

Music suggestions for a wedding

The Church keeps no official list of “approved” wedding music, but it does offer some helpful guidelines that can be applied to your choice of wedding music. In a nutshell, the Church says that good liturgical music helps the whole assembly celebrate the liturgy (in this case, your wedding) more fully. The church encourages the choice from sacred and classical music, and the following websites may provide some guidance:

- <http://catholicweddinghelp.com/topics/catholic-wedding-music-list.htm>
- <http://whatchristianswanttoknow.com/15-best-christian-wedding-songs/>
- <http://christianmusic.about.com/od/specialcharts/tp/aatp081603.htm>

Specific songs:

- **Rob Galea, Song of Love (Wedding Song)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbYkk1FfBDg>
- **Matt Maher, Set me as a seal:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZOLQLL-tWo>
- **Chris Hayman, I Hear my Love**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5vO96T_6Ns
- **Chris Hayman, Prayer of Tobias and Sarah**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-KjkU1nvmI>
- **Darlene Zschech, Everything about you:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUDK8BRfZ_g
- **There is love:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utdPh1Ec1Ws>
- **Michael Card, The Wedding:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrbeiseqjrU>
- **Steve Curtis Chapman, I will be here**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlxQbYPawT8>
- **David Haas, Wherever you go:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAS1NRDrNA8>

The Church strongly discourages the use of recorded music during the liturgy, including during wedding liturgies. Recorded music should only be used when no musicians are available for the wedding. The whole wedding, including the music, is a prayer, and an essential element of any prayer is that it comes from the person who is offering it. Imagine using a CD or digital recording to replace a spoken prayer, like the Lord's Prayer — it just wouldn't be the same as saying it yourself. The same reasoning applies to musical prayer.

Catholic wedding music: Striking the right note

The music minister at your parish can help you choose good music for your wedding. As you work with that person, here are three questions to guide your music selections:

1. Is it prayerful?

The purpose of any Catholic liturgy, including a wedding liturgy, is to give glory to God and to sanctify (make holy) the worshipers. Your wedding music should reflect that purpose; in other words, it should help the assembly to pray and to give thanks to God for your love. Generally, any of the music widely used in

Catholic parishes or issued by Catholic publishers such as OCP Publications or GIA Publications will meet this standard (although some critics of contemporary Catholic liturgical music might argue otherwise). Pop or rock songs, even those with a spiritual theme, are usually considered inappropriate for use in a Catholic wedding ceremony because they were never intended to be used in a liturgical setting. Even some "classic" wedding music, such as the wedding marches by Wagner and Mendelssohn, are usually not permitted for this reason.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of good liturgical music to choose from, including music written specifically for weddings; the music minister at your parish can point you to some of these possibilities.

2. Is it accessible?

Put another way, will it encourage the assembly to sing? In Catholic worship, the assembly—all those folks who have come to your wedding—is not an audience, passively watching events unfold at the altar. Catholic liturgy calls on the assembly to actively participate in the prayer of the Church, including its sung prayer. Doing so is one of the most powerful ways your friends and family can express their love and support for you and your spouse.

As you plan your wedding music, then, consider whether your friends and family will be able to sing what you have selected. What is accessible will depend on your situation. If your family and friends are all talented musicians, then the sky's the limit. If they couldn't carry a note in a bucket, better to stick with simple, familiar songs. If many of the guests will be from other Christian faiths, you might consider choosing classic hymns widely used by many denominations.

Another way to encourage participation is to have the musicians lead the assembly in a brief rehearsal immediately before the ceremony. Basically, the cantor explains that he or she would like to lead the assembly in a quick run-through of some of the essential music: the "Gospel Acclamation," "Holy, Holy," "Memorial Acclamation," "Great Amen," and so on. (The music minister at your parish can suggest which pieces would be best to rehearse with the assembly; obviously, if you are not celebrating the sacrament within a Mass, your list would be much shorter.) The cantor sings each piece once, then invites the assembly to sing it through once. Besides allowing people to "practice," this sends a very strong and clear invitation to full participation in the wedding liturgy.

3. Is it beautiful?

Beauty is a window onto the divine (Catechism #32), so it is not surprising that the Church calls for the music used in its worship to be beautiful. You and your parish music minister will know what wedding music will seem beautiful, given your tastes and culture.

One thing to keep in mind is that the beauty of any musical piece depends a lot on who is singing and playing it. Most of the music provided by the Catholic music publishers has the potential to be beautiful in the right hands. Songs that might have seemed ho-hum when just accompanied by a piano or organ during the Sunday liturgy might completely come alive when accompanied by a wider variety of voices and musical instruments. One way to get an idea of what really beautiful liturgical music sounds like is to listen to professionals play it on the albums issued by the Catholic music publishers.