

San Antonio Organ Project

Question & Answer Sheet

① Q: Why should we buy an organ for San Antonio?

A: Music is an integral part of the Catholic Liturgy. We can't imagine not having vocal music in church: Cantors, choirs, and the most important choir of all - the Congregation. To make our songs and chants complete we need an instrument to lead us in song. The instrument that has most successfully fulfilled that role for hundreds of years is the organ. The ability to produce a wide range of sounds, sustain tones for long periods, and naturally support congregational singing, makes the organ the ideal choice for leading hymns and liturgical music in large spaces where it can fill the room with a powerful and majestic sound.

San Antonio has been blessed in the past with some very talented Music Directors who provided a lot of beautiful music over the years. However, with the purchase of an organ for our parish, our current director, who is a trained organist, will be able to provide the type of musical experience that has been so far unavailable to us. The organ music will beautifully complement what is most important in Church: The Liturgy.

② Q: Is there anything wrong with our current organ?

A: San Antonio's Church doesn't have an organ. The instrument that you hear playing during Mass on Sunday is a digital piano / keyboard. In addition to a piano sound, it has 3 or 4 sounds that may resemble an organ sound, but it can't be compared to the organ.

③ Q: How is an organ different from the instrument we have?

A: Our digital piano has a lot of features that are nice for playing different genres of music, such as pop or folk or dance. Its usability at liturgy is, however, limited to a few sounds that can be played on one available keyboard. In contrast, an organ that we are planning to purchase for our church will have 3 manuals (keyboards), a pedal keyboard, 67 ranks (distinctive sounds) plus hundreds of programmable ranks that can be used in a massive number of combinations.

Our current keyboard plays through the same two speakers that are used and optimized for speech. On the other hand, a digital organ will have around 20 dedicated speakers that will immerse the listener in sound coming from all directions. There is a multitude of other features that are available on the organ that make it the most appropriate and desired instrument for the Liturgy.

④ Q: How much is the organ going to cost?

A: The anticipated cost of the entire project is \$250,000. It includes the cost of the organ, up to 22 speakers, other equipment, installation, non-speaking pipe façade, carpentry, as well as the costs associated with fundraising and advertising.

Although it may seem like a lot, it is significantly less expensive than purchasing a pipe organ, which could easily cost in excess of a million dollars. Also, it is important to remember that we are talking about an investment that will last for decades!

⑤ Q: Why don't we save money and buy a used organ instead of a new one?

A: Buying a used organ may be the only feasible option for some churches, especially very small and rural ones. It may seem like a good idea at first, however, we need to remember that a digital organ is not only a musical instrument, but also a piece of electronic equipment. Buying an old organ means that there's a greater chance of a breakdown. Some parts might become obsolete with time. With no warranty available, any necessary repair would be costly. In contrast, new instruments typically come with a 10-year warranty.

Another aspect to consider is the vast development of the digital technology that took place in recent years. The newest digital organs have become greatly superior to the older ones. They have advanced considerably in their quest to become a worthy replacement of the pipe organ. In simple terms, an old instrument will not sound nearly as good as a new one. It will also lack many useful features currently available.

We should therefore make an effort to purchase a new instrument that will give us the best possible sound and that will reliably serve San Antonio for decades to come.

⑥ Q: Shouldn't we spend all that money to help the poor rather than buy an organ?

A: It is our duty to help those of our neighbors who are less fortunate than we. We can't however consider this dilemma as "either - or". We need to feed the hungry, but we also need to worship God as beautifully as we can. Sacred music will elevate our prayers and help us feel closer to our God who is the ultimate source of beauty and harmony.

The church organ is an investment that will last our parish for decades. It will improve the quality of music. And in turn, good music is one of those elements that will attract new people to church and will help the Parish grow!

So, yes. Feed the hungry. But also, do the right thing for the Liturgy at San Antonio and think of the long term growth of the Parish.

⑦ Q: We aren't a rich parish. How are we going to raise the money?

A: There was once a priest who tried to raise money in his church. So, he said to his parishioners: "I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that we have all the money that we need for our project. The bad news is that the money is still in your pockets".

Although it is true that there are parishes wealthier than San Antonio in the Diocese of Venice, it is also true that with enough awareness and enough people supporting the project, our financial goal will be within our reach. We are in the process of identifying numerous ways to raise funds. The first step is to spread the word among the people. A large church like ours needs an organ. And we should all be aware of that need, even if not everyone will ultimately want or afford to support it financially. One of the ways to finance the organ is to give people an opportunity to make a memorial donation to honor their deceased loved one or friend. The names of the memorialized souls would be later displayed on plaques either on or near the newly purchased organ.

Other ways to raise money may include concerts, raffles, institutional sponsoring, grants, donations in the special project envelopes in the pews, etc.

⑧ Q: What is going to happen with our current instrument when we buy an organ?

A: Although our current instrument can't fulfill the role of a church organ, it can continue to serve us as a digital piano. We are not planning to get rid of it. Actually, some of the church music, especially more contemporary, was written for the piano and not the organ. So, there is a place for both instruments in the church – the organ and the piano!

⑨ Q: I have an organ at home that I would like to donate. Can the church use it?

A: First of all, thank you for your generous offer!

Unfortunately, if you have an organ like Lowrey or Hammond, these are not the types of brands that would make a good instrument for a Catholic church. They are different from the classical sounding organ like we are planning to purchase. If you have a different organ, please speak with Rafał Nowak, the Music Director.

⑩ Q: Isn't the organ going to be too loud and overpower our voices?

A: If a car can drive faster than the speed limit of 70 mph, we don't automatically consider it too dangerous to be permitted on the roads. A responsible driver always knows how fast he or she should drive; therefore it is not an issue, even if the car can technically go 150 mph or faster.

Similarly, although it is true that the organ can play very loudly, it should not be a reason for concern if a qualified organist is playing it.

Of all existing musical instruments the organ has the greatest range of volume available, ranging from a barely audible sound to a really loud sound that would be used on very rare occasions. It also has an unsurpassed range of different tones available, which can be combined in a vast number of possible combinations. This allows the organist to create a joyful noise, a somber ambience, and every other type of sound in between. The main priority for a liturgical organist will always be the support of the congregational singing, and not trying to overpower the people.

⑪ Q: What are we going to do if our Music Director, who is an organist, moves on to a different church one day? Who is going to play our organ?

A: There are qualified organists out there. If San Antonio were to look for a new musician sometime in the future, having a top-notch organ would definitely be an important factor that would help encourage a trained organist to consider working for our church. Secondly, modern digital organs come with some functions that can help non-organist keyboard players to provide liturgical accompaniment at an acceptable level until a fully competent organist could take over.