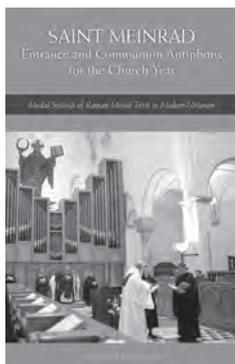


Introducing the *Roman Missal* Antiphons in Your Parish

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How do you describe, let alone get people interested in doing, something you think they would like? Your local bakery does it by letting you taste samples of their latest creation. Your car dealer lets you take that latest model out for a spin.

The musical settings in *St. Meinrad Entrance and Communion Antiphons for the Church Year* (ocp.org/30128557) need to be modeled by a cantor or choir that has already mastered them so that a congregation hears them well done before they begin to sing them themselves. The keyboard accompaniment and the cantor's psalm verses are contained in the keyboard accompaniment books. The following examples are taken from the assembly edition (ocp.org/30128557).

I suggest that you start the use of this collection by introducing a Communion antiphon with its refrain during the Communion procession. Here is one for the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ:

Communion Antiphon
Mode 6

Jn. 6:57

Who-ev - er eats my flesh and drinks my blood re - mains
in me and I in him, says the Lord.

(Psalm 119[118]; or Psalm 23[22])

Congregational Refrain

You have pre-pared a ta - ble for me, my cup is o - ver-flow - ing.

The choir or a cantor sings the antiphon and then the refrain, with the people immediately repeating it. Keep alternating psalm stanzas with the people's refrain and close the singing with the choir or cantor again singing the antiphon.

Another way to use these pieces is to have the cantor alternate the refrain with the people while singing psalmody between the refrain and omitting the antiphon. The choir or cantor could also sing the antiphon and alternate it with psalmody without a refrain for the people. The available musical resources and the type of congregation would determine the best way to use these pieces.

To help break the habit of singing every note as being of equal value, the choir and cantors might practice speaking the text in the following manner:

1. Start with a full breath while swinging your right arm from 6 o'clock to 3 o'clock.

2. Swing your arm back from 3 o'clock to 9 o'clock while saying, "Whoever eats."
3. Swing your arm back from 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock while saying "my flesh."
4. Continue swinging back and forth between the following underlined accents:
5. "and drinks my blood re-mains in me and I in him, says the Lord."
6. Repeat the four steps while singing the melody of the Communion antiphon. Sing with greater intensity for the word accents and a leaning forward toward each accent until one coasts to the last accent of the piece with a softening of the voice.

The tenuto marks over the two notes for the word "him" in the last line of the antiphon serve as warnings to give some extra stretching to the two notes to finish the phrase. These tenuto marks function like the word "allargando" does in contemporary musical scores.

The refrain should be practiced by the song leaders in the same manner: "You have pre-pared a ta-ble for me, my cup is over-flow-ing." The congregation will tend to naturally imitate the style of singing that they hear from the choir and the cantor.

Besides the uses described here, the entrance antiphons can also be sung as a call to worship that is sung only by the choir or cantor and then followed by a hymn or another song. These pieces tend to be more complex and are often based on the musical motives of the original Latin chants as found in the *Roman Gradual*. The following antiphon for the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, is a good example of this:

Entrance Antiphon
Mode 7 Cf. Rev. 12:1

(Psalm 98[97])

Congregational Refrain

A great sign: a wom-an clothed with the sun.

This antiphon uses many of the embellishments found in the original Latin chant and tries to capture the feel of that chant. To sing these embellishments with vitality and gracefulness one needs to move lightly and quickly through all the extra notes until the last note before the change of the syllable. The only exception is when one finds a horizontal *episema*, a tenuto mark, over a note, as in the case of the words "sun" and "feet" in the second line and "crown" in the last.

The two tenuto marks over the first two notes over "stars" at the end of the piece indicate the broadening out (*allargando*) of those notes to make a gentle final cadence for the piece. Thus the notes are given some stretching out. In these cases, the marks are also word accents and so would also get some additional intensity as well as lengthening, as in good speech.

The black notes in the music give the impression that each note is equal in value; actually, in good speech, and in this kind of chant, some notes are a lot more—or a lot less—equal than others! As a general rule, the notes move at a quickly moving speech tempo: speeding up and then slowing down and softening at phrase endings. Do not be afraid to catch a "bounce" breath at the incise marks that cut the top line of the staff; they help group the sense units and give proper phrasing to the text, as in good speaking. The goal is to proclaim the word of God with clarity, grace, and vitality. God's word and our prayer words deserve at least that much from us.

Examples of how to sing these antiphons and refrains are available on the Saint Meinrad website (tinyurl.com/meinradmusic) and on a CD published by OCP (ocp.org/30128558). Listen to some of them to get a feel for this kind of non-metrical, speech-based singing. The OCP recordings are done at a fairly even tempo. All the non-accented words and notes of these antiphons and refrains should be sung more softly, however, with a rapid acceleration toward the word accents and then a slowing down after the accent to finish off the word or the phrase. All this corresponds to the changes in tempo and volume of good speech, preserving any lengthening and intensification of notes for the actual word or note accents. There should be a sense of physically swinging from accent to accent.

The current edition of the *Roman Missal* does not contain any texts for the traditional offertory chants. These entrance and Communion chants could also be used during the Preparation of the Gifts in the various ways described here for the Communion antiphon. The music director might look over the texts of these pieces for an appropriate one to use for a given Sunday or feast day.

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