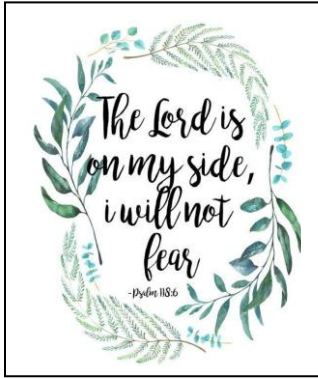


THE PARISH READER (PROCLAIMER) OR CANTOR: THE RECITATION OF THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM



As we collectively begin these concluding weeks of the liturgical year, in preparation for the upcoming Season of Advent, it is an opportune time for us to better inform ourselves, in order to embrace and savor the intended moments of *sacred silence* of the Holy and Divine Liturgy within the Order of the Solemn Mass.

From ancient times, for the Jews to present day, the Psalms continue to be a regular part of Sabbath worship—you could even call the Book of Psalms the *Bible's song book*! Early Christians (circa the First Century C.E.) continued this worship practice. After interiorizing the message of the first reading, those assembled are invited to listen and meditate to a chanted or verbally proclaimed antiphonal response (e.g., leader sings or speaks, then the assembly) taken primarily from the Book of Psalms or Proverbs. It is in effect, a liturgical *bridge* of sorts between (and tying together) the first (commonly from the Hebrew/Old Testament) and the second (New Testament) readings.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965), the Catholic Church's Liturgy of the Word is meant to be celebrated in such a manner as to favor meditation. In the order of the liturgy, there are intentionally placed periods of silence, for the assembled congregation—via the action of the Holy Spirit—to permit the Word of God to seep into their hearts. It is appropriate to observe intentional periods of silence, for example, throughout the liturgy (e.g., recalling our venial sins during the Penitential Act; before the Liturgy of the Word itself begins; between the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm, the Responsorial Psalm and the Second Reading, and the Second Reading and the Gospel Acclamation; at the conclusion of the Homily; and after receiving Holy Communion).

As we highlight in the parish's Reader training, in the absence of a skilled Cantor or Psalmist, the first reader is asked to proclaim the Responsorial Psalm after the First Reading has concluded. (cf: GIRM #61ff) (<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal/girm-chapter-2>)

The Psalms were originally composed to be sung. However, if recited, they are meant to be read *slowly and in a metrical rhythm* based on the particular passage. After all, the Psalms were written in ancient Palestine and Babylon (approximately 1,500 to 450 B.C.E.) mainly by or for King David. The royal-messianic Psalms, either prophecy or make veiled references to Jesus, the Messiah—hence, why Jesus used the Psalms so often to facilitate his teachings.

At the very heart and center of the Book of Psalms, is an understanding, that:

- The Bible is not just a book. It is a human relationship with God portrayed in words.
- It is a living interaction between the Almighty Creator of the universe and his most cherished and blessed creation: humanity—us!
- We cannot recite and comprehend the Psalms, unless we hear and speak them, in the intended Divine-Human relational dialogue.
- They were written as an example of Hebrew poetry.
- They are meant to guide us in our prayer, worship, relationship and reliance of God.