



A Guide to Singing the Presidential Prayers

The new man sings a new song. Singing is an expression of joy and, if we consider the matter, an expression of love.

—St. Augustine

Why sing?

- "Seated at the right and of the Father..., Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments..." (CCC, nos. 1084, 1076).
- "A sacramental celebration is woven from signs and symbols" (CCC, n.1145): liturgical music is one of these symbols.
- "Song and music fulfill their function as signs in a manner all the more significant when they are 'more closely connected...with the liturgical action'"(CCC, n.1157). "Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song..." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.113).
- "When man comes into contact with God, mere speech is not enough." (Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p.136); "Singing is a lover's thing." (St. Augustine)

What are the presidential prayers?

- The orations, "that is to say, the collect, the prayer over the offerings, and the prayer after Communion...are addressed to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present, by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ. It is with good reason, therefore, that they are called the 'presidential prayers'."
 - A presidential prayer has the following parts:
 1. Invitation to prayer: "Let us pray."
 2. Pause for silent prayer.
 3. The prayer itself, which includes (in some form):
 - a. the invocation or naming of God (e.g., "God our Father")
 - b. the reason why God should be praised, based upon God's works in salvation (e.g., "you loved the world so much you gave your only Son to free us from the ancient power of sin and death.")
 - c. the petition (e.g., "Help us who wait for his coming, and lead us to true liberty.")
 - d. conclusion (e.g., "We ask this....")
 4. "Amen" of the community.
- In the Liturgy of the Hours, the psalm-prayers and concluding prayer constitute the presidential prayers.
 - About the concluding prayer: At Night Prayer (*Compline*), the Office of Readings, and the Daytime Prayers (*Terce*, *Sext*, and *None*) the concluding prayer is preceded with the invitation, "Let us pray," then a pause for silent prayer, and then the prayer itself. At Morning Prayer (*Lauds*) and Evening Prayer (*Vespers*), there is no invitation immediately before the concluding prayer.

- About the psalm-prayers:
 - “In the Latin tradition of psalmody three elements have greatly contributed to an understanding of the psalms and their use as Christian prayer: the captions, the psalm-prayers, and in particular the antiphons.... Psalm-prayers for each psalm are given in the supplement to The Liturgy of the Hours as an aid to understanding them in a predominantly Christian way. An ancient tradition provides a model for their use: after the psalm [and its antiphon] a period of silence is observed, then the prayer gives a resume and resolution of the thoughts and aspirations of those praying the psalms.” (*General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, nos. 110, 112)
 - About the invitation to pray, from the *Ceremonial of Bishops*: “When the psalm prayers are used, after the repetition of the antiphon, the bishop puts aside the miter, rises, and once everyone else has stood says, **Let us pray**. After a brief pause for silent prayer by all, he says the prayer corresponding to the psalm or canticle” (n.198).
 - About the conclusion to the psalm-prayer:
 - Long and short forms: It is important to note that different prayers end in different forms. A *longer* conclusion, found usually (but not always) with the concluding prayer for Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer (and which is also the Collect for the Mass), mentions each Person of the Trinity. For example: “Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.” A *shorter* conclusion invoking only Christ is most often used (but not always) at the conclusion to the Daytime Hours, Night Prayer, and the psalm-prayers (as well as for the Prayer over the Gifts and the Prayer after Communion at Mass): “We ask this through Christ our Lord,” or “You live for ever and ever.”
 - How to choose the proper short conclusion to the psalm-prayer: While the concluding prayers for the hours have the proper endings printed, the psalm-prayers do not have them printed, so they must be supplied by the one presiding. A guide for these short conclusions may be found in the Ordinary of the Liturgy of the Hours under Daytime Prayer. In the rubrics under the section for the Concluding Prayer, it reads:

If the prayer is directed to the Father:

We ask this (Grant this) through Christ our Lord, or We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

If the prayer is directed to the Father after which a mention of the Son is made [near the end of the prayer]:

Who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.

If it is directed to the Son:

You live and reign for ever and ever.

These conclusions can be reformed slightly to fit properly the text of the prayer itself, for example: "Lord Jesus Christ.... Through the uncertainties of this earthly journey, lead us home to the everlasting pastures, where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen."

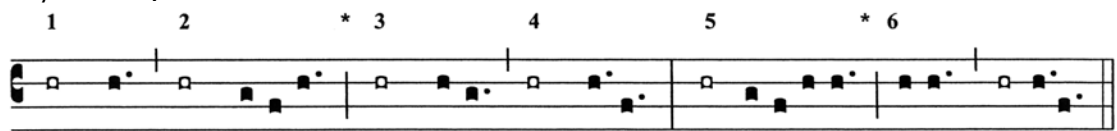
- In sum, the order for praying the psalm-prayers is: stand; the invitation, "Let us pray," with hands joined; pause for silent prayer; psalm-prayer with hands extended; short conclusion followed by "Amen" of assembly.

Tips and techniques for proper singing

1. Sing the text as you would speak it, following the phrases and punctuation.
2. The tone of the voice should be simply an elevated speech.
3. Air: breath from down deep, not from the chest nor from the throat.
4. Don't dip, scoop, or swoop.
5. There is no need to slow down at the end of lines or phrases.
6. Do not be afraid!

Tones for singing the prayers

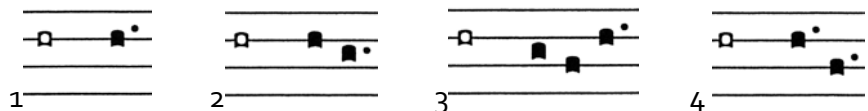
1. *Recto-tono* (literally, "with a straight tone"). The non-inflected singing of a text on the same pitch.
2. According to Tone I
 - Sunday Collect, Advent Week 1



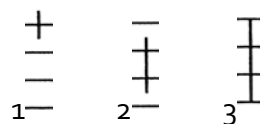
- 1 All powerful God,
- 2 increase our strength of will for *doing good* *
- 3 that Christ may find an eager welcome at his **coming**
- 4 and call us to his side in the kingdom of **heaven**,
- 5 where he lives and reigns with you and the *Holy Spirit*, *
- 6 one God, for ever and **ever**.

- Things to notice:

1. Four types of tone endings:



2. Three types of rests, or pauses:



3. Text: sentence and its clauses, as well as the accompanying punctuation.

- Sunday Collect, Advent Week 3



¹ Lord God,
² may we, your people,
³ who look forward to the birthday of Christ
⁴ experience the joy *of salvation* *
⁵ and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving.
⁶ We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, you Son,
⁷ who lives and reigns with you and the *Holy Spirit*, *
⁸ one God, for ever and ever.

- Sunday Collect, Advent Week 4

Lord,
 Fill our hearts with your love,
 and as you revealed to us by an angel
 the coming of your Son as man,
 so lead us through his suffering and death
 to the glory of his resurrection,
 for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever.

Suggestions for marking the text to sing:

1. Let the structure of the text determine the music.
2. Use ' for a short break; / for a longer break; and // for a final break.
3. Underline the word that departs from the reciting note.

- Psalm-Prayer, Saturday Morning Prayer, Advent Week I: Psalm 119:145-152

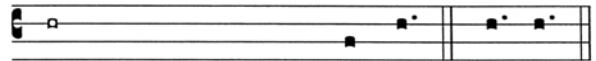
Let us pray.

Save us by the power of your hand, Father,
 for our enemies have ignored your words.

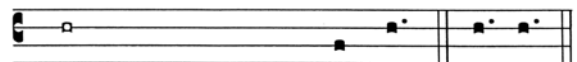
May the fire of your word
 consume our sins
 and its brightness illumine our hearts.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.

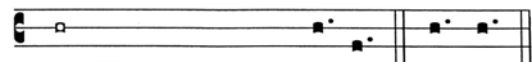
Amen.



We ask this through Christ our Lord. $\text{\textcircled{R}}$ A-men.



Grant this through Christ our Lord. $\text{\textcircled{R}}$ A-men.



who is Lord for ever and ev- er. $\text{\textcircled{R}}$ A-men.

- Psalm-Prayers, Evening Prayer I, Advent Week II: Psalms 119:105-112 and 16

Let your Word, Father, be a lamp for our feet and a light to our path, so that we may understand what you wish to teach us and follow the path your light marks out for us.

Lord Jesus, uphold those who hope in you and give us your counsel, so that we may know the joy of your resurrection and deserve to be among the saints at your right hand.