

Closing a Parish: Music Suggestions and Ideas

A liturgy for the closing of a parish is going to be stuffed with emotion for the assembly. When preparing music for such a liturgy, extreme sensitivity needs to be given to the selection of literature, keeping in mind the climate of sadness, perhaps anger, and (ideally) hope for the future. Here are some ideas to keep in mind when planning this liturgy:

- Familiar, culturally ingrained hymns like *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name* and *Lift High the Cross* are fitting for this kind of celebration. Keeping music very familiar to the congregation and not branching into too much foreign literature is a must, especially but not limited to the Mass Ordinary. If the parish is merging with another, or several are forming to create a new parish, there may be a temptation to create a new, common repertoire to assist in that merging. This is not a good time for that.
- Thanksgiving is always a good theme for these liturgies. Giving thanks to God is a good point of focus in this kind of liturgy. *God, We Praise You* and *Now Thank We All Our God* are good choices here.
- Themes of Church, and even of Church buildings, can be effective here. Almost every hymnal has a “Dedication of a Church” heading in its topical index. Care should be given, though, that those hymns are not too focused on the Church building, especially if the worship site is not going to be used in the future. Good selections here include *The Church of Christ Cannot be Bound* and *The Church’s One Foundation*.
- Finally, petition and looking forward to the future of the Church is a good theme to foster, still keeping in mind the assembly’s need to mourn. The Litany of the Saints, in any of its many settings, can be effective.
- One good idea is, soon after the closing Mass has been announced, to take a survey of the parishioners asking for the 4 or 5 favorite pieces of music. Using these suggestions, try to incorporate them at Mass in the weeks leading up to the closing, as well as at the closing liturgy itself.

Prepared by Andrew Motyka, Director of Archdiocesan and Cathedral Music. For more information contact Andy at amotyka@archindy.org or 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1513.