

St. Mary Worship Commission: Liturgical and Music Ministries

Revised on August 4, 2009

Organization: The Worship Commission brings together all the liturgical and music ministries of the parish, to help celebrate the Church's liturgy with style and grace, in accord with church law and pastoral directives. Such liturgies will be spiritually appealing and nourishing, in order to empower parishioners to worship God actively and enthusiastically, and to live the gospel message of Jesus Christ as they go about their daily lives.

The liturgies are planned by the Pastor, the Liturgy Coordinator, and the Music Director, in consultation with the Worship Commission members. The liturgies are prepared in conformity with the established directives of the Sacramentary, the Lectionary, the Ordo, diocesan regulations, and other local pastoral guidelines adapted to the needs of the parish community.



Participants: It is a special privilege, not a right, to serve in the worship ministries of the parish. For this reason, participation in the worship ministries of the parish deserves special consideration.

- The recruitment, training, and scheduling of all the liturgical ministers are entrusted to the Liturgy Coordinator, in consultation with representatives discerned from the various liturgical ministries. The service of all the liturgical ministers is essential to the celebration of the sacred liturgy at our parish.
- The recruitment, training, and scheduling of all the musicians, and the selection of music, are entrusted to the Music Director, in consultation with representatives discerned from the various music ministries. The service of all the music ministers is essential to the celebration of the sacred liturgy at our parish.
- Because of their public ministry in church during sacred worship, participants in the various worship ministries are selected from among people who are practicing Catholics and parishioners in good standing, as determined by the Pastor. Continuance in ministry involves faithful attendance and fulfillment of duties.
- When questions arise about the suitability of any person for continued liturgical or music ministry, it is the sole responsibility of the Pastor to resolve these questions in a timely manner. Such pastoral discernment will be done privately with the individuals in question for the sake of the good name of the parties involved.
- It is also at the discretion of the Pastor to address situations where someone may be over-involved in various parish ministries, especially in our parish worship ministries, and to discern solutions, so that more people may have the opportunity to become involved in the worship ministries of our parish community.
- Without a large corps of dedicated participants in our liturgical and music ministries, it would be impossible to celebrate the Liturgy as well as we do at our parish. The commitment and cooperation of all our worship ministers is very much appreciated by the Pastor and by all the members of the parish community.
- Finally, punctuality is very important for all the liturgical and music ministers. Searching for last-minute substitutes is always complicated, so arriving in plenty of time before Mass to sign-in is essential. When an absence is anticipated, there are often designated "extra's" who should be contacted ahead of time.

The activities of the worship ministries, the relationships among Worship Commission members, and the activities of the Worship Commission itself, may be aptly illumined by the words of St. Augustine: There shall be "unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, and charity in all things."

Membership: The Worship Commission consists of the following ex-officio and discerned members: the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director are ex-officio members of the Worship Commission, whose joint efforts are coordinated under the supervision of the Pastor. All the other members of the Worship Commission are discerned annually by the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director, in consultation with the Pastor, using the following process for selecting Worship Commission members:

- The Liturgy Coordinator asks the members of each liturgical ministry group to propose the names of individuals from their ministry for consideration as their representative to the commission. After consulting with the Pastor, the Liturgy Coordinator selects the liturgical representatives for the commission.
- The Music Director follows the same procedure as the Liturgy Coordinator in discerning representatives from the music ministries. Because of the overlap of membership in the various music ministries, one representative may represent more than one music ministry group on the commission, at least at this time.
- However, after any representative to the Worship Commission has served for two consecutive years, further discernment is required for each additional year on the commission. Care must be taken to avoid over-involvement and burn-out among parishioners who may be overextended with multiple ministries.

The representatives from each liturgy and music ministry group assist the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director in the recruitment of and training for their respective liturgical and music ministries. Overall responsibility for recruitment and training in each worship ministry is entrusted to the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director, who work closely with the Pastor in planning and preparing the parish Liturgies.

Under the leadership of the Liturgy Coordinator, the Worship Commission discerns a Pastoral Council representative, a commission chairperson, and a commission secretary each year. These commission officers assist the Liturgy Coordinator in planning, leading, and keeping minutes for the Worship Commission meetings, and coordinating their activities with the Pastoral Council. Please consult the Pastoral Council Charter for more information about membership and officers on parish commissions.

Duties: Worship commission members have four main duties: prayer, study, training, and policy formation, in which they assist the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director in their respective roles.

- First, they engage in group prayer for mutual support in their ministries, and help plan and host fall and spring seminars and workshops for the spiritual enrichment of all the worship ministry volunteers.
- Second, they study official liturgical documents and directives to deepen their understanding of the Church's Liturgy, under the guidance of the clergy who are ordained to lead the parish in liturgical worship.
- Third, they assist the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director in the ongoing training and updating of all the volunteers who participate in the different liturgical and music ministries of the parish community.
- Fourth, they help formulate liturgical policy through the regular review and updating of ministry guidelines for each of the various liturgical and music ministries of the parish worship program, as described below.

Because the Liturgy is the most important and most visible aspect of parish life, the interactive work of the Worship Commission, the interpersonal relationships of all its commission members, and also the working relationships of all those engaged in worship ministries, must reflect a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect, under the leadership of the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director, who are appointed by the Pastor to lead the various worship ministries that are assigned to their care and leadership.

The collective result of the Liturgy that is celebrated by the parish community is far greater than the sum of all the individual ministries, liturgical and musical, which comprise the Worship Commission. Together under the presiding celebrant of the Liturgy, all the liturgical and music ministers keep foremost in mind that they have the privilege of leading the parish community in sacred worship, the source of salvation.

Policies: The approval of any proposed change in policy or practice in the Worship Commission requires a process of commission discussions, documentation, and the pastor's signature, as noted below:

- Just as the Parish Council serves as a consultative body to the Pastor, the Worship Commission serves as a consultative body to the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director. In addition, because the activities of the worship ministries interface with the sacramental ministry of the priesthood, all policies and practices of the Worship Commission require the approval of the Pastor in order to be implemented for the parish.
- All proposals for changes in policy and practice are to be presented in written form to the Worship Commission. The pro's and con's of these proposals are to be discussed thoroughly by the commission members, and their consultative votes are to be recorded in the minutes of the commission. The approved minutes are to be preserved in the archives of the Liturgy Coordinator's office for future reference.
- The members of the ministry group that are affected by any change in policy or practice will also be asked for their input and feedback by the Liturgy Coordinator or the Music Director, and their responses shall be documented before any final consideration can be given for the approval of a change in policy or practice. The final recommendations in these matters, however, are made by the commission members as a whole.
- The signature of the Pastor on a written proposal is required for the final approval of any change in policy or practice on the Worship Commission. When ready to be implemented, the approved changes in policy and practice are communicated to all the affected ministry participants in a timely manner. When advisable or necessary, the changes may also be published in the parish bulletin for the sake of all the parishioners.
- In certain cases, liturgical changes that are mandated by the Diocese must be implemented according to the directives that are received, and according to the timetable that is established by the Diocese. In such cases, the consultative role of the Worship Commission focuses not on whether or not to implement these changes, but only on how they may be most appropriately implemented in our parish community.
- The annual action plans and yearly calendar of events are prepared by the commission each spring and summer, according to the same procedures as enumerated above for changes in policy and practice. These annual strategic plans are then considered by the Pastoral Council for final approval, along with the annual strategic plans of all the other commissions, to establish a common purpose for the whole parish.
- When the Liturgy Coordinator is not present for a Worship Commission meeting, the Music Director serves as the pro-tem Liturgy Coordinator for the meeting. Although general leadership over the commission is entrusted to the Liturgy Coordinator, the Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Director model the same kind of mutual cooperation and respect that is required of all commission members and ministry participants.

The frequent attendance of the Pastor at Worship Commission meetings may be helpful to guide the Commission in these endeavors, since the activities of the Commission are closely related to the priestly ministry that is exercised at all our parish Liturgies. However, when no consensus seems possible on any given issue before the Worship Commission, despite several attempts to find common ground through dialogue, the Pastor will intervene and make a decision in the matter for the Commission.

Commission Meetings: Meetings of the Worship Commission are currently held every other month. However, they may need to be held more often, except during the summer, in order for it to function optimally according to the duties and responsibilities outlined in this document. When the Pastor is not present to sign a proposal, the proposal is pending until the signature is received. The Commission members also attend general Parish Leadership Meetings, as scheduled by the Pastoral Council throughout the year.

Final Considerations: As a matter of standard pastoral practice, all liturgical and devotional services in a parish church are scheduled by the pastor of each parish. All clergy officiating in a parish church do so only by invitation of the local pastor. Each diocese has further protocols for allowing visiting clergy to minister in its parishes. On their own initiative, pastors may from time to time bring liturgical matters to worship commissions for their consultative feedback before implementing them in the local parish.