



St. Mary of Vernon Music Ministry Adult Choir Agreements

On November 14, 2008, I began my ninth year as Director of Music Ministry at St. Mary of Vernon. Before my tenure here, Ms. Linda Kay served 20 years in the same capacity. In that time, I believe the agreements listed below have remained pretty consistent. They are expectations we hold for one another, on behalf of our communal life and the service of the congregation at St. Mary of Vernon. I reiterate them at this time, because I have not done so in several years. Our Ministry is a living, growing group that renews itself over time. As we change and expand, it is right that we should renew the expectations held for the common good.

I hope that each of us can approach this as an “examination of conscience” for our ministry. It is more important to look at our own behavior than to use this as a checklist of our own pet peeves in others. We are brothers and sisters in the Lord and each of us make mistakes every day. Let this be a call to be our best selves, and a challenge to improve ourselves for the good of our parish.

Agreements Regarding SMV Adult Choir

1. **Commitment** – As members of adult music ministry at St. Mary of Vernon, we must be committed to rehearse together. As leaders of the song of the congregation, we have taken responsibility to be well prepared to lead.

Music is a discipline, and as with other disciplines requires time and preparation. This discipline is not performed alone, and so even those capable of learning music on their own are required to be present. *(Flexibility has been important to all of us, and of course work events and health issues will come up. However, chronic absences even among veteran members should be discouraged.)*

- Newer members (2 years or less) who miss more than one rehearsal should not sing at liturgy. Newest members (1 year or less) who miss rehearsal should not sing that weekend.
- Cantors should always plan to attend the rehearsal before Masses for which they are scheduled. When this is not possible, they should consult with the director as to whether or not a change of cantor schedule is needed.
- At times, parishioners may join choir for a season or special event. This is to be encouraged, and we appreciate those who are unable to commit to a full year of choir. However, a hit and miss approach to choir participation will not yield a good result for the choir or for the choir member.

2. **Be On Time** - While being on-time for rehearsal is important, this item refers to the **weekend liturgies**. We should never be a distraction for each other or for the congregation. This means we must be prepared with our music, in position, and warmed up **before the beginning of the prelude song**.
- All choir members and instrumentalists should arrive before Mass so that they can be ready to warm up 15 minutes before the Mass begins. This means that you must be in place, with your music and/or instrument ready by 4:45 PM, 7:30 AM, 9:15 AM, 11:00 AM.
 - If you, for whatever reason, arrive after the prelude music has begun, please plan to join the congregation for that Mass.
3. **Appropriate Attire** - We are not the only liturgical ministers who must adhere to a standard for our clothing at liturgy. The Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers are held to an even higher standard. Our requirements are really very simple. Most of you already hold yourselves to this code, so this item is just a reminder. While these rules may seem old-fashioned to some of you, the desire to present a more formal appearance when serving in the Lord's house is part of our ministry in a pretty universal way. Do not feel self-conscious if you have not abided by this in the past. We begin again today.
- No blue jean pants are to be worn for liturgy. Jean skirts are permitted as long as they are of appropriate length.
 - No shorts of any material are to be worn by men or women.
 - Common sense should prevail. No clothing should be worn, by women or men, which would distract the congregation or fellow choir members from the purpose for which we gather.
 - On special occasions, the choir may be requested to wear a particular color combination (black and white, red for Pentecost, etc.). This is always just a suggestion and no choir members should be required to purchase something in order to participate at liturgy.
 - We are not the style police. I do not expect this policy to result in a rash of "reports" about who wears what. See the above item about common sense.
4. **Care for our Resources** - We are all a part of the parish community of St. Mary of Vernon. We are called to be good stewards of the resources that we provide for one another. In Music Ministry, those resources are:

- **People** – be tolerant of one another. Be appreciative of the time given by other choir members and the director. Respect the talents of each person, no matter how great or small. Remember that the Lord reveals to the little ones what he hides from the learned and the clever. Don't think that this excludes music ministry!
- **Music** – we are unique in our approach to the church music library. Each of you is permitted to keep your own counsel regarding how you file and maintain your music. But with this comes the responsibility to do just that! Choir music is an expense to the community, and it will last if we care for it. We do not have a choir librarian, and so all responsibility for our files rests on the director. Please respect the music files. Don't leave messes where there were none. If we are out of something, notify the director so music can be obtained. Be sure to take all pages of a piece, not leaving one or two out for the next person to find.

Don't take several copies of a piece because you aren't keeping good track of what you have.

- **Equipment** - In our new church, we are blessed with some fine equipment and instruments. Please take care with microphones, music stands, cords, sound boards, and especially our beautiful piano. No drinks should be set either on the piano or near anything electronic at any time. Nothing should be placed on the lid of the piano, whether covered or uncovered. Mics should not be dropped, tapped on, blown into, etc. Instruments brought in by others should always be treated with the utmost respect and given a very wide berth when moving throughout the music space.
- **Space** - The music space in our new church is flexible and for the most part very suitable to our music ministry. It is also very visible to the congregation during Mass. Please be aware of what you bring into the space and how it appears to those in the congregation. Ideally, all coats should be hung on the coat rack in the music office. Other items (purses and water bottles) should be tucked well out of sight under or behind the chairs.

Guitar cases present unique challenges. Ideally, they are out of sight in the music file room or in the music office. If this is not possible, then they should be hidden from view behind a row of chairs. At the end of rehearsal and Mass, please be responsible for your own trash, water bottles, etc. There is a trash can under the piano, so disposing of items is a simple process.