Saint Cecilia, Pray for Us: Guided Prayer and Reflection Inspired by and Honoring the Patron Saint of Music

The National Association of Catholic Church Musicians (NACCM) offers this resource to help you celebrate the feast of Saint Cecilia. As pastoral musicians, we draw inspiration from the patron saint of music. On her feast day (November 22), we invite you to pause and reflect on the gifts we have been given and that we share with others.

This resource is intended for individual or group use. If you're using it with a group, we invite you to use the Scripture passages and subsequent reflections for dialogue and insight. The opening and closing reflections are also appropriate for individual use.
If you would like to use this resource as a time of prayer with a group that sings, we invite you to add an opening and closing song that fit your community, both stylistically and musically.
For more information about the National Association of Catholic Church Musicians and how to join as a member, visit www.npm.org.

Opening Prayer

O God, who in no need of our praise,
accept our humble prayer as a sweet fragrance rising to you,
receive the gifts, talents, and sacrifices of all musicians
who minister to you at the Mass,
that, guided by the example of St. Cecilia,
who offered the song in her heart to you
and brought about the conversion of many,
we may become instruments of faith, hope, and love
and sources of peace and unity in the Church and our world.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.

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Opening Reflection

As we reflect upon the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, and the feast day of St. Cecilia, patron saint of musicians, we are invited to consider not only the sacred responsibility entrusted to us as church musicians, but also the journeys of faith that have brought each of us to our ministry. Lord I am grateful for...

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In the first reading from Ezekiel, we encounter the image of God as the shepherd who seeks the lost, brings back those who have strayed, binds up the injured, and strengthens the weak. These words resonate deeply with musicians. When have there been moments in your ministry, where you have needed healing? Where you have searched for direction? When God's presence was difficult to recognize?

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The words of Psalm 23 further remind us that the Lord remains our shepherd, guiding us through uncertainty and restoring our strength. As musicians, we recognize that even during life's most challenging circumstances, God was faithfully leading us toward a renewed sense of purpose. The Lord's grace has blessed me by...

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Scripture Readings

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 22, 2026

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, YEAR A

First reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
Responsorial: Psalm 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR A MEMORIAL OR VOTIVE MASS OF ST. CECILIA

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe precedes the optional Memorial to St. Cecilia in 2026. These readings can be used for private or group reflection, or for another votive mass or vesper on another day.

First Reading: Hosea 2:16b, 17b, 21–22
Responsorial: Psalm 45:11–12, 14–15, 16–17
Gospel: Matthew 25:1–13

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Scriptural Reflection Questions

1) Pope Francis famously advised pastors to “smell like their sheep.” In our music ministries, what does that practically, tangibly mean? How does this image translate to our service to the Church today?

2) Psalm 23 includes the image of a table set for a great feast, notably, “in the sight of my foes.” What does this passage mean to you? Is it in the sight of our foes to instill in them jealousy, envy? Is it to call them also to the feast prepared for us? Something else?

3) Being “subjected” – that is, made a subject of someone else’s authority – is not a popular image today. Yet Paul’s epistle teaches that all of us, even “the Son himself” will be subjected at the last. In what ways can we, in the her and now, begin that conformity to Christ and to God’s will in our lives?

4) The corporal works of mercy listed in the Gospel are not suggestions or goals, they are a road map for our Christian lives. When have you last, directly, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, visited a prisoner, welcomed a stranger? Is it sufficient, for instance, to give money to institutions that do these works of mercy, or is more required of each of us, individually?

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Sacred Scripture
(Psalm for the Memorial of St. Cecilia)
Psalm 45:11-12, 14-15, 16-17

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.
Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear,
forget your people and your father's house.
So shall the king desire your beauty;
for he is your lord, and you must worship him.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.
All glorious is the king's daughter as she enters;
her raiment is threaded with spun gold.
In embroidered apparel she is borne in to the king;
behind her the virgins of her train are brought to you.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.
They are borne in with gladness and joy;
they enter the palace of the king.
The place of your fathers your sons shall have;
you shall make them princes through all the land.

R. The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.

This reading is taken from the Lectionary for Mass from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for use in the Dioceses of the United States,
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Scriptural Reflection

The Memorial of Saint Cecilia invites us to reflect on the virtues and wisdom of our Patron Saint of Music. Psalm 45, a royal psalm filled with Messianic hope, fits us, liturgical musicians, as we celebrate our Patroness. Cecilia is known for her music because she was found “singing to God in her heart” before she betrothed herself to a Pagan man named Valerian. Psalm 45 is filled with wedding imagery and celebrates human love: “The bridegroom is here; let us go out to meet Christ the Lord.”

“So shall the king desire your beauty; for he is your lord, and you must worship him” reminds us of the bride's physical beauty and the great joy of a nuptial celebration. As musicians, we know, love, and feel the beauty within our art and our Church when the liturgy pierces our hearts and minds. “All glorious is the king’s daughter as she enters; Her raiment is threaded with spun gold.” The Psalm for the Memorial of St. Cecilia is also used for the Assumption of Mary, and we hear the Queen-bride of Mary as the perfect model of obedience to the Divine Son. Cecilia was also obedient and true to the Lord, and she not only sang in her heart as a model for musicians, but also converted souls, starting with her husband, Valerian, and brother-in-law, Tiburtius. “The place of your fathers your sons shall have; you shall make them princes through all the land” (Psalm 45:17). Cecilia led those around her to an encounter with Jesus Christ through baptism. She was not only a musician but also a catechist and a model bride in the footsteps of Mary. As musicians and leaders of sung liturgy, we must model Cecilia in our own parishes through art and conversion.

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Scriptural Reflection (Continued)

In 2026, November 22 falls on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. As Psalm 45 proclaims, “Let us go out to meet Christ the Lord,” let us truly meet our Savior in this great Solemnity that celebrates our Lord, and be reminded that Cecilia wanted all those she encountered to be forever changed by her model of daughter and Bride to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Resources:
Nowell O.S.B, Irene, Sing a New Song: The Psalms in the Sunday Lectionary, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993, p. 263.
Saint Pope John Paul II, L'Osservatore Romano: The Fitting Role of Sacred Music in the Holy Liturgy, January 28, 2004.
Schmitz, Fr. Mike, https://www.thebibleinayearstudyguide.com/day-28

Reflection in Song

Consider and reflect on these three moments in the Bible where song plays a role:
Exodus 15:19-20 Miriam leads the women of Israel in song
Acts 16:22-25 Paul and Silas sing hymns in prison
Mark 14:26 The Last Supper ends with a hymn

Choose a song from your worship community’s repertoire, or another song (not a biblical psalm), that you would sing at that moment if you had been there. For each song, take time to let the song speak to that moment in your heart.

Choose two or three more moments in the Bible for reflection either where song or music plays a role, or moments that speak to you in a particular way and choose and reflect on a song as above.

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Closing Prayer

Stir up within us, O Lord, ardent service and unfading zeal,
that, through the intercession of St. Cecilia,
who gave her life as witness to the Gospel,
we might remain pastoral musicians of your Church
who strive to draw the People of God more fully
into the all-embracing love of the Holy Trinity
and to follow after Your Son, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe,
to sing eternal praise with your Angels and Saints
in the Liturgy of Heaven,
where you live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.

Post-Prayer Reflection: Listening for God's Voice in Our Ministry

Inspired by the Ignatian Examen, these reflection prompts invite us to prayerfully consider God's presence in our lives and music ministry. There is no need to answer every question. You may choose one or two that speak to your heart, or simply spend time with whichever prompt draws your attention. Allow yourself a few moments of quiet, listening for God's voice and reflecting with gratitude, honesty, and openness to his grace.

1. Gratitude – Recognizing God's Gifts
Where have I experienced God's presence through music and ministry? What moments, people, or experiences am I especially grateful for?

2. Awareness – Listening to My Heart
When has my music helped me or others draw closer to God? When might I have become more focused on the music itself than on the prayer it is meant to serve?

3. Humility – Remembering Whom We Serve
How have I used the gifts God has entrusted to me? Am I offering them freely and joyfully, while remembering that they are meant to glorify God?

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Post-Prayer Reflection:
Listening for God's Voice in our Ministry
(Continued)

4. Grace – Recognizing God's Mercy
Where have I experienced challenges, disappointments, or moments of weariness in my ministry? How might God be inviting me to receive his grace in those moments?

5. Hope – Looking Toward What Comes Next
As a new liturgical year approaches, what is one way God may be calling me to grow in faith, deepen my prayer, or serve his people more generously?

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