

The sign of the loaves and fishes has been chosen to illustrate the cover of this leaflet. It reminds us of the story of when people were hungry and had nothing to eat. Jesus was able to take the few loaves and fish that a child had to offer and after he blessed them they became food sufficient to feed very many people.

Pope John Paul has asked that we keep this year – October 2004 to October 2005 – as a Year of the Eucharist. He asks that during this year we remember how Jesus continues to feed his people through the Mass. It is now not with loaves and fish that he feeds us but with bread and wine that, through the prayer of the Church and the ministry of the priest, becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist Jesus shares his life with us, so that we might live life well, in communion with him.

The sign of the loaves and fish perhaps also reminds of the ministry that you carry out in the Church. When we minister we bring what we have – our skills as a reader, or a server, or a musician or singer – and use them for the benefit of others. We prepare well and we do the best we can – but sometimes it might feel that we have little to offer.

Yet our contribution is an important part of the Mass. Both through the particular things we do as a minister, but also through the way we take part in the Mass as a whole, as people who are there to listen to God's Word, to join ourselves with the offering of the great prayer of Thanksgiving, and to receive Christ in Holy Communion. Our prayer and our gifts are received by Jesus and become part of the great blessing that is the Mass.

What do Musicians do?

A psalmist, a cantor, an organist, other instrumentalists, a choir, and a director of music assist the assembly's full participation in singing the songs, responses, and acclamations which are all key elements of the liturgy. Together these musicians minister to the liturgy from within the liturgical assembly and by their role help to add beauty and solemnity to the celebration.

See Celebrating the Mass 43

Why?

Because one of the things that music does is draw people together and transform them into an assembly. This is something especially important when we celebrate liturgy, because liturgy is something we do, not as individuals, but together as a community, as members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Music also deepens our participation in texts. Sometimes song helps us dwell a little longer on the texts we sing, but even when it does not its use of rhythm and melody draws us into the texts in a different way. We are more engaged when we sing a text. An ancient proverb says: 'One who sings well prays twice.'

Music can also bring beauty to our prayer. It can highlight those parts of the liturgy that are most central, and indicate the reverence that we wish to show them.

Music makes a powerful contribution to the liturgy. For that reason it is most important to be sure that it is used well. This means that the musicians have to develop not only their musical skills but also their understanding of the liturgy.

Preparing to sing

In preparing to sing or play the music for any particular Mass

- Look at the readings and prayers of the Mass which will have been used in choosing the music for the Mass. Use them for your prayer.
- Reflect on how the music chosen relates to what the readings and prayers express
- Spend time in prayer, praying for yourself, and the other ministers (for example, the Readers, the Servers, the Clergy) — that the service you will offer together will help the whole congregation celebrate Mass well.
- Ask God for the grace to be attentive both as a minister and as a member of the assembly throughout the celebration.



Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp
with the sound of music.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord.

Let the sea and all within it, thunder;
the world, and all its peoples.

Let the rivers clap their hands
and the hills ring out their joy.

Psalm 97 (98) 5-8

Musicians & their ministry at Mass

