the entire procession.

Canon in D	Pachelbel
Rigaudon	Campra
Prince of Denmark March	Clarke
Processional	Handel
Trumpet Tune	Clarke

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Reading I

Responsorial Psalm

Please choose from the following options:

Psalm 23: My Shepherd is the Lord	Gelineau, SJ
Psalm 34: Taste and See	Haugen
Psalm 103: The Lord is Kind and Merciful	Haugen
Psalm 118: This is the Day	Haugen
Psalm 122: Let us Go Rejoicing	Joncas
Psalm 128: Blest are Those Who Love You	Haugen
Psalm 145: I Will Praise your Name	Haugen

Reading II

Gospel Acclamation

WEDDING CEREMONY

Wedding Vows

Exchange of Rings

Unity Candle (optional)

The lighting of the unity candle takes all of about one minute, so choosing music that has good spots to stop is helpful. Please choose from the following options if you chose to do a Unity Candle:

When Love is Found	Wren
Where You Go	Callaghan
Bridegroom and Bride	Slane

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

You will need to chose music from this portion ONLY if you are going to have a wedding MASS. If you are having wedding CEREMONY, then proceed to the section marked BLESSED VIRGIN MARY DEDICATION.

Presentation of Gifts

This section also takes all of about one minute. You can also choose music from the section marked 'Unity Candle.'

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	Bach
Love is the Sunlight	Bunessan

Music During Communion

It is appropriate to choose a hymn that 'expresses outwardly the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart and to highlight more the "communitarian" character of the communion procession.' (#86 Roman Missal 2004)

I Received the Living God	Proulx
Draw us in the Spirit's Tether	Dearmer
Now in this Banquet	Haugen
Panis Angelicus	Franck
Take and Eat	Porter

Blessed Virgin Mary Dedication (optional)

Ave Maria	Schubert
Ave Maria	Bach/Gounod
Ave Maria	Arcadelt

Recessional

Rondeau	Mouret
Ode to Joy	Beethoven
Arrival of the Queen of Sheba	Handel
Toccata from Symphony #5	Widor
Wedding March	Mendelssohn
Hornpipe from Water Music	Handel
'Réjouissance' from Fireworks Music	Handel
The Heavens are Telling	Marcello
Trumpet Tune	Stanley

Suggested Music Selections from Journeysongs

The list of music selections below is a good guide, but does not include all possible options deemed liturgically appropriate for a Catholic wedding. If you are considering any options not found below, they will need to be approved by the Parish Priest.

To hear examples, click “View Songs” on this page: <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/hymnals/B20/journeysongs-third-edition>.

Prelude(s): (A) on Planning Sheet: Choose 1-2 pieces or defer to the Accompanist to play some liturgically appropriate instrumental or vocal music before the wedding. The Preludes set the tone as people are gathering for the ceremony.

Ave Maria (Bach/Gounod)
Ave Maria (Schubert)
I Will Be Here (Steven Curtis Chapman)
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (JS #709)
Panis Angelicus (Franck)
The Lord’s Prayer (Malotte)
The Prayer (Sager/Foster)
When Love is Found (JS #543)
Wherever You Go (JS #541)

Processional: (B) on Planning Sheet: Choose One Piece

Note: This is usually an instrumental piece. Be aware that if you look for a recording of these pieces online they are often played by a full or small orchestra and not just by a pianist. Try searching for a recording of ‘piano only.’ Only one processional piece is accepted. These selections are somewhat interchangeable with the suggestions for the Recessional.

Air from “Water Music” (Handel)
Canon in D (Pachelbel)
Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring (Bach)
O God Beyond All Praising instrumental or sung (JS #589)
Panis Angelicus (Franck)
Trumpet Tune (Purcell)
Trumpet Voluntary (Clarke)

Gloria and Eucharistic Acclamations: Mass of Renewal (Stephan)

Optional Procession to Blessed Virgin Mary / Bringing flowers to parents/grandparents

Ave Maria (Bach/Gounod)
Ave Maria (Schubert)
Bridal Prayer (Copeland)
How Beautiful (Twila Paris)
When Love is Found (JS #543)
Wherever You Go (JS #541)

Offertory Hymn:

Be Thou My Vision (JS #646)
For the Beauty of the Earth (JS #609)
Here I Am, Lord (JS #818)
Lord of All Hopefulness (JS #647)
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (JS #709)
Prayer of St. Francis (JS #702)
The Servant Song (JS #816)
When Love is Found (JS #543)
Where Charity and Love Prevail (JS# 720)
Wherever You Go (JS #541)

Communion Hymn:

At That First Eucharist (JS #804)
Behold the Lamb (JS #785)
Bread of Life (JS #805)
Christ Before Us (JS #640)
Gift of Finest Wheat (JS #791)
Love Has Come (JS #711)
One Bread, One Body (JS #793)
Only A Shadow (JS #676)

Recessional:

Allegro Maestoso (Handel)
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (Bach)
O God Beyond All Praising instrumental or sung (JS #589)
Ode to Joy (Beethoven)
Rondeau (Mouret)
Spring – from “The Four Seasons” (Vivaldi)
Trumpet Tune (Purcell)
Trumpet Voluntary (Clarke)
Wedding March (Mendelssohn)