

Sacred Music Program

Mission Statement

The Sacred Music department of Franciscan University exists to train future church musicians to realize the definition and purpose of sacred music according to the Roman Catholic Church.

Musicam Sacram: The Instruction on Music in the Liturgy defines sacred music as “that which, being created for the celebration of divine worship, is endowed with a certain holy sincerity of form.”¹

Moreover, Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states that sacred music surpasses merely religious music when it is joined to the liturgical rite to become “a necessary and integral part of the solemn liturgy,” whose purpose is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.”² To that end, students acquire the skills to learn, plan, perform, and direct the Church’s 1500-year patrimony of sacred music based on four principles:

Education: Students learn to live and work as authentically practicing Catholics through a rigorous educational curriculum—performance, academics, liturgical praxis, and community outreach—underpinned by the Catholic intellectual tradition of Franciscan University, as well as from official Church legislation concerning sacred music and the liturgy. Students prepare for careers as leaders and ministers of sacred music in the Church, music teachers, and for graduate study.

Catechesis: Students learn and refine the artistry of uniting music with the words and liturgical action so to draw the faithful into a deeper understanding of the sacred mysteries unfolding during divine worship. Students use as their guide the criteria set by Pope St. Pius X’s *Tra le sollecitudini*. Sacred music must sanctify and be appropriate for temple worship; display goodness of form; be true art; and must be supra-national, universal.³

Evangelization: Sacred-music students are uniquely positioned to invite people to the Faith through the experience of beauty. By drawing on the Church’s long tradition of sacred music, students invite an experience with the numinous that can plant the seed of faith or expand faith more deeply through recitals, concerts, and other community performances. The Church is experiencing a time of renewal concerning the importance of beauty within the liturgy and beyond, and sacred-music students are especially suited for evangelizing the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

Vocation: Students discern the crucial role their ministry plays in the life of the Church, one that parallels and complements those of Directors of Religious Education and the clergy itself. Students are uniquely positioned to model for the Faithful the definition, purpose, and function of sacred music. In the truest sense, students realize their student of sacred music prepares them for a life of specialized ministry, which constitutes their service and dedication to the Church.

¹ ¶4.

² ¶112.

³ ¶2.

Vision

The Sacred Music department's vision is to promote a vibrant dynamic orthodoxy. By drawing on the Church's 1500-year musical tradition infused with the Franciscan dynamism of the importance of joy in Christian life, Sacred-music students work to realize what alumnus Clement J. Harrold calls "[Tradismatic Trentecostalism](#)." The students help deepen the Faithful's personal relationship with Christ within a liturgy that promotes a sense of the numinous, while providing an environment of beauty as an invitation to those who may not share in Catholic or even Christian belief.

This vision presupposes a fundamental objective for the sacred music department: Ministry formation. Above all, the faculty trains students for careers as competent, professional, dependable, and faithful ministers of music—ones that churches across the country continuously demand for their music programs. Our students take very seriously the gravitas and mission nested within this identity. They dignify the role of the church musician to one of preeminence within parish life, which realizes *Sancrosanctum Concilium's* statement that the Church values music above any other art.⁴ This vision demands students regard their roles no differently from OCIA directors, liturgists, or directors of religious education, for music within Catholic liturgy is a powerful catechizer. It is therefore vital as well as practical for all our students to deliver professional-quality service playing, vocal instruction, and choral direction to elevate their parish music programs. Moreover, sacred music students work to become congenial colleagues who understand the necessity of working collaboratively as well as independently for the benefit of parish life. The students also are prompt responders, expressing themselves articulately in both speech and writing.

Regarding the formation of students, music itself is an integral part of the human experience and of Christian worship to the point where its absence is poignantly felt. So too does this feature parallel music's relationship to student's university study. We envision the sacred music department fostering relationships with disciplines typically and historically associated with music: Philosophy, theology, communications, art, and so forth. Music can connect with and inform numerous courses of study within Franciscan's Catholic intellectual tradition. And the sacred-music department can work to forge these intersections, thereby enriching every student's knowledge and appreciation of the art rooted in their Catholic faith.

⁴ ¶112.