



An Essential Part of the Mass

Processions are a very important part of our American culture. We start the new year with a Rose Bowl parade and the holiday shopping season with the Thanksgiving Day parade. Every football game begins with the entrance procession of the home team and the acclamations of their fans, led by the cheerleaders. In our Sunday liturgies, the entrance and Communion antiphons have the important function of accompanying a procession and simultaneously setting the focus of the liturgical celebration and season. On their Web site (usccb.org/liturgy/), the US bishops' music subcommittee reminds us that "Antiphons and Psalms form an essential part of the Mass, not only in the Liturgy of the Word, but in the Entrance, Communion and other processional chants" (*Musica Sacram* 16).

Like our parades, the entrance procession only has the ministers moving through the congregation while the members of the assembly unite themselves to this

INTROIT FOR THE 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Columba Kelly

Speech-like ♩ = ca. 120)

Cantor

To you, my God, I lift my soul,

People

To you, my God, I lift my soul,

Cantor

I trust in you; let me never come to shame.

Do not let my enemies laugh at me. No one who waits for you is ever put to shame.

Use Psalm 25 for verses with 8th mode psalm tone

Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way.

He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way.

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movement with their eyes. The use of antiphons and psalm verses by a choir or a cantor, with an easily learned refrain for the people, allows the text to set the focus of the celebration on the day or the season; the refrain calls forth the sound of the people to be united as one voice to begin this act of worship, leaving their eyes free to follow the procession. The music example shows how this might be put into practice for the First Sunday of Advent.

The text is taken from Psalm 24/25, verses 1–3. It is the same text used for the Latin chant in the *Roman Gradual* for this Sunday. In fact, the texts of these entrance antiphons come primarily from the prayer book of the Church, the Book of Psalms. The editors of the New American Bible put it this way: "By fulfilling all that the Psalms foretold concerning him, Jesus makes the Psalter his prayer book and that of the Church for all time" (478). These psalm texts were chosen to highlight a particular theme of the season or the feast. The Communion antiphon for this First Sunday of Advent is taken from Psalm 84/85: "The Lord will shower his gifts, and our land will yield its fruit." As the faithful receive the body and blood of the Lord, they are reminded that it

is a foretaste of the fullness of God's gifts that we will receive in the coming kingdom. At the Christmas Midnight Mass, the entrance antiphon tells us who this child in the crib really is: "The Lord said to me: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you" (Psalm 2:7). The Communion antiphon for the Christmas Day Mass proclaims that "all the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God" (Psalm 97/98:3) in this Eucharist that we are now receiving.

Some of the antiphon texts found in the Sacramentary for both the entrance and the Communion procession are drawn from other parts of the Bible. These present powerful images for a season or a feast. The Communion antiphon for the Christmas Midnight Mass has us reflect on the beginning of John's Gospel: "The Word of God became man; we have seen his glory" (John 1:14).

With the entrance antiphon, only the ministers make up the actual procession; during the singing of the Communion antiphon, the entire community usually participates in the procession. For this reason, the use of a hymn or song with many stanzas is the least effective way of involving the assembly. The best use of the hymn or song form during this period of the eucharistic service is as a thanksgiving hymn after all have received Communion and after a period of quiet has been observed (*GIRM* 88). Our hymnals and worship resources contain wonderful examples of songs that expand on the themes of the Advent and Christmas season and can bring our Sunday celebration to a grand climax before the presiding minister gives us the final blessing and dismisses us.

While the Communion procession is still going on, the use of a short, easily memorized refrain can be a very effective means of encouraging the assembly to participate. In this way, the choir or cantor can sing the antiphon text of the season or feast and then alternate verses of an appropriate psalm with the people's refrain. The basic structure of the example given for the entrance procession can serve as a model for the Communion antiphon and its refrain.

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