

Music Copyright within Liturgy

Practice Note | Update 5 | February 2024

Introduction

At its foundational level, copyright and appropriate acknowledgement of work that is not our own is about justice. When we celebrate liturgy and prayer, it is important that we act justly in all that is associated with our celebrations. We have a moral imperative to acknowledge the work of all people who contribute to the liturgy in any way, including the crafting of words, art and music.

All liturgy and prayer are subject to copyright. Reproducing any work under copyright, in any format, without the appropriate permission or licence is illegal. Under Australian law, copyright in text, images and music lasts for 70 years after the year of the creator's death.

One License church music copyright permissions

All Maitland-Newcastle parishes and schools have music reprint licences with copyright agent, One License. One License website <https://www.onelicense.net/> has tutorial features for new and seasoned users, and its news site <https://news.onelicense.net/> has an easily searchable knowledge base.

Selecting liturgical music

When assessing the appropriateness of sacred music for the liturgy, the main considerations would be that the piece is

1. liturgically appropriate: it expresses the meaning of the rite it accompanies and so helps the community understand what is happening ritually
2. theologically appropriate: it expresses the faith of the Church as appropriate to the liturgical context
3. musically worthy
4. pastorally appropriate: it enables the full, conscious and active participation of the community and creates the appropriate 'feel' for the part of the liturgy it accompanies.

The above points indicate that we need to 'sing Catholic', especially at Mass, Sacraments of Initiation, and other key liturgical celebrations that express and shape our Catholic faith.

Reviewing your music repertoire

From time to time, it is good practice to review and update the parish or school repertoire and identify the best way to provide words for the Assembly and music for musicians. A suggested process follows.

1. Identify what you have.
 - 1.1. Community's existing core repertoire – this is the liturgical music used across the liturgical year
 - 1.2. Hymns/music used for different seasons of the Liturgical Year
 - 1.3. Mass Settings your community knows – you may have one Mass Setting that is used most of the time e.g., the Mass of St Francis by Paul Taylor

2. Remove what you can't use
 - 2.1. Any hymns/music no longer appropriate for liturgical use in your community
 - 2.2. Any hymns/music not covered by One License or other licences you may have
3. Consider adding new music
 - 3.1. New hymns/music to introduce to the community over time.
 - 3.2. One or more additional Mass Settings – for different liturgical seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and other significant occasions
 - 3.3. Ensure any new hymns/music are covered by One License or other licences you may have

One License can assist in building your repertoire through its Manage Lists tool. Learn how at <https://news.onelicense.net/2021/04/19/making-and-managing-lists/>.

Music outside copyright

Hymnal use

If your community only uses published hymnals for the Assembly, and never prints words or melody lines, either in booklets or in slide shows, you do not have to worry about music copyright because you are not copying anything.

Public Domain

When using hymns that are in the public domain there is no copyright responsibility, even when you print or project the words or melody line.

In Australia, music doesn't enter the public domain until 70 years after the year of the composer's death.

Managing music under copyright

Sheet music for musicians

One Licence does NOT cover the reproduction of music scores beyond the melody line. Original copies of sheet music are required for every musician – instrumentalists, choir members and cantors.

Never photocopy sheet music. If you do not have sufficient original copies you will need to purchase extra copies or choose another piece of music.

Consider purchasing individual song sheet music instead of volumes or compendiums of music. Parish and school communities who choose this option can create folders of original music for musicians for a given liturgy.

Selecting music for the Assembly

Most parishes will need to copy hymns, still under copyright, into booklets or slide shows. The parish Annual Reprint licence with One License allows legal copying of hymn lyrics and melody lines of the songs held within its extensive database. Before copying it is important to check that

1. you have a legitimate copy of the work, NOT a photocopy
2. the work is covered by your licence provider
 - 2.1. There are often several versions of the one hymn or piece of music. Take care that the hymn version you want is covered by your licence provider.

Do not include any music in your liturgy or prayer that does not meet both these criteria.

Music not covered by One License

1. Christian music, including Hillsong, is generally not appropriate for use in Catholic liturgy. This type of music is covered by CCLI.
2. Secular music, often requested in funerals and weddings, is not covered by any church copyright licences, and should never be copied or projected by parishes.
 - 2.1. Funeral Directors have industry specific licences which allow them to copy secular song lyrics into booklets that they produce and report usage under their licence number.
 - 2.2. The playing of any music during a wedding ceremony does not require a licence. However, the reproduction of song lyrics would require the wedding couple to obtain permission directly from the copyright owner. The couple can contact APRA at education@apra.com.au for guidance.
3. For liturgical music not covered by your church licence provider, contact the copyright owner directly for a one-off licence.

Playing music in a service of worship

In Australia it is legal under a special worship exemption to play legitimate copies of CDs and purchased electronic music files in liturgy without requiring a licence from APRA. Never use copied, burned, pirated versions of music.

This exemption is granted on the condition that a [PPCA complimentary licence is acknowledged](#).

Downloading music for a service of worship

When purchasing electronic music files, download to the device from which music will be played in worship. This will avoid shifting between devices which is a breach of copyright outside private and domestic use. We recommend that receipts for music bought electronically be kept in the church so they can be produced if required.

No licence is required to format 'playlists' for a liturgy on the same device on which the music is purchased/downloaded. This is not considered copying. It is recommended that parishes with a need to format playlists for liturgy purchase a tablet device or use the parish laptop already used with the data projector, to download all parish music. Playlists can be legally formatted on this device and played during the liturgy as there is no copying involved.

Embedding music for slide show presentations

Given the complexity of music synchronisation rules and licences we advise that parishes and schools NOT embed music into slide show or media presentations.

1. Embedding music files into a slide show presentation creates an additional copy of the music. Without the appropriate licence this is a breach of copyright.
2. Inserting a link in a slide show presentation for online music to play directly from the host site is not copying. However, accessing music from personal use platforms, e.g., Spotify for use outside the home is a breach of copyright.

It is legal to play stand-alone CD/MP3/iTunes files to accompany a slide show in a liturgical setting. Be sure to [acknowledge the played sound recording](#) in the presentation.

For further information, read Willow Publishing blog post [The Legal Position for Embedding Sound Recordings in Church Music Slide Presentations](#).

Playing or screening Youtube videos

There are liturgical and copyright issues related to the use of Youtube versions of hymns in liturgy. Youtube is a personal viewing platform so should not be screened outside of home use. The processes required to obtain permission or a licence are unclear. We therefore recommend that Youtube clips NOT be used in liturgy.

Displaying acknowledgement of music use

Music composers hold the legal right of attribution, or acknowledgement, i.e., to be identified and named as the creator of their work. Acknowledgement details are found in the copyright notice which appears on the published version of music, usually at the bottom of the piece.

Acknowledging lyrics or melody line

You must display acknowledgement of each hymn under copyright, either after each song or in a list at the beginning or end of your booklet or slide show. The name of the composer should also appear at the top of hymn lyrics, with the title.

Include the name of the author/composer, the copyright year and publisher, the licensing agency and the parish licence number, but NOT the source of the hymn, e.g.

Words: John Doe, © 1988 ABC Music Co.; Music: Jane Doe, © 1990 XYZ Publications. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-000000. All rights reserved.

(Replace the "000000" with your unique license number)

Acknowledging played sound recordings

When playing CDs, MP3 files in prayer or liturgy, an acknowledgement of PPCA complimentary licence must be made, e.g.

Blest Are They, As One Voice I CD 3. Complimentary Licence granted by PPCA within a Service of Worship.

[This acknowledgement is required as part of the APRA worship exemption](#) that allows us to play sound recordings in liturgy.

Other copyrighted works

Images

The use of images on screens and in booklets is discouraged. People's attention should be on the liturgical action rather than the worship aid. Limit the use of images to booklet cover or first slide of projection only.

When searching the internet for images it's best to assume that most search results will have full copyright protection, i.e., can't be reproduced without permission or a paid licence. Works in the Public Domain, where copyright has expired, can be difficult to find. Fortunately, there is a growing base of media under Creative Commons licenses where creators give permission in advance for certain uses of their material. Learn more at <https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/>.

Be sure to display copyright acknowledgement of images as directed by the copyright owner. Acknowledging the work of artists, whose gifts enhance our liturgy, is not only fair but allows us to share our resources and good ideas. By indicating where images come from, others can use them legally and acknowledge them appropriately.

Check copyright details of every image. If there is no copyright information – don't use the image.

Liturgical texts

All liturgical texts, including scripture are under copyright. Reproducing those texts, into a bulletin, booklet, master order of service or slide show, is permitted for the purpose of prayer and worship. This permission comes with the obligation to make the required acknowledgement.

Examples of text acknowledgements are provided at <https://www.catholic.au/s/article/Liturgy-Copyright-Information>.

Conclusion

This Practice Note, and resources on the Maitland-Newcastle diocesan website, seek to support our parishes and schools in providing quality music and in acting justly in terms of copyright when preparing prayer and/or liturgy. Please be guided by the above advice and direct any questions to Sharon Murphy at P 4979 1134 or E sharon.murphy@mn.catholic.org.au.

More information

Information and assistance on church music copyright is available from:

Monica O'Brien, Willow Publishing

Monica is the Australian agent for One License copyright agency.

Email: info@willowpublishing.com.au Web: www.willowpublishing.com.au

Australian Pastoral Musicians Network (APMN)

APMN promotes the art of Religious Music in the service of the Church in Australia through education, support, networking and advocacy, with a special focus on supporting the use of Australian compositions.

Email: executive@apmn.org.au Web: www.apmn.org.au