



## A New Opportunity: Chanting the Introduction and Conclusion to the Readings on Solemn Occasions

### Music Ennobles the Liturgy and Enables Participation

Most of us are familiar with a key teaching of the Second Vatican Council, expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), that “the Church earnestly desires” the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy (14). One of the ways to enable this participation, the document says, is through sacred music: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bearing” (30). In fact, the Constitution places great emphasis on the importance of sacred music: “A liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing, the sacred ministers take their parts in them, and the faithful actively participate” (113).

Since that document’s promulgation in 1963, the vision of music ennobling liturgy and encouraging participation has been taking more concrete shape, and the English-speaking faithful in the United States have seen increased evidence of that in the past several years. *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007, asserts in its first pages that “Singing is one of the primary ways that the assembly of the faithful participates actively in the Liturgy” (26).

The new English translation of the third edition of *The Roman Missal*, which will be in use on the First Sunday of Advent of 2011, provides chant notation for many more parts of the Mass than appeared in *The Sacramentary*. While the use of these particular chant notations is optional—other styles of singing are welcomed—the provision of so many chant notations indicates the Church’s intention that singing or chanting the texts of the Mass should be encouraged.

### The More Solemnity, the More Music

“God has bestowed upon his people the gift of song” (1), *Sing to the Lord* begins, and then it articulates the

expectation of “progressive solemnity” in music for the Mass. This term, progressive solemnity, means that the more solemn the Mass, the more parts of it should be sung. “Music should be considered a normal and ordinary part of the Church’s liturgical life” (110), and so even on days without memorials, feasts, or solemnities, some parts of the Mass are chanted or sung. On very solemn and festive occasions, many more parts of the Mass should be sung.

Among the many parts that might be sung on solemn occasions, it may surprise us to read that this document names the readings from scripture:

153. While the readings are ordinarily read in a clear, audible, and intelligent way (see *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 14), they may also be sung. “This singing, however, must serve to bring out the sense of the words, not obscure them. (‘On occasions when the readings are in Latin, the manner of singing given in the *Ordo cantus Missae* is to be maintained’ *Lectionary for Mass*, no. 14).”

154. Even if the readings are not sung, the concluding acclamation *The Word of the Lord* may be sung, even by someone other than the reader; all respond with the acclamation *Thanks be to God*. “In this way the assembled congregation pays reverence to the word of God it has listened to in faith and gratitude (*Lectionary for Mass*, no. 18).”

In fact, *Sing to the Lord* was simply quoting the Introduction to the Lectionary, written in 1981, but these suggestions have not been taken as a practical option by most parishes.

In the English translation of the third edition of *The Roman Missal*, the intention of the Church for more music on solemn occasions stands out to us more sharply because tones are provided for chanting the introduction and concluding acclamation for the First Reading, the Second Reading (the epistle or book of Revelation), and the Gospel. In the case of the Gospel, *The Roman Missal* furnishes both a simple and a

solemn version of the chanted introduction and conclusion. Tones are also provided for chanting entire readings, although musical notation is given only for examples.

## To Chant or Not to Chant? And Who Will Chant?

Chanting the introduction and conclusion to the readings ("A reading from . . . The word of the Lord") would be especially appropriate for solemn celebrations. The Easter Vigil, Mass during the Night (formerly Midnight Mass), Pentecost, or the parish's patronal feast would be examples of occasions when the parish might consider chanting these parts.

For many ministers of the word, this prospect may seem daunting. Deacons are often trained in some chant, but lay ministers of the word do not usually

find it a part of their preparation for the ministry. If no readers are willing, the chanting may be done by a cantor, with the reader doing the proclamation as usual in between the introductory and concluding chants. But some ministers of the word may be willing to take up this challenge.

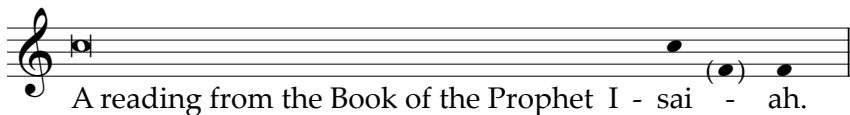
Whoever will be chanting will need to practice the chant tones presented here. Audio files demonstrating each of the tones (separate tones are provided for the First Reading, Second Reading, and Gospel) may be found at the URLs indicated below or through the QR codes given in the introduction of the printed *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word 2012*. Listening to the audio files and repeating after them will be good preparation.

May we find in this opportunity a new way to invite the assembly's attention to the word of God, and a new way to welcome and praise God dwelling in the word in our midst!

## Notation for Chant Tones

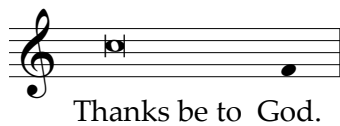
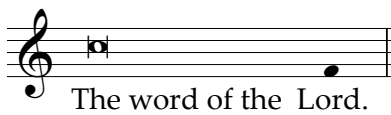
### FIRST READING:

#### Tone for the Introduction



Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/l2mjeG>.

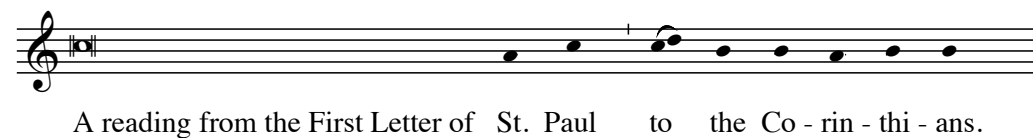
#### Tone for the Conclusion



Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/l2mjeG>.

### SECOND READING:

#### Tone for the Introduction of the Epistle



Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/kwEYy>.

### Tone for the Conclusion of the Epistle

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/krwEYy>.

### GOSPEL: SIMPLE TONE

#### Gospel Dialogue

V. The Lord be with you. R. And with your spir-it.

V. A reading from the holy Gospel according to

Mat-thew.  
Mark.  
Luke.  
John.

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/iZZvSg>.

#### Conclusion

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Je-sus Christ.

Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/iZZvSg>.

### GOSPEL: SOLEMN TONE

#### Gospel Dialogue

V. The Lord be with you. R. And with your spir-it.


V. A reading from the ho-ly Gos-pel according to

Mat-thew.  
Mark.  
Luke.  
John.

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/lwf6Hh>.

**Conclusion**



The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Find the audio file for this tone at <http://bit.ly/lwf6Hh>.