

Antiphons

What are the things we sing before entrance and communion?

These are the antiphons, or Propers of the Mass. They are Scriptural texts that are prescribed by the Church for the Entrance, Offertory and Communion times and match the Gospel/Feast of the day.

Why do we sing the antiphons?

The antiphons offer us the chance to focus our worship using Christ in the Word. Through them, the Gospel of the day can be opened even further. Additionally, these are the preferred texts of the Church having been assigned early in the first centuries of Christian liturgy in the West.

Didn't Vatican II get rid of these and chant?

It has always and still is the view of the Church that "The main place should be given, all things being equal, to Gregorian chant, as being proper to the Roman Liturgy" (GIRM 41). It is important to keep chant alive in our celebration of the Liturgy as it reflects the heavenly Liturgy with which we join at Mass. Similarly, the antiphons are still the preferred option of the Church (GIRM 48, 87). The antiphons were lost when the vernacular was introduced to the Liturgy and the antiphons remained in Latin. Thus, the only readily available English alternative at that time were the Protestant hymns.

Why do we change in Advent and Lent?

All antiphons are paired with verses from a psalm. In other seasons, we simply chant the refrain before our hymn. In Advent and Lent we take advantage of these pairings and do a setting of the full antiphon. The psalm that is paired with the antiphon often expounds on the Gospel message of the day — again giving us a deeper look into the Word.

The antiphons are useful tools for focusing our minds and hearts during the Liturgy. They familiarize us with Scripture and show us the message of the Gospel. As we sing the full communion antiphon during Lent, I encourage all to use the refrains as a point of contemplation as we prepare to receive Christ in the Eucharist. While repetitive, the refrain offers a succinct reminder of the Gospel message of the day and thus is ideal for contemplation.

Acknowledging that this is new for some, I have included a couple resources:

If you would like to see the antiphons we use at all weekend Masses, click here:

[Simple English Propers](#)

For the season of Lent, if you would like to see and hear the communion antiphons we use, please use the following links:

[Ash Wednesday \(Listen\)](#)

[1st Sunday of Lent \(Listen\)](#)

[4th Sunday of Lent \(Listen\)](#)

[2nd Sunday of Lent \(Listen\)](#)

[5th Sunday of Lent \(Listen\)](#)

[3rd Sunday of Lent \(Listen\)](#)

[Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion \(Listen\)](#)

Feel free to contact me at the parish office or by email if you have any further questions or comments. I ask to please approach these with an open heart as we strive to enter into beauty and truth through Sacred Scripture. Thank you!

[Jonathan Higgins](#)

Director of Music