

# Five Steps to Selecting a Mass Setting

One of the key tasks facing pastoral musicians and ministers is selecting Mass settings. Is it better to return to a familiar Mass setting or start fresh and learn new settings? This guide includes a five-step evaluation process to help you narrow down your search, then a chart that will allow you to compare your final choices.

**01**

## Investigate the present and past

The best clue to what will work in the future is what has worked in the past and which Mass settings the parish is currently using. What qualities have made them useful and popular? You will have a better answer to the Mass setting decision if you know what qualities of a Mass are most important for your parish.

**02**

## Assess the current context and need

Describe the gathered assembly at each of the parish Masses. What are the real circumstances that surround celebrating the liturgy with them that require attention? How many settings are currently in a rotation for various liturgical seasons? What about bilingual or multilingual options?

**03**

## Listen to samples

Go online and listen and compare the various settings. Things to keep in mind: which settings are available through your worship resource; what Masses your neighbors are going to use; any settings your local bishop or diocesan office are recommending for common use. Find out which Mass settings are available in each OCP hymnal and missal here: [www.ocp.org/mass-settings](http://www.ocp.org/mass-settings).

**04**

## Involve others in the selection

There is no better way to ensure the successful transition to new settings than to involve others in the selection process. Consider how the pastor, the choir members, cantors, song leaders, accompanists, ensemble leaders, other pastoral ministers could be involved in determining the Masses to be used in the first months. There are many creative ways to hold a "Taste and See Session" on choir evenings, Sunday between Masses, or other opportunities that are right for your parish. Parishioners will appreciate being asked to help select and those involved will provide support at those times that the new settings are used.

**05**

## Implement your plan

Set a time to meet and review the response of how the setting is being received by the assembly. Prepare for adjustments or the migration to a new setting. Singing a new setting is less traumatic for the assembly than we think. Learning a new setting is probably a bigger issue for choirs and ensembles.

**The Bottom Line:** Ultimately, the song of our prayer must lead to the song of our lives living the Christian gospel. Christ invites us into the paschal sacrifice. We respond by first gathering, then participating through sung response, active listening, and finally going forth with a sense of our mission and call to share the gifts we've been given. *Ite missa est.* Let us sing a new song to the Lord!

# Mass Setting Checklist

## The Musical Judgment

Mass Setting

Mass Setting

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**Melody:**

Is the melody well-crafted, memorable, inviting to the assembly?

**Sing-ability:**

Is the Mass setting easy enough for the congregation to sing?

Is it "intuitively sing-able"?

Is the Mass setting overly syncopated?

Can the Mass setting be sung unaccompanied?

**Vocal Range:**

Is the tessitura in a comfortable range for assembly singing?

Are the intervals reasonable and expected within the melodic structure?

**Vocal Arrangements:**

Are there simple harmonies that can be added by choir or vocal ensemble?

Is it set as SATB or SAB for choirs with fewer low voices?

**Instrumental Arrangements:**

Are there parts for the various instruments our parish regularly uses?



# Mass Setting Checklist

## The Pastoral Judgment

Mass Setting	Mass Setting	Mass Setting	Mass Setting

<b>Suitable for this Assembly:</b>				
Does the Mass setting meet the needs of our congregation(s)?				
Does it have a universal appeal?				
Would this Mass setting help engage particular groups such as children, youth, and older generations?				
<b>Teaching/Learning:</b>				
Can I teach the Mass setting to the assembly?				
Will it require extra time to learn?				
<b>Versatility/Durability:</b>				
Is the setting adaptable to the needs of musical ensembles normally used in our parish?				
Does it setting help provide for the diversity of settings or musical genres we need?				
Will the setting carry us through multiple months of use?				
<b>Bilingual Options:</b>				
Can we use this effectively as a bilingual setting?				
Can it be sung well in either language?				
Will this setting move you toward unity?				



# Mass Setting Checklist

## The Liturgical Judgment

Mass Setting	Mass Setting	Mass Setting	Mass Setting
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Liturgical Moment				
Does the music support the particular liturgical actions for which it is written?				
Is it appropriate to the solemnity of the moment?				
Could I use this Mass setting during Advent?				
Could I use this Mass setting during Lent?				
Could I use this Mass setting during Ordinary Time?				
<b>Participation</b>				
Will the music encourage participation?				
Will this music assist your own personal participation?				
<b>Liturgical Art</b>				
Does this setting move you toward a deeper understanding of the "ars celebrandi" – the sense of the sacred art of liturgy?				
Does the music evoke the liturgical disposition needed?				
<b>Completeness</b>				
Does it include settings for the priest dialogues, prefaces, and other chanted components of the Mass?				

