



St. DOMINIC PARISH CHURCH & DIOCESAN SHRINE OF BL. CARLO ACUTIS

14 August 2024

Dear colleagues,

I pray that summer proved restful and rejuvenating for all of you! As we are gearing up for the impending end of pool-side retreats and the beginning of a new academic year together, I wanted to send some important information about St. Dominic Sacred Music's youth choir program and the involvement of the choristers in the school liturgies.

Weekly Rehearsals

The *Pueri Cantores Youth Choir* (PCYC) has grown exponentially in the last few years. At the start of the 2023-24 school year, we had nearly seventy young choristers signed-up for the program! In light of the increase in numbers, I decided to adjust our weekly rehearsal schedule to accommodate the different age groups. The weekly rehearsal schedule will remain the same as last spring:

Thursdays (September 19 – December 19, 2024)

3:00 - 3:45pm	Section I (grades 2 & 3)
4:00 - 4:45pm	Section II (grades 4 & 5)
5:00 - 5:45pm	Section III (grades 6-8) *

**Senior Youth choristers.*

End-of-day dismissal will follow the same protocol as last year: only those choristers in **Section I** will be dismissed directly to the front office for the 3pm rehearsal. The students will report to myself or another staff member (e.g., Marjorie Pawlowicz) to then be walked to the choir loft. Choristers in other sections of the PCYC will be dismissed either to pickup or Aftercare.

General Instruction

For an overview of the course instruction for each section of the PCYC, see the last page.

School Liturgies (Masses)

The following changes will be made for school liturgies for the 2024-25 academic year:

- **Section I** (or, grades 2 & 3) will remain seated with their respective classes for *all* SDS liturgies. This will allow the younger students to continue learning the structure and flow of the liturgy with their classes, and allow our choir instruction to reinforce/support the same.
- When the front office calls for PCYC choristers to report for the school liturgies, **Section II & Section III** (or, grades 4-8) choristers will report to the front office to be escorted to the choir loft by myself or another staff member. This typically occurs 10-15 minutes before the start of Mass.

Liturgical Music Selections

All music selections for the 2024-25 academic year have been finalized in consultation with Mrs. Tiernan, Ms. Marjorie Pawlowicz, and Fr. Brian Woodrow. A list of these selections will be made available to all teachers in order to help them prepare their classes for each liturgy. Audio recordings of music selections may be available upon request. If you wish to make a request for a recording, please email me at least two (2) weeks prior to needing the materials.

How You Can Help

Here are a few ways in which you can help support the work we are doing to prepare our students for the school liturgies:

- Encourage your students to sign up for the PCYC! Even if there are seasonal conflicts, I try to work with parents to accommodate those students who have busier extracurricular schedules.
- Many of the teachers choose to incorporate learning the hymn selections in their lessons, or during rehearsals for their scheduled class Masses. This is a great way to reinforce what the choristers are learning in their weekly PCYC rehearsals!
- Early and frequent communication is key. Per Fr. Brian, Marjorie Pawlowicz will be acting as the liaison for liturgies this year. Please consider her as an important resource that will help you prepare your class for these special times where we can pray together as a school family.

I can't thank you enough for your support and continued efforts in helping bring our Faith into the lives of the next generation. Music has historically been an incredibly effective tool in helping to shape the hearts and minds of our young people. The regular opportunities we have to pray together in the classroom – in our sacred spaces – allow the Holy Spirit to be welcomed as the "Master Teacher," leading us each day closer to Heaven. As we look towards the beginning of a new year, I pray that this year brings a renewed sense of wonder and a deeper love of beauty as we sing together: "Here am I, Lord, I come to do Your Will."

With admiration and gratitude,



Colton Martin

Director of Sacred Music

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General Instruction

The following is a brief overview of the instructional focus for each section of the PCYC:

Section I <i>Grades 2 & 3</i>	SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning the structure of the Mass and how to participate • Introduction of basic choral etiquette (i.e., healthy vocal technique and team-building skills as pertains to choir) • Reinforcing foundational music literacy skills (preparing them for regular liturgical choral singing in Sections II/III) CONTENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning the hymns for each liturgy to allow participation from the pews with their respective classes
Section II <i>Grades 4 & 5</i>	SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building upon choral etiquette and music literacy skills learned in Section I • Reinforcement of basic choral etiquette (i.e., healthy vocal technique and team-building skills as pertains to choir), and preparation for solo liturgical singing (or, “cantoring”) • Introduction to chanting psalmody and its liturgical use CONTENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the hymns for each school liturgy • Preparing music for select Sunday liturgies throughout the year
Section III <i>Grades 6, 7, & 8</i>	SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning principles of <u>musical leadership</u> as senior choristers • Strengthening solo vocal technique in preparation for cantoring at parish liturgies • Strengthening choral etiquette and music literacy skills in preparation for successful transition to high-school music ensembles (or parish Adult Choir) • Learning how to read neumatic notation (e.g., “Gregorian chant”) and incorporating it into liturgical practice • Experience with chanting psalmody in the Divine Office (e.g., weekly Chanted Vespers during Lent) • Exposure to choral literature through monthly participation in Sunday liturgies with the Adult Choir CONTENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing hymns and special music for all school liturgies • Preparing to lead psalms and responses as leaders of the PCYC • Preparing music for monthly Sunday liturgies with Adult Choir • Preparing music for special events (e.g., Lenten Chanted Vespers, SDS Commencement, etc.)

