



Wedding Music Guidelines — Mass

Annunciation Catholic Church

Houston, TX

Congratulations on your engagement! This document discusses some of what you need to know about music at a wedding at Annunciation; it is not a substitute for consultation with the Music Director, though reading it before that consultation is good “homework” to undertake!

Annunciation celebrates weddings using the “Roman Rite”, a form of worship with roots in ancient Christianity that eventually became the Western world’s “de facto” Christian ritual. Weddings are also part of this parish’s worship life. Both the parish and the Roman Rite carry traditions that have nurtured Christian faith for generations. A wedding’s music carries part of its “identity”. While that identity should include elements that are specific to you, it should also be visibly part of this parish’s worship and of Roman Rite worship.

Music has been integral to Christian worship from its beginnings; St. Matthew’s account of the Last Supper, for example, concludes with Christ and the disciples singing a hymn together, and St. Paul exhorted the faithful to “sing and make melody in your hearts to the Lord.” Weddings are one of the Church’s most joyful liturgies; music is a great part of that festivity!

The first items to consider for music planning are:

1) Congregational singing. The most fundamental music in any liturgy, after the priest’s singing, is that of the congregation. Together, the priest and congregation represent the great “dialogue” between Christ and the Church. This is an especially beautiful idea to highlight at a wedding: we often describe the relationship between Christ and the Church as a “marriage”!

Unfortunately, many in contemporary society feel it awkward to participate in congregational singing. While we work and pray for a change of heart in those who think this way, it is generally unfruitful to expect such persons to walk into a wedding and decide to sing when such is not their usual course. At Annunciation the congregation’s singing consists entirely of what comes from the pews (i.e., there is no amplified “cantor”)—so if all are tasked with singing, but few or none sing, **the moment will be awkward for all involved**.

In light of the above, for the specific occasion of the wedding, if you do not anticipate much singing from the congregation, you may consider attenuating or even forgoing completely the expectation that they should sing.

For those weddings where the congregation will sing, it is customary to sing the longer texts that comprise the “Ordinary”: the “Gloria”, “Sanctus”, and “Agnus Dei”. A hymn of thanksgiving after

communion is optional but appropriate. Note that **the couple being married, and the wedding party, should sing with the rest of the congregation!**

2) Choral or solo singing. For vocal music, consider a quartet of professional singers. The Music Director sings as one member of the quartet, and the other three are contracted for a reduced rate from the normal fee for a professional singer. The harmony that results from the interplay of trained voices is a beautiful sound like no other!

Note that the Music Director will generally sing the Gregorian chant “proper” chants at your wedding with whatever singers are present. Gregorian chant is normally sung in Latin; it may also be sung in English if preferred.

3) Instrumentation. Annunciation is blessed with a beautiful pipe organ whose use is normative at all weddings. The parish’s Music Director normally serves as Organist; this arrangement ensures a smooth, worry-free flow to the service. You may also engage the services of one or more instrumentalists such as a trumpeter, string quartet, harpist, etc. for additional variety of sounds. Note that guitars and electronic keyboards are not part of liturgical worship at Annunciation, including weddings.

Singers and Instrumentalists

Please do not engage the services of any singers or instrumentalists, professional or volunteer, without consulting the Music Director.

As with flowers, photography, and other such services, is best to entrust music leadership at a wedding to trained professionals. Unforeseen circumstances—which arise frequently!—tend to “rattle” even very good amateur musicians much more than they would someone who does such work as part of his/her livelihood. **The result can be embarrassment for all involved.** The Music Director reserves the right to audition all outside musicians, to assess additional fees for the audition, and to approve or to deny the request to use them.

Choice of Music

Music selections should match the aesthetic that Annunciation cultivates for regular Sunday services. Well-known examples include Pachelbel’s *Canon in D* and J. S. Bach’s *Jesu, joy of man’s desiring*; the Music Director will discuss these and other ideas with you. Note that we cannot allow some pieces, such as the wedding marches from Richard Wagner’s *Lohengrin* or Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, because of their particular secular associations. Still other pieces, such as Fr. Dan Schutte’s “Here I Am, Lord”, fit poorly with the parish’s liturgical aesthetic and hence are not part of liturgical worship at Annunciation, including weddings.

The congregation normally sings the parts of the Mass called the “Ordinary”. You may alternatively have the choir sing one of several fine choral settings of these texts instead, in part or in whole. (This is very beautiful, but it may lengthen the service somewhat.)

Specific Liturgical Moments for Musical Selections

1. Preludes and seating of parents - usually soft, reflective vocal or instrumental music. The Music Director usually chooses these selections. (Note that the couple may not hear this music.)
2. Wedding party procession - The Pachelbel *Canon in D* is uniquely suited to this moment in the liturgy owing to its flexibility in the event that the procession is longer or shorter than anticipated. Vocal music may be sung here as well, though there may be a “pause” or unexpected repetition if the procession is longer or shorter than anticipated.
3. Entrance of couple/bride - Vocal music is especially appropriate here. An especially apt choice is the Gregorian chant “Deus Israël”, whose text is:

<p>Deus Israël conjungat vos, et ipse sit vobiscum, qui misertus est duobus únícis: et nunc, Dómine, fac eos plenius benedicere te. Beati omnes qui timent Dóminum: qui ámbulant in viis ejus.</p> <p>—Tobias 7:15 & 8:19; Psalm 128:1</p>	<p><i>May the God of Israel join you together: and may He be with you, who was merciful to two only children: and now, O Lord, make them bless Thee more fully. Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.</i></p>
--	--

Instrumental music may also accompany this action.

4. Angelic Hymn (“Gloria in excelsis” / “Glory to God”) - If you expect that the congregation will sing, they should sing this, and your program should refer to where the printed music is. Alternatively, this part may be sung by the choir alone or, less preferredly, recited.

The Responsorial Psalm is ideally sung as a congregational response to the first reading; however, since the musical settings are usually not well-known, congregations rarely sing it well. Hence, the Music Director usually sings a piece of Gregorian chant here instead called a “gradual”, whose text you should include in your program:

<p>Uxor tua sicut vitis abundans in latéribus domus tuae. Filii tui sicut novellae olivarum in circúitu mensae tuae.</p> <p>—Psalm 128:3</p>	<p><i>Your wife shall be like the fruitful vine on the walls of your home. Your children will be like olive branches around your table.</i></p>
--	---

An “*alleluia*” chant, which is normally the same at each wedding at Annunciation, follows the second reading. The congregation should respond singing “*alleluia*”.

5. Offertory - A setting of the Gregorian Offertory chant for weddings is always sung; you should include the following text in your program:

In te speravi, Dómine: dixi: Tu es Deus meus, in mánibus tuis témpora mea. —Psalm 31: 15-16	<i>In you, O Lord, I have put my trust. I have said, “You are my God; my times are in your hands.”</i>
---	--

After this chant, vocal or instrumental music may follow.

6. “Holy, holy, holy” and “Lamb of God” - Normally sung by all. May be sung by the choir (if present); recited otherwise.

The choice to sing or to recite the Lord’s Prayer (“Our Father ...”) is left to the priest.

7. Communion - A setting of the Gregorian Communion chant for weddings is always sung; you should include the following text in your program:

Ecce sic benedicetur omnis homo qui timet Dóminum: et vídeas filios filiorum tuorum: pax super Ísraël. —Psalm 128: 4-6	<i>Behold, thus is every person blessed who fears the Lord: and may you see your children’s children: peace be upon Israel.</i>
---	---

After this chant, vocal or instrumental music may follow.

8. **OPTIONAL:** Hymn of thanksgiving, sung by all. Consider well-known hymns like “Now thank we all our God”.

9. **OPTIONAL:** Veneration of Mary - This is an ideal time for a setting of a Marian text like “Ave Maria”, “Salve Regina”, etc. (During Eastertide, consider “Regina caeli”!)

10. Recessional / Postlude - Usually “extroverted” music chosen by the organist. Every effort will be made to accommodate specific requests.

COST STRUCTURE

\$200 - Music Director's fee, including organ playing, coordination, contracting, and research to a reasonable degree.

\$375 - Vocal quartet. (3 singers × \$125 each; the Music Director is the fourth singer.)

NOTE: This is a reduced fee to help couples exercise this very beautiful option!

\$200 - Solo singer.

\$50 - Additional fee for auditioning a guest singer or instrumentalist.

Sample plan #1: Congregational singing, vocal quartet

Preludes:

- Viadana “Exsultate justi” (quartet)
- J. S. Bach, Sinfonia from Cantata #156
- J. S. Bach, “Jesu, joy of man’s desiring” (quartet)

Procession:

- “Deus Israël” chant
- OR
- Pachelbel “Canon in D”
- Clarke “Prince of Denmark’s March”

Gloria:

- English chant (congregation)
- OR
- Palestrina, from the Missa Brevis in F (quartet)

Offertory:

- Willan “Rise up, my love” (quartet)

Sanctus and Agnus Dei:

- English chant (congregation)

Communion:

- Durufié “Ubi caritas” (quartet)

Thanksgiving Hymn:

- “Holy God, we praise thy name” (congregation)

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

- Willan “I beheld her, beautiful as a dove” (quartet)

Recessional:

- Stanley “Trumpet Voluntary”

Sample plan #2: No congregational singing, vocal soloist

Preludes:

Handel "Air in F"

Bach "Air on the G string"

Procession:

"Deus Israël" chant

OR

Pachelbel "Canon in D"

Campra "Rigaudon"

Gloria:

(recited)

Offertory:

Vaughan Williams "The Call"

Sanctus and Agnus Dei:

(recited)

Communion:

Mozart "Ave verum corpus" OR Franck "Panis angelicus"

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

"Ave Maria" (usually Schubert or Bach/Gounod setting)

Recessional:

Handel "Allegro maestoso à la Hornpipe"

Sample plan #3: Organ only

NOTE: Please consider the greater festivity that more substantial music arrangements can confer on the wedding liturgy.

Preludes:

Walther, Prelude on "Lobe den Herren"

Robert Powell, Sonata for Organ, mvt. 2

Procession:

"Deus Israël" chant

OR

Pachelbel "Canon in D"

C. H. H. Parry, "I was glad" (introduction)

Gloria:

(recited)

Offertory:

James Biery, Prelude on "Ubi caritas"

Sanctus and Agnus Dei:

(recited)

Communion:

Gerald Near, Prelude on "Ave verum corpus"

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

"Ave Maria", chant

Recessional:

Mathias "Fanfare"