

Sing to the Lord

Cantor training and formation for ministry
An opportunity for parishes, schools and all interested people

In the liturgy – the action of Christ in which the whole community of the faithful participates – no other sign brings out the communal dimension so well as singing, where many individual voices are fused together, blending into a single voice. Singing together fosters a strong bond of unity and sense of belonging; it helps to develop the unity of mind and heart which is part of the mystery of the Church.

... power of liturgical music carries the liturgical assembly beyond the text into a sense of the mystery of God. The chief form of music in the liturgy is the song that arises from the voice of the entire assembly. Musicians and choir members use their talents and resources to 'lift up the hearts' of God's people and to help them proclaim God's marvellous deeds. Music is a wonderful way of drawing the assembly into the 'full, conscious and active participation that is called for by the very nature of the liturgy'. (CSL a. 14)

From: Catholic Worship Book II – Part I p. xii

Identifying a need

In many ways the experience of COVID brought into sharper focus and further exacerbated issues and challenges that had been bubbling away for some time. In particular, it has resulted in a significant loss of liturgical ministers.

Even before COVID many parishes found it difficult to find musicians and singers to support the voice of the Assembly at Sunday Mass, Sacraments of Initiation, funerals, and other liturgical celebrations. This is particularly the case for our small country communities who often have neither singers nor instrumentalists.

Our schools are not immune from this problem which becomes critical for significant celebrations such as school centenaries.

While recorded music can help in these situations it also has limitations.

At the same time our communities are full of people with a range of musical gifts and who love to play music and sing. Indeed, it is said that almost anyone can be taught to sing.

Music is integral to good liturgy. And liturgy is essential in nurturing our faith and forming us for mission. The Diocesan Liturgy Council has been considering how we could work together to address this need and invite the participation of singers from the wider community. What follows is a first step that we hope will develop over time and with experience.

Offering a response

After listening to the experience in some other dioceses and discerning how we might respond in this Church of Maitland-Newcastle, we are looking to offer a form of music 'scholarship' to those already exercising music ministry in their parish, and to new people who would like to have a go.

We are conscious of the many generous people who are part of parish music ministry. We hope 'Sing to the Lord' offers an opportunity that nurtures them as ministers and connects them with other music ministers across the diocese.

Initially we are focusing on the ministry of cantor and singer.

The 'scholarship' is not monetary. Rather it involves an exchange of gifts. The 'gift' received for those who express interest will be the provision of training and formation for the ministry of cantoring. The 'gift' given in return would be a commitment to ministering as a cantor in one of our parishes on a semi regular basis. This would be determined to suit the cantor and the parish community.

This is an initial step from which we hope to learn together and grow this initiative.

Training and Formation

Facilitator

Dr. Anne Millard, Director of Cathedral Music.

Supported by the Diocesan Liturgy Council.

Training Component

"To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamation, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bearing."

(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, p.30)

Content

The Diocesan training and formation process for the ministry of Cantor will focus on developing vocal techniques necessary to effectively lead the congregation. Training will cover the following:

1. VOCAL SKILLS including:
 - Development of vocal techniques for singing acclamations, responses, antiphons, psalms, hymns, and songs
 - Understanding the background and use of the different vocal styles
 - Awareness of one's vocal range and how to adapt music to suit individual abilities
 - Techniques to develop good diction and articulation
 - Fostering breathing techniques to best lead singing
2. THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE including:
 - Posture

- Physical placement of the instrument
- Eye contact
- Effective use of musical manuscripts
- Gestures
- Microphone techniques
- Facial expression
- Basic acoustical awareness—the building is important

3. MUSICIANSHIP including;

- Phrasing
- General theory skills

Process and schedule

First Session: 4 x 2-hour gatherings followed by singing at Mass

Practicum: Cantoring at parish liturgy over 6 months

Second session: Reflection on the practicum experience and consolidation of skills covered in the first session.

Formation component

- Appreciation of music as an essential element of liturgy
- Tips and strategies to ensure we pray at Mass, while staying focused on the task of cantoring

Numbers

The upper limit per group will be 10.

Venues and dates

Pending numbers, over time we hope seek to host this formation:

- in Newcastle at the Sacred Heart Cathedral
- in the Hunter at either Singleton or Muswellbrook
- in the Manning at Forster or Taree

Dates will be organised, and venues finalised once we have received people's Expressions of Interest. We will then plan for what will work best for the group.

Ministry opportunities

Existing parish music ministers would continue ministering in their parish, enriched by the training and formation opportunity.

Those who are new to cantoring will be introduced to their local Catholic parish community. Support will be provided to the new cantor and parish community to work out what the ministry of the cantor might look like in the local parish. We will all be learning together.

Seeking Expressions of Interest

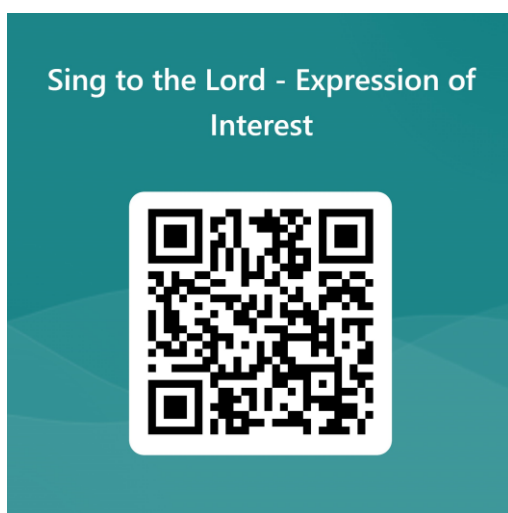
All people with a gift for/interest in singing and would like to participate in 'Sing to the Lord' are invited to complete an Expression of Interest form. This invitation is extended to all the baptised, all members of parish worshipping communities, all members of our school communities, all people with a music gift who would be comfortable using their gift in the context of Catholic worship.

Parish leaders are invited to consider the whole parish community and neighbourhood, and invite people to submit an Expression of Interest. Parish leaders are also invited to: preach about this opportunity and the importance of music ministry in liturgy; talk about it and encourage members of the community to invite people to participate. Personal invitation is always more effective.

Expression of Interest Form

To complete the Expression of Interest form please click on the following link or click on the QR code.

<https://forms.office.com/r/7CGYdeXGZw>



Conclusion

We look forward to receiving an abundance of Expressions of Interest and embarking on this new and exciting initiative together. The closing date is Friday 12 April.

With every best wish,

Louise Gannon rsj

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