



## **Music for Graduation Masses in Catholic Secondary Schools.**

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,  
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope - Jeremiah 29: 11*

### ***Transitions: Stepping into the Unknown with Hope***

Graduation Masses that celebrate the transition from primary and secondary school to the new life waiting hold special memories for children and families. A new chapter begins with all the fears, hopes, dreams, and questions that come with such a significant life change: what will this new stage bring? How will people cope with the bigger horizon, as well as with the increased demands of study and/or work? Will old friends remain connected, and who will be the new friends that emerge? Where does God fit into all of this?

### ***Sacred Moments, Intentionally Celebrated***

As Catholic communities of faith, we share the gift of moving in the deep and living tradition of the paschal mystery that always welcomes new life. Stages of growth and change are intentionally marked in sacred ritual. Our Graduation Masses therefore stay true to any liturgical celebration in that they have three dimensions: they recall the past in the present for the sake of the future.<sup>1</sup> Any Graduation Mass will honour the past, while also pointing to an unknown but hopeful future for young people and their families. These Masses are therefore opportunities to show gratitude for a shared past in a specific community that is also part of a global Church family. These Masses acknowledge how far people have come, allowing all people to stand together in joyful and solemn solidarity. Finally, they seek to send young people and their families into the future with hope, sure in the care of a loving and accompanying God, and in the richness and anchor of Christian community. The music chosen should reflect the saving work of God, while also reflecting the community's collective response to God's love and faithfulness.

### ***Highlight Opportunities for Evangelisation***

Graduation Masses are important highlight opportunities for evangelisation. Family and friends will make a significant effort to prepare, gather, and participate in the Mass, and

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<sup>1</sup> Adrien Nocent, *The Liturgical Year, Book 1*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 54.

in the ongoing celebration that usually follows the Mass. Many people will often travel long distances and make sacrifices to be present to mark the occasion. The music and sung prayer in these Masses will ideally reflect and honour this preparation and commitment by the extended school community to the occasion. This means Graduation Masses need to be consultatively planned, carefully prepared, and thoroughly rehearsed over time. Music on these occasions can offer a fitting tribute to the character of a community, while also staying true to Catholic Identity, and to the liturgy itself.

### **All Are Welcome**

All people need to feel welcome to join in the sacred song at different points at a Graduation Mass. There also needs to be clear consideration of the cultures represented, and the singing abilities of the people who will come. Some people also may not have been to Mass for a time, so having both hymns and a Mass setting that is intergenerational is integral.

People also need to be able to see and hear what is going on, and to know when they are being clearly invited to participate in the music. This allows the range of people present to experience hospitality and inclusion as they participate through sound, silence, word, posture, and gesture in the Mass. Ideally, people will be able to easily follow a booklet, a hymnal, or a clear PowerPoint or Keynote so they can maximise their participation. This is *invitational, and also demonstrates hospitality*.

These Masses are not concert opportunities for the school Music Department or the star vocalist, although the beauty of excellence in music performance is present and welcome. Graduation Masses are opportunities to bring all the musical gifts of the school community together in Music Ministry to serve the sung prayer of the wider school family. This also means actively discerning with the planning group (which will include the student leadership team, including leaders in music and liturgy) *which music is better suited to the Mass, and which is more appropriate to the party after Mass*.

### **Scripture, Season, and Liturgical Action**

The readings of the day and the liturgical season are the first considerations in planning any Mass; and this includes a Graduation Mass. Most Graduation Masses fall before Advent but if the Mass is in Advent, it is important to be mindful that this is the season of expectant waiting and preparation for the birth of Christ at Christmas. The music at this time is still joyful but is not as exuberant as the music at Christmas. For Masses outside of Advent, there is more scope for music choice and character. In looking first to Sacred Scripture that is chosen for the Mass, this gives the opportunity for the texts to have even deeper resonance through the music chosen. The nature of each part of the Mass also needs to be honoured, as music needs to complement the liturgical action at different points in the Mass. An inclusive and consultative approach to planning ensures student buy-in and liturgical understanding, as well as being consistent with what is required by *Musica Sacram 5*.

### **Roadtested Repertoire**

See the list from *Celebrating Liturgy in Schools: Catholic Identity in Song* as published in The Summit Online Liturgical Journal, Melbourne:

<https://www.cam.org.au/evangelisation/News/NewsView/Article/21828/Celebrating-liturgy-in-schools-Catholic-identity-in-song#.Wu1VMi9L3q0>

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