

## Entrance Procession

### Roman Missal: Procession, Entrance Antiphon, and Veneration of Altar

When the people are gathered, the Priest approaches the altar with the ministers while the Entrance Chant (Latin *introit*) is sung. When he has arrived at the altar, after making a profound bow with the ministers, the Priest venerates the altar with a kiss and, if appropriate, incenses the cross and the altar. Then, with the ministers, he goes to the chair. (Roman Missal, *Order of Mass* no. 1)

### General Instruction of Roman Missal

1. Procession: Priest, Deacon, and ministers (GIRM 47)
2. Order: of procession to the altar (GIRM 120)
  - a. Thurifer: “if incense is being used”
  - b. Candles: carried by “ministers”
  - c. Cross: carried by “acolyte” or “other minister”; placed “near altar” (GIRM 188)
  - d. Book of the Gospels: carried by “reader” (GIRM 122)
  - e. Priest: “who is to celebrate Mass”
  - f. Concelebrants: “walk ahead of the principal celebrant” (GIRM 210-211)
3. Entrance Chant: takes place “during the procession to the altar” (GIRM 121); purpose is to “open the celebration,” foster “unity,” “introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity,” and “accompany the procession” (GIRM 47)
4. Options: “four options for Entrance Chant” (GIRM 48); but appropriate for proper “chants” to be sung (GIRM 44)
  - a. Antiphon from Missal (or Antiphon with Psalm from *Graduale Romanum*)
  - b. Antiphon and Psalm of *Graduale Simplex*
  - c. Chant from another collection of Psalms and Antiphons
  - d. Another liturgical chant: “suited to the sacred action, day, or time of year”
  - e. Recitation: if no singing; Antiphon “recited” by Priest, faithful, or together
5. Veneration: “profound bow”; “a kiss,” “if appropriate, incense” (GIRM 122-23)

### Entrance Antiphons: Examples

#### 3rd Sunday of Advent

Rejoice in the Lord always;  
again, I say, rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.  
(cf. Phil 4:4-5)

#### Original Latin

*Gaudete in Domino semper:  
iterum dico, gaudete.  
Dominus enim prope est.*

#### 4th Sunday of Lent

Rejoice, Jerusalem,  
and all who love her...  
(cf. Isa 66:10-11)

*Laetare, Ierusalem, et conventum facite,  
omnes qui diligitis eam...*

#### Funeral Mass

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
(cf. 4 Esdr 2:34-35)

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

## Scripture

### **The Procession of Moses to the Tabernacle**

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting. And every one who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. *Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and every man stood at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent.* When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. *And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship* (Hebrew, *chawa*, “bow down”)... (Exodus 33:7-10)

### **The Book of Psalms: Processions to the Altar**

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:  
*how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God,  
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,  
a multitude keeping festival.* (Psalm 42:4)

Vindicate me (Latin *Judica me*), O God, and defend my cause...  
Oh, send out your light and your truth; let them lead me,  
*let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!*  
*Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy;  
and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.* (Psalm 43:1, 3-4)

Psalms 120-134: “Psalms of Ascent/Going Up” (cf. Latin *Canticum Graduum*)

### **The Altar and the Incense in Heaven**

And another angel came and stood at *the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar* before the throne; and *the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints* from the hand of the angel before God. (Revelation 8:2-4)

## Tradition

### **St. Ambrose Adds Antiphons to the Latin Mass (4<sup>th</sup> century)**

St. Isidore of Seville (6<sup>th</sup> Century): *The Greeks first composed antiphons, with two choirs alternately singing together like two seraphim... Among the Latins, however, the same*

*most blessed Ambrose was the first to have instituted antiphons, imitating the example of the Greeks. From that time their usage has increased in all the western regions.*<sup>1</sup>

### **Pope St. Celestine Adds the Entrance Antiphon to the Roman Liturgy (5<sup>th</sup> Century)**

*Liber Pontificalis*: Celestine, born in Campania, [...] decreed that *the 150 psalms of David be antiphonally sung before the sacrifice*, something not done formerly...<sup>2</sup>

### **The Pope Venerates and Kisses the Altar (7<sup>th</sup> Century)**

*Ordo Romanus I*: When they have lit [the incense], immediately the attendant subdeacon, holding *the golden thurible*, places the incense outside the doors, so that he may go before the pope... *Then... the candlesticks are divided*, four to the right and three to the left, and *the pope crosses to the top part of the schola and bows his head to the altar, standing up and praying and making the sign of the cross on his forehead...* [T]he fourth of the choir... places the prayer rug in front of the altar; and approaching, *the pope prays on it* until the repetition of the verse. Now the deacons get up when he says: “As it was,” so that they kiss the sides of the altar, first two by two in turn returning to the pope. *And getting up, the pope kisses the evangelary [book of the Gospels] and the altar* and approaches his seat and stands turned toward the East.<sup>3</sup>

## **Mystagogy**

### **The Altar Represents the Body of Christ (4<sup>th</sup> Century)**

*Catechism*: The Christian altar is *the symbol of Christ himself*, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us. “*For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?*” asks St. Ambrose. He says elsewhere, “*The altar represents the body [of Christ] and the Body of Christ is on the altar.*” (CCC 1383, quoting St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments* 5.2.7; 4.2.7)

### **The Procession and the Exodus from Egypt (13<sup>th</sup> Century)**

*William Durand*: Just as Christ’s embassy to this world on our behalf is symbolized in the Mass, at the same time *our processions symbolize our return to our heavenly homeland, and their solemnity resembles on practically every point the journey of the people of God out of Egypt.* ...Just as the Tablets of the Testament were received on Mount Sinai by Moses and carried before the people [Exod 34-35], *so too is the Gospel book taken from the altar and carried.* The [Israelites] were preceded by pillars of fire as

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<sup>1</sup> Isidore of Seville, *On the Ecclesiastical Offices*, 1.7. In Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* (trans. Thomas L. Knoebel; New York, N.Y./Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 2008), 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Liber Pontificalis* 45.1. In Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, 4:58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ordo Romanum I*, nos 41, 50-51 (7<sup>th</sup> century AD). Translation by John F. Romano, in Baldwin, “History of the Latin Text and Rite,” in *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Missal*, 118.

*we are preceded by the light of the candles. In front of their squadrons of troops they carried signs; in front of ours, crosses and banners are carried. They experienced prodigies; among us, the miracles never cease. Their Levites carried the Tabernacle of the Testimony, our deacons and subdeacons carry cases for consecrated hosts and the books of the Epistles and Gospels. They carried the Ark of the Covenant; for us, it is the relic case, or a bier with relics is carried by the presbyters. For them Aaron the High Priest followed adorned in [his vestments]; we have the bishop wearing a mitre. They had Moses with a staff; we have the king with his scepter or the bishop with his crosier. They had the noise of trumpets; we have the clanging of bells. There, the people were armed; now the clergy are adorned with sacred vestments, the people with virtue. There, the people were sprinkled with blood; now they are sprinkled with holy water with salt. They had to resist Amalek, who was thirsting for blood; we, the troop of demons who are always lying in wait to ambush us. They had as their conqueror Joshua, while ours is Jesus Christ, who achieved the victory for us. When we process in the direction of a given church, it is as if we are entering into the promised land. When we enter into the church chanting, it is as if we have arrived rejoicing into the fatherland.*<sup>4</sup> [cf. 1 Pet 2:11: “aliens/sojourners (Greek *paroikos*) and exiles”]

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. In your experience, what role does the Entrance Antiphon play in the celebration of Sunday Mass? What about daily Mass? Why do we refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent as “*Gaudete* Sunday” and the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent as “*Laetare* Sunday”?

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2. What are some parallels between the Entrance Procession and the Exodus from Egypt? What is the mystical significance of comparing the procession to the altar with the journey to the promised land?

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### For Further Reading

1. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2011). Official description of the norms and rubrics for the celebration of the Roman Missal of St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II.

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<sup>4</sup> William Durand, *Rationale IV: On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It* (trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau; Corpus Christianorum in Translation 14; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), 99-100.

2. Archdale King. *Liturgy of the Roman Church*. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1957. A classic historical study of the Roman Rite; on the entrance procession and veneration of the altar, see pp. 230-34.
3. Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (2 vols.; trans. Francis A. Brunner, C. SS. R.; repr. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 2012 [orig. 1951]). On the entrance procession, see Volume 1, pp. 311-333.