

Professional Concerns

BY KARL PUNG

What Should a Pastor Expect of a Director of Music Ministries?

What are my expectations of a director of music ministries? Beyond the basic competencies in playing instruments, conducting and arranging, knowledge of liturgy, a sustained prayer life, and ability to work with others, I expect a music minister to be up to date, growing, part of a team, and communicative. I have been the pastor at parishes of wildly different sizes and budgets—and thus with different types of music ministers—but my general expectations for a music minister have remained the same. At one parish, the music minister was part-time. She played for all the weekend Masses, led the choir, and developed a bell choir while at the same time serving as a full-time math teacher at the public school. At another parish, we are fortunate to have a full-time music minister with a doctorate in music. Both ministers serve their respective parish communities very well. Though my general expectations have remained the same in each circumstance, they were expressed differently in practice at each place.

Up to date. I expect my staff to be up to date on the latest documents and trends in their field of expertise. If something is going on in their particular area, I expect them to know what it is and to have an opinion about how this will affect the life of the parish. If we consider, for example, the document *Sing to the Lord*, then I expect an understanding of the document's

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history, how it will affect our parish, and in what ways it can be used as a tool to form our parish. I would review *Sing to the Lord* myself, but I expect my music minister to be very knowledgeable about it and its implications.

In addition to being well read in their area, I also expect the staff members to engage in ongoing formation and to interact with other professionals. For the full-time music minister, this means annually attending a national convention and regional, local, and diocesan events. For the part-time minister it would mean the same, so far as is possible given the restraints of that minister's time. For either full- or part-time ministers I encourage any opportunities to serve on committees or in organizations that put them in contact with other professionals in their area. I believe the broader the experience of the minister, the richer the experience of ministry will be, and the deeper that minister's impact will be on the parish.

Growing. In this context, growth has two forms: how the parish is growing and how the minister is developing in the ministry. I would approach the first form of growth by posing a few basic questions: What are the new pieces the parish is learning this year, what are the plans and vision for next five years, and how are the parish and the other people in music ministry being formed? "Growing" is not always about what is new but is more simply about what the next step ought to be or what is needed for our parish. How is the parish moving forward within the tradition of the particular and universal Church?

The second form of growth revolves around allowing the minister the freedom to develop his or her passions in ministry. What are the projects or parts of ministry that help keep the minister alive? Then, I need to make sure there are sufficient time and money to allow the minister to engage in and develop those passions within the parish.

Part of a team. I expect staff to be mutually supportive of one another, to

be servants. We are all working to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and no one staff member or one department is more important than another. When special events or projects arise, I expect the music minister to be available and present just like anyone else. When budgets are tight, I also expect equal sacrifice. I am careful about preserving boundaries and watching for overwork, but I expect within those boundaries an attitude of generous service and mutual support.

Communicative. A parish music minister should not only be willing to share what is going on with music but also to let people know the little things, like where you are and when you are going to be around. Being communicative is more than just communicating; it is an attitude of holding myself accountable to those around me, so that together we can offer the best possible service to our community. Communication within the staff lets everyone know what is going on, fosters greater collaboration, and keeps us from working at cross purposes to one another. A willingness to communicate also makes one more approachable to others.

Finally, Trust

A final overall expectation that flows through all of the above is the ability to build trust. If there is no trust between two people or groups who have to work together, then conflict and discord will ensue. There are some basic, foundational questions that often need to be discussed—if not resolved—between a pastor and a music minister. Do I agree with or at least respect my minister's/pastor's understanding of the Church, overall theology, and sense of the liturgy? Building on discussion of these basics, trust can be fostered through a variety of other factors including demonstrating competency in one's areas of ministry, being reassured that there is freedom to make mistakes, and knowing that one's concerns and ideas are being heard.