



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment: Part 11

#### The Responsorial Psalm

After the First Reading, the Liturgy of the Word continues with the Responsorial Psalm. We go from the simple “the Word of the Lord...Thanks be to God” to a more specific invocation and petition usually inspired by the readings. The Responsorial Psalm is a prayerful response to God after hearing His Word; an acclamation that follows proclamation. In general, the psalms are a school of prayer that should shape all our conversations with God and all life’s aspirations. It is therefore recommended that we turn the psalms into our vocabulary for prayer and for life.

It might interest you to know that the Book of Psalms was an Israel Hymn Book. A prayer book that Jesus probably used in his time on earth as a faithful Jew. The psalms were produced and then prayed throughout all the various epochs and phases of Israel’s existence. In them we see the prayers of a people who heard God speaking in the creation and in the events of her history. They express joy and wonder, gratitude and repentance, pleas for help and mercy and protection. However, it should be noted that the psalms (just like we saw last week in the First Reading, mainly taken from the OT) point to the events of Christ. You can say it has a Christological character. The psalms refer to Christ and his story as the center of Israel’s story. About this the Scriptures say, “everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled” (Lk 24:44). The words written in the psalms were fulfilled by Jesus as he prayed them during the course of his life. Verse by verse, psalm by psalm, they were a mystery, hidden but now revealed in him.

Recall that in the First Reading God speaks to us and in the Responsorial Psalm we speak to him. The cantor/psalmist (the one who chants the psalm) articulates in a lovely way the voice of the Church with the voice of Christ, the mediator. As the gathered assembly repeats the refrain, we sing with Christ to the Father and also listen to him in the voice of the cantor with some of the verses. The refrain is repeated. Sometimes we have to repeat something to help it sink in. Our response helps some aspect of the readings of the day to reverberate in us a little, in our minds and hearts, so they do not just pass through our ears and vanish. We make them not just God’s Words, but our words. So, the Responsorial Psalm is a time for us to reflect and to joyfully immerse ourselves into the heart of the readings and it allows us the chance to reflect on the readings more fully when we can reverently and fully sing the song of praise that we have placed before us.

Apart from the Lectionary (the book that contains a collection of Scripture Readings for weekdays, Sundays, and various occasions), the text of the psalm can also be taken from other books: either from the *Graduale Romanum* or from the *Graduale Simplex*. The selection of the Responsorial Psalms found in the Lectionary was done with the utmost care. Certain general principles were followed. Thus, a psalm is used for a response if the Scriptures for the day quote the psalm, if a literary reference is made to the psalm in the First Reading, if the psalm more clearly illustrates what is proclaimed in the reading. Additionally, psalms having a connection with a particular liturgical season are used during that season, e.g. the Penitential Psalms during Lent. Furthermore, a selection of psalms appropriate to each season of the year is also given. A close attention to this intentional selection would improve our active participation and fruitfulness.

*And that is your Mass Moment for the week.*