The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this preeminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.

-Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum concilium, 112
Introduction

1. As in many dioceses of the United States, the Archdiocese of New York serves an increasing number of people for whom Spanish is their primary language. Many pastors and parish musicians, however, are not familiar with the standard repertoire and styles of music frequently used at Spanish-language liturgies. The guidelines that follow are intended to be of assistance to clergy and pastoral staff who wish to minister effectively to these communities by offering an experience of liturgical worship that is culturally authentic, faith-filled, and beautiful.

General Principles

2. Pastors and music directors should seek to ensure that all parish liturgies are celebrated with joy, solemnity, and reverence, reflecting an encounter with divine and heavenly realities. Parishes with Spanish-speaking congregations should equally be aware of, and foster an appreciation for, diverse cultural expressions of Catholicism from various countries and regions which remain a revered part of the faith-life of parishioners in their new homes. When this takes place, a community will become enriched by the cultural contributions of the various groups present and be led to a deepening understanding of the Gospel message.

The Contributions of Spanish-Language Music to the Catholic Church

3. Since the early Middle Ages, Spain has been a strongly Catholic country. Many revered saints were born and lived in Spain. Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Ignatius Loyola, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Dominic, Saint Josemaria Escriva are some commonly known Spanish saints. There also exists a rich history of Spanish sacred music. Celebrated Renaissance composers such as Cristobal de Morales (1500-1553), Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599), Tomas Luis de Victoria (1548-1611), and Alonso Lobo (1555-1617) all hailed from Spain. When Spanish missionaries first proclaimed the Gospel in Central and South America, they brought with them the longstanding tradition of sacred music from Spain to the New World. Although the corpus of medieval Spanish polyphonic pieces is no longer generally well known, many traditional hymns originating in Spain and brought to the Americas are still sung regularly and remain beloved across the Spanish-speaking diaspora even today.
4. In the centuries that followed, composers wrote new music to express the spiritual faith and religious fervor of Spanish-speaking Catholics. The liturgical works of Hernando Franco (1532-1585), Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (1590-1664), and Francisco López Capillas (1608-1674) composed for the great cathedrals of Latin America, the villancicos sung on Christmas and folk hymns written in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and modern religious compositions by Héctor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) and Alberto Ginastera (1906-1983) all serve as examples of the ever-expanding repertoire of Spanish-language sacred music. This great body of works from both the Old and New Worlds forms part of the Church’s musical patrimony, which the Second Vatican Council described as “a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art” (Sacrosanctum concilium, 112).

Spanish-Language Music in the Parish Music Program

Hymnody

5. The use of familiar hymnody is essential to cultivating a singing congregation. The rich collection of traditional Spanish-language hymns remains well known today across national boundaries and generational groups. While there is certainly a place for newer compositions at Mass, including cherished hymns in parish music programs is essential to creating welcoming liturgies that foster congregational singing and a cultural appreciation for the Hispanic heritage of the local community. A list of these hymns may be found at the conclusion of this document.

Cultural Celebrations

6. Cultural observances often revolve around feasts that are of special importance and which are based on the national origins of Hispanic communities. These celebrations help to unite a community through the sharing of food, dance, and fellowship. Vibrant liturgical celebrations on feast days play a special role in strengthening the faith and unity of the community by gathering peoples from various nations in common worship around the Eucharistic table of the Lord.

7. Liturgical music chosen for these occasions should be both appropriate for the feast and reflective of the various groups that make up a parish community. For example, cultural celebrations frequently focus on a particular Marian feast, and a community will often know a particular hymn to Mary under a title that originated in their country of birth or ancestral homeland. Music directors should seek to include these kinds of special hymns in celebrations of national feasts.

Use of Proper Chants

8. The proper chants of the Mass, including the Entrance [Introit], Offertory, and Communion antiphons, may be found in the Graduale Romanum, and texts for the Entrance and Communion antiphons are listed in the Misal Romano. Although hymns may be substituted in
their place (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], 48), it is recommended to include sung antiphons at Mass when appropriate so that the congregation can benefit from hearing and praying with all of the proper liturgical texts assigned to a particular day or celebration. Several resources for the musical setting of the antiphons in Spanish may be found at the end of this document.

**Charismatic Music**

9. Charismatic music developed in the latter part of the twentieth century and largely focuses on one’s personal growth in the baptismal gifts of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, these songs do not have as their focus the communal dimensions and activities of liturgical worship; as such, they are more appropriately sung in devotional contexts, such as prayer meetings and revivals, group sharing, Bible study sessions, etc. In parishes where, for pastoral reasons, these songs are sung at Spanish Masses, it is important to ensure that musical texts reflect Catholic theology and spirituality. Because this style of music is also used in Evangelical and Pentecostal settings, not all songs, even if they mention God or religious themes, may be appropriate for use in a Catholic setting.

**Use of Approved Texts for Mass Ordinaries**

10. It is sometimes the case that published Spanish Mass Ordinary settings (*Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*) will deviate from the approved Spanish translation of the Mass in favor of abridged or poetic variations of these prayers. Such settings are not permitted for use at Mass. Only the approved liturgical texts found in the *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición* may be sung for the Mass Ordinary, and musical settings should not be used unless they proclaim these texts in their entirety, without alterations, additions, or omissions. Music directors and musicians should ensure that any settings they have been using, or new settings they wish to introduce, utilize the correct texts of the Mass.

11. In parishes where multiple language groups are present, it is advisable to have some common settings which are known by both the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking congregations, and any other language groups whom the parish serves. To achieve this unity, the use of Latin, the common language of the Church, can be helpful (GIRM, 41). Simple Latin settings are usually easy for a congregation to learn and may be used at Masses in any language, including bilingual celebrations.

**Use of the Pipe Organ and Other Instruments**

12. The organ is considered the primary musical instrument to be used at Roman Catholic liturgies because it “adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things.” However, other wind, string, or percussion instruments may also be played, “provided they are truly suitable for sacred use or can be made suitable” (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 120).
13. In Spanish-language Masses, guitars, drums, percussion, and brass instruments are often used to accompany the singing of the gathered faithful. These instruments generally function well in this role, and they also form a recognized part of the stylistic genres often associated with Spanish-language music in the United States. Notwithstanding, congregations usually find the organ one of the easiest instruments to sing with because it produces sound much like the human voice (i.e., through wind-induced vibrations).

14. Spanish-speaking congregations are typically vibrant and robust in their singing when properly supported by instrumental accompaniment, and organists should seek to play Spanish hymns and Mass parts confidently and with an adequate volume to help carry congregational singing. Organ accompaniment books are published for most Spanish hymnals, and, in some cases, accompaniments can also be found by searching online.

**Pastoral Challenges and Solutions**

*Availability of Music Resources*

15. The Spanish liturgical music tradition is frequently handed on orally. People hear songs sung in church and learn to sing or play them by ear. This is the way in which musical traditions were passed on for many centuries before the advent of musical notation, and this practice remains common today in the Spanish-speaking community.

16. For those musicians who did not grow up singing this repertoire, there exists a large number of published print resources that include well-known hymns and Mass parts in Spanish, a sampling of which is included at the end of this document. Spanish-language liturgical music is available online as well. For example, YouTube can be an excellent place to find recorded examples of hymns that are familiar to most congregations. Notated sheet music for lesser-known hymns may also often be found online by typing the name of the hymn along with the words “written notation,” “*notas musicales,*” or similar phrases.

17. In some cases, the way in which hymns are notated in mainstream Spanish hymnals does not reflect the way that a particular individual or community may be accustomed to singing these songs. As a general rule, it is better to follow the standard versions of songs as opposed to renderings based on the preferences of individual musicians or singers. However, a pastoral decision will sometimes have to be made as to whether it is better for the sake of unity to follow a standard version of the hymn or make adjustments to accommodate the variations known by a particular community.

*Music Program Budgeting for Spanish-Language Masses*

18. In parishes where there is a regular weekend Mass celebrated in Spanish, it is important to include the musical needs for this Mass in the parish music budget. The distribution of parish musical resources for liturgical celebrations in all languages should be equitable, whenever
19. If a professional music director is employed by the parish, it is usually helpful for this person to oversee the music at both the Mass(es) celebrated in Spanish and those celebrated in English or other languages; this will ensure that a unified vision and consistent commitment to the quality of musical performances guides all parish Masses. Pastors and music directors should also take care that every Mass is celebrated with appropriate solemnity, and that the music chosen is both a true expression of Catholic theology and appropriate for the liturgical feast or season.

Volunteer Musicians Who Lack Formal Musical Training

20. A challenge that commonly arises in the Spanish-speaking community is a lack of training and experience amongst volunteer musicians in reading written musical notation. These singers and instrumentalists are often quite talented, but an inability to read music makes it difficult for them to learn new songs and Mass settings and then introduce these pieces to a parish community. In such cases, efforts should be made to foster and improve the musical skills of dedicated volunteer musicians, including training in the reading of musical notation. For example, a pastor might consider offering assistance to volunteer musicians who wish to engage in private or group study through parish music scholarships or other means of financial support.

Sound Amplification Systems

21. In some parishes, groups providing music for Masses in Spanish make use of external sound systems during Mass, resulting in concert-level volumes. This practice is to be avoided where possible. Not only does this reflect an atmosphere more conducive to a performance or a non-liturgical venue, but it also presents real challenges for congregational participation. For example, those in the pews may find it difficult to hear themselves or those around them singing, or they might be inclined not to participate in singing at all, with the mistaken understanding that those engaged in music ministry are offering a performance of sorts.

22. In general, the sound system already installed in the church should be used without resorting to the addition of extra speakers or other amplification devices. Maintaining a moderate volume of sound for instruments and singing will assist the congregation in participating fully and help to create an atmosphere that fosters a prayerful and focused liturgical celebration.

Special Circumstances and Additional Considerations

23. Additional questions regarding music at Spanish-language liturgies may be referred to the archdiocesan Office of Liturgy or members of the Liturgical Music Commission.
**Suggested and Well-Known Music for Use in Spanish-Language Masses**

The sample resources given below are intended to serve as a helpful guide for pastors, music directors, and musicians who serve Spanish-speaking congregations. What follows is not an exhaustive list; new resources for Spanish-language liturgical music are being regularly developed and published, and parish musicians are encouraged to contact the Office of Liturgy for updated recommendations.

The following hymns may be found in hymnals of major publishers - OCP, GIA, WLP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Advent</strong></th>
<th><strong>Holy Thursday (see also Eucharistic)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ábranse los Cielos</td>
<td>Perdona a Tu Pueblo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Como Estrella en Claro Cielo</td>
<td>Pequé, Pequé Señor</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Dios de Paz</td>
<td>Venid Oh Cristianos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oh Ven, Oh Ven, Emanuel</td>
<td>Preparen el Camino del Señor</td>
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<td>Ven Señor no Tardes Más</td>
<td>Ven Señor no Tardes</td>
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<td>Ven, Ven Señor No Tardes</td>
<td><strong>Christmas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Christmas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good Friday/Holy Cross</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Noche de Paz</td>
<td>Oh Buen Jesús</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastores a Belén</td>
<td>Oh Cruz Fiel y Venerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Una Estrella que Llama en la Noche</td>
<td>Venid Oh Cristianos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vamos, Pastores, Vamos</td>
<td><strong>Easter</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vamos Todos a Belén</td>
<td>Aleluya, Aleluya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venid Pastorcillos</td>
<td>El Señor Resucitó</td>
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<td><strong>Presentation of the Lord</strong></td>
<td>La Fiesta del Señor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cántico de Simeón</td>
<td>Resucitó</td>
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<td><strong>Lent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pentecost/Holy Spirit/Confirmation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A Ti Levanto Mis Ojos</td>
<td>Espíritu Santo, Ven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Mía</td>
<td>Ven Creador, Espíritu Divino</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caminaré</td>
<td>Ven Espíritu Santo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Escúchamos Señor</td>
<td><strong>Eucharist</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Misericordia, Señor</td>
<td>Alabado Sea el Santísimo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oh Buen Jesús</td>
<td>Altísimo Señor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oh Cruz Fiel y Venerable</td>
<td>Ante ti, Mi Postro/Con Devoto Anhelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perdón Oh Dios Mio</td>
<td>Bendito, Bendito</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perdón Señor</td>
<td>Cantemos al Amor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oh Buen Jesús</td>
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Sacred Heart
Corazón Santo

Christ the King
Cristo Vence
Tú Reinarás
Viva Cristo Rey

General
Amémonos de Corazón
Bendigamos al Señor
Bienaventurados
Caminaré
Cantemos al Señor
Cristo Libertador
Demos Gracias al Señor
Dios nos Convoca
Entre Tus Manos
Este Pan y Vino
Humildes Gracias
Jubilosos, Te Adoramos
Juntos Cantando la Alegría
Juntos Como Hermanos
Mi Dios y Mi Todo
Ofertorio Nicaragüense
Oh Jesús, Oh Buen Pastor
Oración de San Francisco
Pueblo de Reyes
Qué Alegría Cuando Me Dijeron
Recibe, Padre Eterno
Te Den Gracias
Te Presentamos
Un Mandamiento Nuevo
Unidos en Caridad
Vamos Cantando al Señor
Vayamos Jubilosos
Vienen con Alegría

Marian
Adiós Reina Del Cielo
Canto de María
Del Cielo ha Bajo

Dios te Salve, María
Feliz de ti, María
Oh María, Madre Mía
Oh Santísima
Santa María del Camino

National Marian Hymns
Altagracia (Dominican Republic)
Himno a Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia
(Virgen santa, tus hijos dichosos)

Carmen
A la Virgen del Carmen (Santa María, flor del Carmelo)
Himno de la Virgen del Carmen (Viva María, Viva el Carmelo)

Coromoto (Venezuela)
Himno a la Virgen de Coromoto (Salve aurora jubilosa)

Guadalupe (Mexican)
Buenos Días, Paloma Blanca
Oh Virgen de Guadalupe

Providencia (Puerto Rico)
Himno a Nuestra Señora de la Providencia
(Virgen Santa de la Providencia)

Quinche (Ecuador)
¡Salve, Salve, Gran Señora!

Funerals
Caminaré
Cerca de Ti Señor
Concédeles el Descanso Eterno
Hacia Ti, Morada Santa
Jesús, el Buen Pastor
Oración de San Francisco
Que los Ángeles, Te Lleven al Paraíso
**Weddings**
Amar es Entregar
Dios es Amor
Donde Hay Amor y Caridad
Jubilosos Te Adoramos
Unidos en Caridad

**Mass Ordinaries**
Señor ten Piedad - Miguel Manzano, Juan Luis García, Francisco Palazón
Gloria - Palazón (2 versions)
Santo - Miguel Manzano, Juan Luis García
Cordero de Dios - Juan Luis García, Francisco Palazo
Misa Melódica - Alejandro Meija

**Propers Chants in Spanish**
Canta la Misa - Ignatius Press
Spanish Propers Project

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**Spanish Language Hymnals with Organ Accompaniment**
*Canta la Misa* - Ignatius Press
*Flor y Canto* - OCP
*Libro del Organista* (Although not commonly used as a hymnal in the United States, this is a helpful resource that includes accompaniments to many well-known hymns.)

**Spanish Misal Romano Chant Resources**
The Zipoli Institute
Como Cantar La Santa Misa en Español
Coro San Clemente

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