

Getting to Grips with Copyright

*A Parish Guide for the Archdiocese of Armagh and the
Diocese of Dromore*

September 2025

Letter from Archbishop Eamon Martin

Dear Friends in Christ,

In recent years, the conversation about copyright has grown in importance across our dioceses as we strive to share the Good News in new and exciting ways on the many digital platforms and mediums that are now at our disposal.

Our conversation around copyright began some 12-18 months ago with questions about the use of liturgical music such as hymn sheets, projection of lyrics, and livestreaming of Masses.

This conversation has since expanded into wider questions:

- *What images can we use on parish websites, bulletins or on social media?*
- *Can we include video clips in our liturgies or youth events?*
- *How do we make sure our digital presence reflects both our faith and the integrity in fiscal matters that the Catholic tradition calls us to?*

Our conversations over the last 18 months have revealed that Copyright is about more than just compliance with the law. At its heart lies the moral and spiritual duty each of us has to respect the work of others: the composers, writers, artists, photographers and creators whose gifts enrich our worship and mission. To use their work well is to honour the Spirit at work in them, and to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us.

In the Archdiocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Dromore, One License is the designated provider for liturgical music. This licence ensures that our parishes have access to much of the repertoire central to Catholic worship. Other providers, such as CCLI, are more oriented to the Evangelical and Reformed traditions. While occasionally useful for youth groups or ecumenical contexts, they do not cover the breadth of Catholic liturgical music that is needed to nurture the faith and life of our communities.

This booklet and the workshop that accompanies it is designed to help parishes navigate the practicalities of copyright. It offers guidance on licences, reporting, permissions, and considers ethical use of materials. It also addresses wider questions about streaming, digital communications, images, and the use of video in parish life.

My hope is that this guide will support you in ensuring that our worship and pastoral activities are carried out with integrity, with respect for creators, and with good stewardship of the resources at our disposal.

Thank you for all that you do in service of the Gospel in our dioceses. May the Lord bless our efforts, and may we continue to walk together as a Church marked by honesty, respect, and creativity

With every blessing,

+*Eamon Martin*
Archbishop of Armagh
Apostolic Administrator of Dromore

Section 1: Why Copyright Matters in Parish Life

Copyright is about fairness, respect, and stewardship. Every hymn, photograph, prayer, or video we use has been created by someone who has offered their gifts to the Church and to society. To respect their rights is to respect their dignity.

- **Respect:** acknowledging the creator honours their work.
- **Stewardship:** paying for licences ensures artists are supported.
- **Witness:** respecting copyright is part of our Christian example in the public square.

Section 2: What Copyright Protects

Copyright law applies to all forms of creative work, including:

- **Music:** words, melodies, harmonies, arrangements, recordings.
- **Words:** prayers, poetry, books, articles, sermons.
- **Images:** photographs, artwork, digital graphics, logos.
- **Video:** films, TV clips, parish livestreams, short reels.
- **Performance:** choirs, readers, preachers, drama groups.

Protection usually lasts for the life of the creator plus 70 years. Works older than that are usually in the public domain.

Section 3: Licences Parishes Need

3.1 One License

Covers Catholic liturgical music and is the required licence for parishes in the Archdiocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Dromore.

- Print hymn texts in service sheets.
- Project lyrics during Mass.
- Report all music used to ensure royalties are paid.

One License Streaming License

- Required for livestreaming Masses, weddings, funerals, or parish events.
- Covers both the performance of music and the projection of lyrics during livestreams.
- Allows recordings of livestreams to remain available online.

One License Recorded Audio License

- Required if your parish choir, cantor, or musicians record liturgical music and share it online, by CD, or by download.
- Covers choir CDs, parish YouTube videos, or cantor rehearsal tracks.

3.2 CCLI

- Covers contemporary worship songs, often Evangelical or Reformed in style.
- May be useful in youth events or ecumenical settings.
- Does not cover Catholic liturgical music.

3.3 PRS for Music and PPL Licences

- Required for secular or commercial music.
- Needed at socials, coffee mornings, exercise classes, and youth socials and gatherings.

3.4 Church Video Licence (CVL)

- Required to show films or film clips at parish events.
- Advertising must remain parish-only.

3.5 Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA)

- Covers photocopying from books, magazines, and study guides.
- Useful for newsletters, catechetical programmes, and study groups.

3.6 Creative Commons and Free Resources

- Some works are shared with “some rights reserved.”
- Creative Commons licences allow free use with proper credit.

Section 4: Common Parish Scenarios

- Printing hymn sheets or projecting lyrics requires One License.
- Livestreaming Mass requires the One License Streaming License.
- Recording parish choirs requires the One License Recorded Audio License.
- Showing films at youth events requires a CVL.
- Playing music at socials requires PRS and PPL.
- Reusing prayers, poetry, or prose in newsletters or bulletins may require permission.
- Using online images without checking rights is risky and can lead to financial penalties.

Section 5: Protecting Parish Work

Anything a parish creates, be it a hymn, a video, or a resource, is automatically protected by copyright. Parishes may choose to release material under **Creative Commons** if they want others to use it freely, but they must be explicit about this.

Section 6: Wider Copyright Issues in Digital Evangelisation

Many parishes now livestream Masses, share images and reflections on social media, and create digital videos for evangelisation. These activities raise new copyright challenges.

6.1 Websites and Social Media

- Treat a parish website or Facebook page as a **public platform**. Copyright rules apply as much as they do in print.
- Do not copy and paste text from books, prayers, or articles without permission.
- Do not download images from Google Images. Most are copyrighted.

6.2 Using Images

Safe sources include:

- **Unsplash**: free stock photography, no licence fees.
- **Pixabay**: free photos, vectors, and videos.
- **Pexels**: free photography and video.

Always check the small print. Even free images may require attribution.

6.3 Using Art and Religious Images

- Classical religious art (e.g., Michelangelo, Caravaggio) is usually public domain.
- However, photographs of such art are often copyrighted by the museum or photographer.
- Use reputable Catholic sources or free image platforms where permissions are clear.

6.4 Using Poetry and Prose

- Many modern prayers, poems, and reflections are copyrighted.
- Check with the publisher before reprinting in bulletins or on websites.
- Public domain poetry (authors who died more than 70 years ago) can be used freely.

6.5 Video in Ministry

If your parish creates original videos for evangelisation (e.g., a promotional video, youth testimony, Advent reflection), you may need background music or stock footage.

Safe licensing platforms include:

- **Artlist**: affordable subscription model for royalty-free music.
- **Artgrid**: high-quality stock video footage.
- **Motion Array**: music, video templates, and motion graphics.

These licences cover YouTube, websites, and social media. They are particularly valuable for youth ministry and creative evangelisation.

6.6 Music for Parish Videos

- Avoid using commercial tracks from iTunes or Spotify. These require expensive licences.
- Use royalty-free or Creative Commons music from sites like:
 - **Free Music Archive**
 - **Bensound**
 - **Artlist** (With subscription)

Section 7: The Ethical Dimension

The Catechism calls us to honesty and justice. Respecting copyright is part of the Seventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not steal.”

Digital evangelisation magnifies this responsibility. Parish websites and social media are our “shop window” to the world. Using others’ work responsibly strengthens our witness.

Section 8: Archbishop Eamon's 10 Principles to guide our presence on the digital highways

10 Principles to guide our presence on the Digital Highways

1. Be positive, communicating the 'joy of the Gospel'.
2. Strictly avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online; try not to be judgemental or polemical.
3. Never bear false witness on the internet.
4. Fill the internet with charity and love, continually seeking to include a sense of charity and solidarity with the suffering in the world.
5. Have a "broad back" when criticisms and insults are made – when possible, gently correct.
6. Pray in the digital world! Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.
7. Establish connections, relationships and build communion, including an ecumenical presence online.
8. Educate young people to keep themselves safe and responsible online, particularly in light of cyberbullying and the prevalence and accessibility of pornography and online gambling.
9. "Give a soul to the internet", as Pope Benedict XVI once said - at all times witness to human dignity online.
10. Be missionary, remembering that, with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds!



Archbishop Eamon Martin,
Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland and
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dromore.



#DigitalBelievers #WorldCommunicationsDay2019 @catholicbishops

Section 9: Case Studies in Parish Copyright

These examples show some copyright questions that arise in everyday parish life and how they can be resolved responsibly.

Case Study 1: Livestreaming Sunday Mass

Scenario:

St. Mary's Parish livestreams Sunday Mass to Facebook and YouTube so that housebound parishioners can take part. The choir sings "Christ Be Our Light" by Bernadette Farrell and "Be Thou My Vision."

Copyright Issues:

- "Christ Be Our Light" is copyrighted.
- Lyrics are projected during the livestream.
- The Mass is recorded and available later online.

What is Required:

- A valid **One License** for printing and projecting.
- The **One License Streaming License** to livestream copyrighted music and display lyrics.
- Correct copyright line displayed:
Bernadette Farrell © 1993, OCP Publications. Used with permission. One License #A-654321.

Resolution:

With these licences in place, the parish is compliant. "Be Thou My Vision" is public domain, but the music edition may still be copyrighted if copied directly from a hymn book.

Case Study 2: Parish Newsletter with Poem and Image

Scenario:

The parish newsletter editor wants to include a reflection by John O'Donohue and a photo from Google Images of a sunrise.

Copyright Issues:

- John O'Donohue's work is copyrighted. Permission is required from his publisher.
- Google Images photos are usually copyrighted and cannot be used without permission.

What is Required:

- Obtain permission or use only a short, attributed quotation under "fair dealing" rules.
- Replace the photo with one from a free image site such as Unsplash or Pixabay.

Resolution:

The editor uses a two-line excerpt of O'Donohue with citation and swaps the image for a free photo from Unsplash. The newsletter is compliant.

Case Study 3: Youth Ministry Video**Scenario:**

The parish youth group creates a short video about Lent for Instagram. They want to add background music from Coldplay.

Copyright Issues:

- Commercial tracks like Coldplay require expensive broadcast licences.
- Using them without permission is illegal and may result in the video being removed or fined.

What is Required:

- Use royalty-free music instead (Subscription). Platforms like **Artlist** and **Bensound** offer safe options.
- Add a copyright line in the video credits if required:
Music: "Hopeful Journey" by John Smith, licensed through Artlist.

Resolution:

The youth group replaces Coldplay with a track from Artlist. The video is safely shared on Instagram and YouTube.

Case Study 4: Parish Film Night**Scenario:**

The parish youth club wants to show a Disney film for a family evening in the parish hall.

Copyright Issues:

- Showing a film in public requires a **Church Video Licence (CVL)**.
- Disney films are included, but advertising must remain within the parish.

What is Required:

- Parish holds a valid CVL.
- No admission fee is charged, though a collection may be taken.
- The official film poster cannot be used without permission.

Resolution:

The parish advertises the film night in the bulletin only and uses a homemade flyer instead of the poster. They are fully covered.

Case Study 5: Parish Choir CD

Scenario:

The parish choir records a CD of Christmas hymns to raise funds for the parish roof repair.

Copyright Issues:

- Many carols are public domain, but newer hymns are not.
- Recording and distributing music requires permission.

What is Required:

- A **One License Recorded Audio License** for copyrighted hymns.
- Careful track list review to distinguish public domain from copyrighted works.
- Proper copyright lines printed in the CD booklet.

Resolution:

The choir secures the Recorded Audio License, includes copyright attributions in the CD insert, and distributes CDs legally.

The parish/diocese/individual choir sources pieces of liturgical music that are now outside the limits of Copyright Legislation, hires a recording professional and produces a CD that they are sure is not subject to Copyright restrictions.

Case Study 6: Social Media Post with Icon Image

Scenario:

A parish Facebook post for the Feast of St. Brigid uses a modern icon image found on Pinterest.

Copyright Issues:

- Modern icons are usually copyrighted.
- Using them without permission is an infringement.

What is Required:

- Permission from the iconographer or publisher.
- Alternatively, use icons shared under Creative Commons or public domain collections.

Resolution:

The parish contacts an Irish iconographer who allows the use with credit. They post the image with attribution:

Icon of St. Brigid © 2019, Mary Murphy. Used with permission.

Appendices

Appendix A: Quick Guide to Licences

Licence	What It Covers	When You Need It	Catholic Note
One License	Printing, projecting, and sharing Catholic liturgical music	Every parish using copyrighted hymns	Diocesan Designated Catholic provider
One License Streaming License	Livestreaming liturgies with copyrighted music, displaying lyrics online	Parishes that livestream Masses, weddings, funerals, or events	Essential for parishes with livestreams
One License Recorded Audio License	Recording parish choirs or cantors and sharing other audio online or on CD	Choir recordings, cantor rehearsal tracks, parish YouTube uploads	Required for parish recordings
CCLI	Contemporary praise songs, youth worship	Youth events and ecumenical worship	Not sufficient for Catholic liturgy
PRS/PPL	Secular or commercial music	Parish socials, coffee mornings, youth gatherings and events	Not required for Mass
CLA	Photocopying from books and study guides	Parish newsletters, study groups	Covers non-music works
CVL (Church Video Licence)	Showing films in parish settings	Parish film nights and youth events	Advertising must remain parish-only
Creative Commons	Free-to-use works with credit	Images, videos, music	Always check the licence terms

Appendix B: Sample Copyright Lines

Always include a copyright line under every hymn, image, or text.

Format:

[Author] © [Year, Publisher]. Used with permission. One License #A-12345.

Example:

Bernadette Farrell © 1993, OCP Publications. Used with permission. One License #A-654321.

Appendix C: Reporting Sheet Template

Parish Copyright Reporting Log (Note that One License has an online reporting facility.)

Date	Material Used	Author/Composer	Publisher	Licence #	How Used (printed, projected, streamed, recorded)	Reported To
10/12/25	Christ Be Our Light	Bernadette Farrell	OCP	One License A-654321	Projected during Advent Mass	One License
15/12/25	Psalm setting	Parish music group	Own composition	N/A	Sung at Carol Service	N/A

Appendix D: Safe Resource Platforms

Free Image Platforms

- Unsplash: www.unsplash.com
- Pixabay: www.pixabay.com
- Pexels: www.pexels.com

Royalty-Free Music and Video Platforms (Subscriptions Needed)

- Artlist: www.artlist.io
- Artgrid: www.artgrid.io
- Motion Array: www.motionarray.com
- Free Music Archive: www.freemusicarchive.org
- Bensound: www.bensound.com

Appendix E: Quick Checklist for Parish Teams

Before using any material in parish life, ask:

1. Is it in the public domain?
2. Do we have the right licence (One License, CVL, PRS, etc.)?
3. Do we need permission from the creator or publisher?
4. Is there a safer free or licensed alternative?
5. Have we displayed the correct copyright line?