



HYMNS IN THE LITURGY: AN EXPRESSION OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

On December 10, a document entitled “Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church: An Aid for Evaluating Hymn Lyrics” was distributed to the bishops of the United States. The document was written in September 2020 by the USCCB Committee on Doctrine. It seems to not have been intended for the general public, but rather offered as a guide to bishops who may be tasked with evaluating “the suitability of certain hymnals proposed for use in their diocese,” and in particular to bishops who are asked to evaluate texts for publication in hymnals or other collections of liturgical music. The document encourages bishops to share the resource with composers and publishers within their diocese and with diocesan offices of worship, pastors, and parish musicians.

The Committee noted that the guidelines applied to any music intended for use in the sacred liturgy or in public devotions. While the document quotes the text of a number of hymns as examples, it never explicitly bans any particular compositions, nor in fact does it in any way suggest that parish musicians should be acting upon the document and its contents at this time, before guidance from their own bishop.

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians is committed to forming pastoral musicians for excellent musical leadership for service to the Church. Since its founding, NPM has promoted the principles first articulated in the 1972 USCCB document *Music in Catholic Worship* and still found today in the 2007 USCCB document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. NPM echoes the bishops’ teaching that the appropriate liturgical, pastoral, and musical judgments (STL 126ff) must be applied to decisions about what to sing and how to sing in the liturgy.

The leadership of NPM is already in communication with the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship in regard to how we can collaborate in further discussion about music for the sacred liturgy. As always, NPM is at the service of the Church, continually working to ensure divinely inspired musical worship in the dioceses of the United States.