



**A Pastors Guide to Returning to Public Worship
in the Diocese of Cleveland – EXPANDED EDITION**

Music Ministry at Publicly Celebrated Mass during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The following liturgical music directives are in effect temporarily and will be updated as new information becomes available. Please continue to refer to this document on the diocesan website as we move forward with Christ in the public celebration of Mass.

A cry from deep within our being, music is a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things. Music is therefore a sign of God's love for us and of our love for him. ... By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension.¹

The communal dimension of music ministry demands that we consider first and foremost the common good of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The following guidelines for music at publicly celebrated Masses during the coronavirus pandemic take this first principle very seriously.

Various scientific studies have shown that singing dramatically increases the transmission of viruses.^{2, 3} A recent [webinar](#) to discuss these scientific findings was hosted by the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), Chorus America, Barbershop Harmony Society, and Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA). Dr. Lucinda Halstead, MD, an otolaryngologist at the Medical University of South Carolina, stated unequivocally during this webinar that under current coronavirus pandemic conditions, there is no way for congregations or choirs to

¹ USCCB, *Sing to the Lord*, 2007, no. 2.

² Sima Asadi, Anthony S. Wexler, Christopher D. Cappa, Santiago Barreda, Nicole M. Bouvier & William D. Ristenpart.

“Aerosol emission and superemission during human speech increase with voice loudness.”

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-38808-z>. Published online 20 February 2019, accessed May 13, 2020. Saying “aah” for 30 seconds releases twice as many micron-scale particles as 30 seconds of coughing.

³ Sara Austin, “Why Singers Might Be Covid-19 Super-Spreaders,” [Elemental.medium.com](#), May 6, 2020, accessed May 13, 2020. “When you exhale, mucosal fluid forms a film deep in your contracting lungs. When you inhale and your lung walls expand, the film bursts, creating aerosol particles that are then breathed out into the world. “The rate at which you inhale or exhale affects the number of particles you emit, he says. Deep, slow breathing followed by a fast exhale would produce the fewest particles. The greatest number would come from quick inhalation (causing a more violent film burst) followed by slow and prolonged exhaling. “That’s kind of a description of singing,” Ristenpart says.”

safely sing together. Dr. Halstead further explained that masked singing is also unsafe, and that humming is, unfortunately, no different in terms of contagion spread than singing.⁴

In light of this scientific and medical information, congregational singing and choral singing at public liturgies is temporarily suspended, and church choir rehearsals are not permitted until further notice.

“The Great Commandment states, “You shall love the Lord your God ... and love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37–39). During this pandemic, love for ourselves is expressed in the ways we protect ourselves from getting infected. In the same way, love for our neighbor is expressed in the ways we protect them from getting infected.”⁵

In keeping with this directive, the psalms, acclamations, dialogs, and responses of the Mass are to be spoken, not sung, during public liturgies for the time being. As heart-breaking as this is for church musicians and for all who love the liturgy, responsible stewardship and the common good require that pastors and music directors encourage instrumental music and prayerful listening during public liturgies for the time being. For further information, please watch the webinar “Science and the Near-Term Future of Singing,” ([LINK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFI3GsVzi6Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFI3GsVzi6Q)) and read the articles referenced in the footnotes.

Solo or small instrumental ensembles might assist with adding musical prayer to liturgies. Keyboard, string, or percussion instruments are encouraged for such ensembles. Brass or wind instruments are not to be used, for the same reasons that singing is not permitted. Instrumentalists must maintain a minimum of six feet physical distancing from one another and from the assembly. Instrumentalists must be masked, both during any joint rehearsals and during the liturgy.

Pastors and music ministers might consider adding hymn singing to their online and/or livestreaming outreach to their parishioners, both to meet the very human need to sing together, and to continue to practice the music of the Church’s liturgy, preparing for the time we can again sing “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in [our] hearts to God.”

Until that time, let us pray for the sick and for one another:

*In the hour of trial and confusion
Give us your Spirit, O Lord
In temptation and fragility
Give us your Spirit, O Lord
In the fight against evil and sin*

⁴ “Science and the Near-Term Future of Singing,” c.f. 59:00:00, 1:20:00, and 1:22:00; (see also the slides from Dr. Halstead’s presentation at this [LINK \[https://www.chorusamerica.org/sites/default/files/Dr.%20Halstead%20-%20NATS%20Webinar%20may%202020v%20final%20ppt.pdf\]](https://www.chorusamerica.org/sites/default/files/Dr.%20Halstead%20-%20NATS%20Webinar%20may%202020v%20final%20ppt.pdf))

⁵ Daniel P. Chin, “When Your Church Reopens, Here’s How to Meet Safely,” ChristianityToday.com “Daniel Chin is a physician trained in pulmonary and critical care medicine and epidemiology with 25 years of global public health experience. In 2003, he led much of WHO’s support to China to contain the SARS epidemic.” May 6, 2020, accessed May 13, 2020, emphasis added.

*Give us your Spirit, O Lord
In search for true good and true joy
Give us your Spirit, O Lord
In the decision to remain in You and in Your friendship
Give us your Spirit, O Lord⁶*

“In closing, I want to remind us of one certainty. The COVID-19 pandemic in its present form will pass. One day we will look back on this time and see clearly that God was with us and was working in our midst for good. Knowing this, we can turn to him today and ask him to give us the discernment, compassion, and faith to make the right decisions for our churches at this time.”⁷

⁶ Pope Francis’ *Urbi et Orbi*, “Litany of Supplication” (Vatican News Service)

⁷ Daniel P. Chin, “When Your Church Reopens, Here’s How to Meet Safely,” *Christianity Today*. “Daniel Chin is a physician trained in pulmonary and critical care medicine and epidemiology with 25 years of global public health experience. In 2003, he led much of WHO’s support to China to contain the SARS epidemic.” May 6, 2020, accessed May 13, 2020