

DIOCESAN LITURGY COUNCIL

Liturgical bodies through the ages

The documented story
– full and unedited!

What the Church Says about Liturgy Commissions ...

Constitution *Immensa*, Sixtus V, 1588, reference in n.57 of Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII, 1947:

(https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html)

57. The Church has further used her right of control over liturgical observance to protect the purity of divine worship against abuse from dangerous and imprudent innovations introduced by private individuals and particular churches. Thus it came about - during the 16th century, when usages and customs of this sort had become increasingly prevalent and exaggerated, and when private initiative in matters liturgical threatened to compromise the integrity of faith and devotion, to the great advantage of heretics and further spread of their errors - that in the year 1588, Our predecessor Sixtus V of immortal memory established the Sacred Congregation of Rites, charged with the defense of the legitimate rites of the Church and with the prohibition of any spurious innovation. This body fulfills even today the official function of supervision and legislation with regard to all matters touching the sacred liturgy.

Canon 253 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law reads:

§ 1. The Congregation for Sacred Rite has authority to see and establish all those things that proximately involve the sacred rites and ceremonies of the Latin Church, but not which refer to sacred rites in the wide sense, things like the right of precedence and others of this sort, which are treated either in the judicial order or in the disciplinary line.

§ 2. It is for it especially to be vigilant that the sacred rites and ceremonies are diligently observed in celebrating the Sacred Synaxis, in the administration of the Sacraments, in conducting divine offices, and in all those things that respect cult in the Latin Church; [it can] grant opportune dispensations; it can give out insignia and privileges of honour whether personal or for a time, whether to places or perpetually, in matters affecting sacred rites and ceremonies, and shall take care lest these fall into abuse.

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§ 3. Finally all those things that pertain to the beatification and canonization of the Servants of God or sacred relics in any way are referred to it.

Motu Proprio *Tra Le Sollecitudini*, Pius X, 1903: (alternate translation [here](#))

https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/es/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html

24. For the exact execution of what has been herein laid down, the bishops, if they have not already one so, are to institute in their dioceses a special commission composed of persons really competent in sacred music, and to this commission let them entrust in the manner they find most suitable the task of watching over the music executed in their churches. Nor are they to see merely that the music is good in itself, but also that it is adapted to the powers of the singers and be always well executed.

Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII, 1947:

(https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html)

56. It is likewise easy to understand that the progress of the fine arts, those of architecture, painting and music above all, has exerted considerable influence on the choice and disposition of the various external features of the sacred liturgy.

109. Wherefore We exhort you, Venerable Brethren, that each in his diocese or ecclesiastical jurisdiction supervise and regulate the manner and method in which the people take part in the liturgy, according to the rubrics of the missal and in keeping with the injunctions which the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Code of canon law have published. Let everything be done with due order and dignity, and let no one, not even a priest, make use of the sacred edifices according to his whim to try out experiments. It is also Our wish that in each diocese an advisory committee to promote the liturgical apostolate should be established, similar to that which cares for sacred music and art, so that with your watchful guidance everything may be carefully carried out in accordance with the prescriptions of the Apostolic See.

186. We earnestly exhort you, Venerable Brethren, that after errors and falsehoods have been removed, and anything that is contrary to truth or moderation has been condemned, you promote a deeper knowledge among the people of the sacred liturgy so that they more readily and easily follow the sacred rites and take part in them with true Christian dispositions.

194. We also exhort you, Venerable Brethren, to promote with care congregational singing, and to see to its accurate execution with all due dignity, since it easily stirs up and arouses the faith and piety of large gatherings of the faithful. Let the full harmonious singing of our people rise to heaven

like the bursting of a thunderous sea and let them testify by the melody of their song to the unity of their hearts and minds, as becomes brothers and the children of the same Father.

195. What We have said about music, applies to the other fine arts, especially to architecture, sculpture and painting. Recent works of art which lend themselves to the materials of modern composition, should not be universally despised and rejected through prejudice. Modern art should be given free scope in the due and reverent service of the church and the sacred rites, provided that they preserve a correct balance between styles tending neither to extreme realism nor to excessive "symbolism," and that the needs of the Christian community are taken into consideration rather than the particular taste or talent of the individual artist. Thus modern art will be able to join its voice to that wonderful choir of praise to which have contributed, in honor of the Catholic faith, the greatest artists throughout the centuries. Nevertheless, in keeping with the duty of Our office, We cannot help deploring and condemning those works of art, recently introduced by some, which seem to be a distortion and perversion of true art and which at times openly shock Christian taste, modesty and devotion, and shamefully offend the true religious sense. These must be entirely excluded and banished from our churches, like "anything else that is not in keeping with the sanctity of the place."

196. Keeping in mind, Venerable Brethren, pontifical norms and decrees, take great care to enlighten and direct the minds and hearts of the artists to whom is given the task today of restoring or rebuilding the many churches which have been ruined or completely destroyed by war. Let them be capable and willing to draw their inspiration from religion to express what is suitable and more in keeping with the requirements of worship. Thus the human arts will shine forth with a wondrous heavenly splendor, and contribute greatly to human civilization, to the salvation of souls and the glory of God. The fine arts are really in conformity with religion when "as noblest handmaids they are at the service of divine worship."

Encyclical *Musicae Sacrae*, Pius XII, 1955:

(https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae.html)

78. It would certainly be best if in diocesan Councils of Christian Art there were someone especially expert in the fields of religious music and chant who could carefully watch over what is being done in the diocese, inform the Ordinary about what has been done and what is going to be done, receive the Ordinary's commands and see that they are obeyed. If in any diocese there is one of these associations, which have been wisely instituted to foster sacred music and have been greatly praised and commended by the Sovereign Pontiffs, the Ordinary in his prudence may employ this association in the task of fulfilling responsibility.

Instruction *De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*, Congregation for Rites, 1958: (alternate translation [here](#))

https://archive.ccwatershed.org/media/pdfs/13/04/11/01-33-58_0.pdf

118. Since the time of Pius X, every diocese has been required to have a special commission of sacred music. The members of this commission, both priests and laymen, specially selected for their knowledge, experience, and talent in the various kinds of sacred music, are to be appointed by the local Ordinary.

The Ordinaries of a number of diocese may, if they wish, establish a joint commission.

Since sacred music is so closely bound with the liturgy and with sacred art, commissions of sacred art, and of the liturgy, are also to be established in every diocese. These three commissions may meet together – at time it is even advisable – to work out their common problems by a mutual exchange of opinions and solutions.

Local Ordinaries should see to it that these commissions meet frequently, or as often as circumstances require. Moreover, the local Ordinary himself should occasionally preside at these meetings.

Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Second Vatican Council, 1963:

(https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

43. Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church. It is today a distinguishing mark of the Church's life, indeed of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and action.

So that this pastoral-liturgical action may become even more vigorous in the Church, the sacred Council decrees:

44. It is desirable that the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Art. 22, 2, set up a liturgical commission, to be assisted by experts in liturgical science, sacred music, art and pastoral practice. So far as possible the commission should be aided by some kind of Institute for Pastoral Liturgy, consisting of persons who are eminent in these matters, and including laymen as circumstances suggest. Under the direction of the above-mentioned territorial ecclesiastical authority the commission is to regulate pastoral-liturgical action throughout the territory, and to promote studies and necessary experiments whenever there is question of adaptations to be proposed to the Apostolic See.

45. For the same reason every diocese is to have a commission on the sacred liturgy under the direction of the bishop, for promoting the liturgical apostolate.

Sometimes it may be expedient that several dioceses should form between them one single commission which will be able to promote the liturgy by common consultation.

46. Besides the commission on the sacred liturgy, every diocese, as far as possible, should have commissions for sacred music and sacred art.

These three commissions must work in closest collaboration; indeed, it will often be best to fuse the three of them into one single commission.

Instruction [*Inter Oecumenici*](#), Congregation of Rites, 1964:

(<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/inter-oecumenici--instruction-on-implementing-the-constitution-on-sacred-liturgy-2182>)

44. The liturgical commission, which should be expeditiously established by the territorial authority, shall as far as possible be chosen from among the bishops themselves or at least include one of them, along with priests expert in liturgical and pastoral matters and designated by name for this office.

The members and consultants of the commission should ideally meet several times a year to deal with issues as a group.

45. The territorial authority may properly entrust the following to the commission:

a. to carry out studies and experiments in keeping with the norms of the Constitution art. 40, §§ 1 and 2;

b. to further practical initiatives for the whole region that will foster liturgical life and the application of the Constitution on the Liturgy;

c. to prepare studies and the resources required as a result of decrees of the plenary assembly of bishops;

d. to control pastoral liturgy in the whole nation, to see to the application of decrees of the plenary assembly, and to report on these matters to the assembly;

e. to further frequent consultation and promote collaboration with regional associations involved with Scripture, catechetics, pastoral care, music, and art, as well as with every kind of lay religious association.

47. The diocesan liturgical commission, under the direction of the bishop, has these responsibilities:

- a. to be fully informed on the state of pastoral- liturgical activity in the diocese;
- b. to carry out faithfully those proposals in liturgical matters made by the competent authority and to keep informed on the studies and programs taking place elsewhere in this field;
- c. to suggest and promote practical programs of every kind that may contribute to the advancement of liturgical life, especially in the interest of aiding priests laboring in the Lord's vineyard;
- d. to suggest, in individual cases or even for the whole diocese, timely, step-by-step measures for the work of pastoral liturgy, to appoint and to call upon people capable of helping priests in this matter as occasion arises, to propose suitable means and resources;
- e. to see to it that programs in the diocese designed to promote liturgy go forward with the cooperation and mutual help of other groups along the lines mentioned above (no. 45 e) regarding the liturgical commission of the assembly of bishops.

Instruction *Musica Sacram*, Congregation of Rites, 1967: (alternate translation [here](#))

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_instr_19670305_musica-sacram_en.html

68. Diocesan music commissions make an important contribution to the promotion of sacred music as part of the program of pastoral liturgy in the diocese.

As far as possible, therefore, every diocese is to have such a commission to work in close conjunction with the diocesan liturgical commission.

For greater efficiency it will be better in most cases to combine the two commissions into one, made up of experts in each field.

It is also strongly recommended that, when it is considered helpful, several dioceses establish a single commission to carry out a unified program in an entire region through a coordinated use of resources.

69. The liturgical commission recommended for bodies of bishops is also to have responsibility for music and should accordingly include musical experts in its membership. It would also be well for this commission to establish contacts not only with the diocesan commissions but also with other associations of the region that are involved with sacred music. This applies to the institutes of pastoral liturgy mentioned in the same article of the Constitution.

Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, John Paul II, 1988:

(https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19881204_vicesimus-quintus-annus.html)

21. In every diocese the bishop is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, and likewise the governor, promoter and guardian of the entire liturgical life of the Church entrusted to him. When the bishop celebrates in the midst of his people, it is the very mystery of the Church which is manifested. Therefore it is necessary that the bishop should be strongly convinced of the importance of such celebrations for the Christian life of his faithful. Such celebrations should be models for the whole diocese. Much still remains to be done to help priests and the faithful to grasp the meaning of the liturgical texts, to develop the dignity and beauty of celebrations and the places where they are held, and to promote, as the Fathers did, a “mystagogic catechesis” of the sacraments. In order to bring this task to a successful conclusion, the bishop should set up one or more diocesan commissions which help him to promote liturgical activity, music and sacred art in his diocese. The diocesan commission, for its part, will act according to the mind and directives of the bishop and should be able to count upon his authority and his encouragement to carry out its particular task properly.

Instruction *Varietates Legitimae*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1994:

(<https://adoremus.org/1994/03/instruction-inculturation-and-the-roman-liturgy/>)

67. The episcopal conference will supervise the process of experimentation,[142] normally with the help of the national or regional liturgical commission. The conference will also take care to ensure that the experimentation does not exceed the limits of time and place that were fixed. It will also ensure pastors and the faithful know about the limited and provisional nature of the experiment, and it will not give it publicity of a sort which could have an effect on the liturgical practice of the country. At the end of the period of experimentation, the episcopal conference will decide whether it matches up to the goal that was proposed or whether it needs revision, and it will communicate its conclusions to the congregation along with full information about the experiment.

Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2001:

(https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html)

126. In the preparation of a translation of texts of a diocesan liturgical approved by the Apostolic See as *textus typici*, the following are to be observed:

a) The translation is to be done by the diocesan liturgical Commission or by another body designated by the diocesan Bishop for this purpose, and then it must be approved by the diocesan Bishop, after consultation with his clergy and with experts;

Instruction [*Redemptionis Sacramentum*](#), Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2004:

(https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html)

25. Commissions as well as councils or committees established by the Bishop to handle “the promotion of the Liturgy, sacred music and art in his diocese” should act in accordance with the intentions and the norms of the Bishop; they must rely on his authority and his approval so that they may carry out their office in a suitable manner and so that the effective governance of the Bishop in his diocese will be preserved. As regards all these sorts of bodies and other entities and all undertakings in liturgical matters, there has long been the need for the Bishops to consider whether their working has been fruitful thus far, and to consider carefully which changes or improvements should be made in their composition and activity so that they might find new vigour. It should be borne in mind that the experts are to be chosen from among those whose soundness in the Catholic faith and knowledge of theological and cultural matters are evident.

26. The same holds for those commissions of this kind which have been established by the Conference of Bishops in accordance with the will of the Council, commissions whose members consist of Bishops who are clearly distinguished from their expert helpers. Where the number of members of a Conference of Bishops is not sufficient for the effective establishment of a liturgical commission from among their own number, then a council or group of experts should be named, always under the presidency of a Bishop, which is to fulfill the same role insofar as possible, albeit without the name of “liturgical commission”.

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