

NPM CANTOR NEWSLETTER

ADVENT December 2-24, 2018



*Lord our God,
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:
he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,
he is the Savior of every nation.*

From the Blessing of the Advent Wreath (Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers)

A blessed Advent to you, dear cantors!

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and also to the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. (USCCB) We pray and light the candles of the Advent wreath as we prepare for the birth of Jesus. The ritual of lighting the candles helps prepare our hearts and minds for Christ's birth.

However, the month of December can also be a chaotic time in preparation of Christmas - guaranteed to frazzle our nerves! There are so many things to prepare: decorate the house, bake goodies, buy presents, attend programs at church and school, prepare music for Advent Masses (as well as Christmas celebrations!), attend parties at work and in our neighborhoods... the list goes on and on! Simply catching your breath might seem an insurmountable feat! (My anxiety level rose just writing out the list!)

There may not be a better time to practice proper breathing techniques than this time of year. Close your eyes. Breathing in through your nose, take a deep breath. Allow the air to fill your abdomen and hold it there. Then gently exhale through your mouth as slowly as you can. (It should sound like steam escaping from a pressure cooker.) After you have done this a few times, try singing the refrain of a psalm as you exhale. "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul" - Ps. 30. Repeat this over and over and feel your mind and body calm as you pray the words of the psalm.

We have been blessed with multiple Institutes and Cantor Certifications the past few months from all over the country! If you have any questions about scheduling an Institute or certification for your parish or NPM chapter, please send us an email at npm.cantor.certifications@gmail.com

May your soul be filled with joy and your homes full of love this season! Many blessings to you as you prepare for Christ's birth!

God Bless,

Tammy Schnittgrund
Chair, NPM Cantor Steering Committee

The "O Antiphons" of Advent

“The Roman Church has been singing the "O" Antiphons since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany the *Magnificat* canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.” (USCCB)

Consider contemplating these during your spiritual preparations!

December 17

○ Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

○ Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

○ Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

December 20

○ Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

○ Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell
in darkness and in the
shadow of death.

December 22

○ King of all nations and
keystone of the Church:
come and save man,
whom you formed from the dust!

December 23

○ Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

From the USCCB website [here](#).
And in this USCCB published book:
[Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers](#)

Have a comment about the Newsletter?

Write to the editor, Susan Groeschel Lovelette, [NPM Cantor Newsletter Editor](#).

Have a question about growing in your ministry as a Cantor?

Click this link to find your [NPM Cantor Steering Committee](#) members
and write to them by email.

Have you moved, changed positions, changed your email, retired?

Update your membership and contact information by contacting Kathleen Haley
in the NPM National Office by [email](#) or by phone to (240) 247-3002.

Sunday, Solemnity & Feast Days for Advent (Year C)

December 2, 2018 - 1st Sunday of Advent - Year C

Psalm 25: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14, with refrain from verse 1b:

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.



December 8, 2018

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Psalm 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4, with refrain from verse 1:

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.

December 9, 2018 - 2nd Sunday of Advent - Year C

Psalm 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 with refrain from verse 3:

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

December 12, 2018 - Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Judith13:18BCDE, 19, with refrain from verse 15:9d:

You are the highest honor of our race.



December 16, 2018 - 3rd Sunday of Advent - Year C

Isaiah: 12:2-3, 4, 5-6, with refrain from verse 6:

Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

The third Sunday of Advent is called "*Gaudete*" Sunday (coming from the first word of the Latin Entrance Antiphon for this day, meaning "Rejoice") and the liturgical color may be rose instead of purple. This is the Church's way of further heightening our expectation as we draw ever nearer the Solemnity of Christmas.
(From Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar: 42)

December 23, 2018 - 4th Sunday of Advent - Year C

Psalm 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19, with refrain from verse 4:

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

NPM Cues for Cantors! Tips and Tools for Cantor Ministry

This issue's article by Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN, Ph. D., is the **THIRD** of a series of "Cues for Cantors!" articles based on her book, *Becoming the Psalms: A Spirituality for Singing and Praying the Psalms*.

BOOK DISCOUNT AVAILABLE!

If you would like to purchase the book to experience the series in greater depth, Liturgical Press offers all readers of NPM "Cues for Cantors!" a **10% discount and free freight**. Use the following link and enter **NPMCN10** where it says "Apply Promo Code":
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4859/Becoming-the-Psalms>

Journey to Becoming the Psalms Taste and See That God is Good!

Kathleen Harmon



In this issue of "Cues for Cantors!", I offer the third of a series of articles drawn from my book *Becoming the Psalms: A Spirituality for Singing and Praying the Psalms*. These teasers are an invitation to read a chapter or section of this short book and then spend some time, either alone or with other cantors, reflecting on what you are learning about the psalms, about your ministry of proclaiming the psalms, and about your own faithful discipleship. Please use the link above if you would like to purchase the book at a discount with free shipping. However, please note that it is not necessary to have a copy of the it. I have written this to be helpful to you whether or not you have the book in hand.

Taste and see that God is Good!

Psalm 1: From the Beginning to the End (Part I, Chapter 2, of *Becoming the Psalms*)

Psalm 1 and Psalm 150 are the bookends of the Hebrew Psalter. Psalm 1 sets us on the path of fidelity to the way of God. Psalm 150 praises God who holds the history of humankind and the movements of the cosmos in his hands. Psalm 1 begins the journey of salvation. Psalm 150 celebrates its glorious conclusion. In this issue of “Cues for Cantors!” we take a closer look at Psalm 1, the beginning of the journey.

*Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in due season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*

*Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

*For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.* (translation from NIV)

Psalm 1 makes a promise: walk the way of God and all that you do will prosper. Psalm 1 also raises a challenge, for the way of the righteous is hard to walk. It is a way that is easily misunderstood, frequently belittled and readily dismissed. The prosperity it yields is not earthly wealth and power, but hidden, heavenly graces. By contrast, the way of the unrighteous is overtly successful, enticing, and applauded (p. 10, *Becoming the Psalms*).



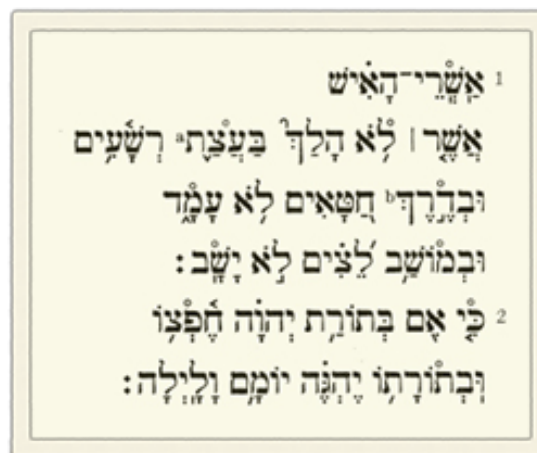
Key Images in Palm 1

Three key images in Psalm 1 help us understand both its promise and its challenge. First is the image of “blessed.” The Hebrew word for blessed used in Psalm 1 is *ashré*. *Ashré* comes from a root that means “to go forward” or “to walk steadily.” Blessedness, then, is not a state of being but a journey of becoming. Walking the way of God demands repeated choice and steadfast perseverance. In the changing and challenging circumstances of our here-and-now lives, we must choose to walk the way of God over and over. We must “trudge on through dark days and terrifying nights, surrounded by evil and confronted by opposition,” not knowing “how long our journey will be, how long our becoming will take” (p. 9, *Becoming the Psalms*).



The second important image is “way,” in Hebrew *derek*. It is no accident that *derek* appears 706 times in the Hebrew scriptures. The scriptures teach us there are two ways we can follow; the way of sinners who choose to walk with the wicked, or the way of the righteous who choose to walk with God. To move forward on the way of God we must meditate every moment, day and night, on the law of God (Ps 1: 2). Such persistent meditating on God’s law makes that law “the driving voice in our hearts and minds,” a voice that becomes “heard in our way of living and acting” (p. 9, *Becoming the Psalms*).

The third central image is “law,” or Hebrew *tōrah*. *Tōrah* is not a rigid legalism (as we twentieth century westerners tend to think) but the will and purpose of God that all have what is needed for fullness of life. *Tōrah* means the way of God, “the divine *derek* revealed in every fiber of the natural world, in every loving human relationship, in every healthy human community” (p. 9, *Becoming the Psalms*). *Tōrah* is not a stricture that binds and limits, but “a lifestyle that frees, leads to the deepest happiness, and generates blessing for all in the community” (p. 10, *Becoming the Psalms*). *Tōrah*, then, calls us to the deepest level of human freedom by calling us to the deepest level of love: love for God, love for one another, love for justice and peace, love for those in need, love for the stranger, love for the enemy, and love for all the created world.



Psalm 1 in the Lectionary

Psalm 1 appears in the Sunday Lectionary only once, on the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C. In the First Reading of that Sunday, Jeremiah condemns those who turn their hearts away from God. These people are “barren bush[es]” who bear no fruit. He praises those who hope in God. These people are trees “planted beside the waters,” deep-rooted and green. Even during drought they bear fruit. The gospel passage partnered with this reading from Jeremiah is Luke 6:17, 20-26: the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who hunger, blessed are those who weep, blessed are those hated for their fidelity, Jesus teaches. Your reward will be great. But cursed will be those who think and act otherwise, staking their hopes on the empty claims of earthly power and possessions.

Together, the words of Jeremiah, the imagery of Psalm 1 and the Beatitudes of Jesus open our minds and hearts to the true meaning of blessedness. Those who appear deserving of denigration in the eyes of the world (the poor, the meek, the hungry, the persecuted, etc.) are worthy of everlasting reward in the eyes of God.

Psalm 1 in the Ministry of the Cantor

Although Psalm 1 appears only this one time in the Sunday Lectionary, its meaning and message has bearing on the entirety of our ministry as psalmists. Here are some helpful reflection questions to ponder:

1. As a faithful Christian, Psalm 1 invites me to . . . promises me . . . challenges me. . .
As a cantor, Psalm 1 invites me to . . . promises me . . . challenges me. . .

2. When—in my family life, at work, in the Church—do I struggle to walk the way of God? What challenges do I meet? What pitfalls? What opposition? When keeps me faithful to walking God’s path?

3. How is every preparation to sing a responsorial psalm an opportunity to meditate on the way of God? How does every responsorial psalm call me to walk in the way of God?

4. How do I see my ministry as a psalmist within the movement from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150? In other words, how does my ministry as psalmist help me to:

- remain steadfast on the long journey of fidelity?
- sing Alleluia in the midst of suffering?
- see that suffering, loss, pain, death (i.e. lament) is not the last word—Alleluia is?

And so, my fellow cantors, although we may not sing it often in the liturgy, Psalm 1 nonetheless sets the entire framework for our ministry just as it sets the framework for the entirety of our Christian living.

May God bless your proclamation of the psalms throughout Advent!

Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN, Ph. D. is a noted writer and presenter on the meaning of the psalms and the ministry of the cantor. Her other books published by Liturgical Press include *The Ministry of Cantors*, and *The Ministry of Music*, both in revised editions, as well as *The Mystery We Celebrate, the Song We Sing: A Theology of Liturgical Music*. She is also one of the composers of the responsorial psalm collection *Cry Out With Joy*, published by GIA, and currently vice-chair of the NPM Board of Directors.

