

## **Sing to the Lord: An Examination of Conscience for Musicians**

St. Ignatius Loyola asked his companions to spend some time each day reflecting on the positive aspects of how the day went before considering any negative parts. They were to ask first: “Where did I see or reveal the presence of Jesus today?” Only then were they to ask: “Where did I miss seeing Jesus or miss an opportunity to reveal Jesus, or where did I reveal what was not Jesus today?” The Jesuit practice called the “examination of conscience” is based on this custom.

In November 2007, the Latin Church Bishops in the United States gave us *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (STL), a revision and expansion of the 1972 document *Music in Catholic Worship*, “to guide and oversee liturgical song in each particular church [and to] draw all who worship the Lord into the fullness of liturgical, musical prayer” (*Foreword*). A reflective, critical, and careful reading of this document offers a kind of examination of conscience for all of us who participate in, direct, and support sung worship.

We invite you to meditate on the following and to share it with your parish musicians.

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## **EXAMINATION OF CONSCIOUS FOR LITURGICAL MUSICIANS**

Do I view my ministry as “a valued and integral part of the overall pastoral ministry of the parish or diocese”?

Do I serve with the sense of professionalism and of ministry that complement one another?

Do I model good form for the congregants; stand, sit, respond to the prayers, keep my focus on the priest, and not look at my phone or distract in any way?

Do I understand that music accompanies ritual, and is not separate from the liturgy?

Do I take time to practice and put resources into my continuing formation as a musician?

Do I practice with the assembly?

Do I give 5 minutes of silence prior to Mass for quiet reflection?

Do I understand the teachings of the Church and the structure of the liturgy?

Do I understand my service as a ministry rooted in baptism?

Do I foster the active participation of the liturgical assembly and empower the musicians with whom I serve to do the same?

Do I understand that as psalmist I proclaim the Word of God?

Do I understand why the responsorial psalm is sung from the Ambo?

Do I proclaim the text with “clarity, conviction, and sensitivity” and invite the people to sing their part with inviting gestures and smiles?

Do I step away from the microphone when the assembly is singing their part?

Do I understand that my voice should not be heard above the congregation?

Do I lead from a place where I can be seen and in ways that help the assembly find its voice?

Do I choose music that is within the Congregation’s abilities, and use caution in introducing new mass parts?

Do I understand that choral music must always be “appropriate to the Liturgy,” that is, drawn from a proper liturgical text or “expressing themes appropriate to the Liturgy” (e.g. No pop music)?

Do I understand why choral pieces are best done as a prelude or at the preparation of the gifts and why a communion meditation is not an appropriate choice?

Do I use the “three judgments—one evaluation” to determine the appropriateness of music for the liturgy?

Do I minister in ways that do not “minimize the musical participation of the faithful”?

Do I understand that we are to participate in the entire liturgical celebration as “servants of the Liturgy and members of the gathered assembly”?

