

THE ROLE OF ANTIPHONS IN THE SINGING OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

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The substance of the Divine Office is psalmody, traditionally all one hundred fifty psalms sung in the course of a week. With some notable exceptions, they are sung in continuous numerical succession. But this strict order is given considerable variety by antiphons: each psalm has attached to it a complementary verse, its antiphon, that for the same psalm can vary throughout the year. My purpose here is to explore the significance of this variation, to survey the kinds of antiphons that are employed and to speculate upon their purposes.

First, a little history. Whether the Divine Office is sung according to the current ordinary form or the extraordinary form of 1962, the antiphon is sung at the beginning and end of the psalm. We may have forgotten that before 1960, on ordinary days, only the intonation of the antiphon was sung at the beginning of the psalm, with the whole antiphon sung only at the end. This related to the classification of feasts as ‘doubles,’ those important days on which the antiphons were doubled—sung completely both at the beginning and end of the psalm.

We may have also forgotten that under Pope Pius X, a revision of the order of the office was made, in which the longer psalms were divided, but also quite a number of new antiphons were provided—for example, of the five psalm antiphons of ordinary Sunday Vespers one was substantially revised and one replaced with a new one.¹

The most ancient history is more interesting. It concerns how the psalms were sung and the nature and use of antiphons. The psalms were often sung responsorially in the Mass: a soloist would sing the verses of the psalm, while the congregation would respond with a refrain. In preaching upon the successive parts of the Liturgy of the Word, St. Augustine documents the division of roles in the following way: ‘*audivimus* apostolicam lectionem . . . ,’ then ‘*audi* psalmum . . . ,’ then ‘*audistis* et evangelium.’ The conjugation of the verb designates obliquely the assignment of the epistle to another reader, ‘we have heard the epistle’; the psalm to the congregation (and most likely the lector or cantor), ‘I have heard the psalm’; and the gospel to Augustine himself, ‘you have heard the gospel.’ This manner of singing psalms is documented by several sources of the fourth century. It was the precedent in the post-Vatican II reform for replacing the Gregorian gradual with a

¹ Cf. William Mahrt, Review, *Antiphonale romanum II* (Solesmes, 2009), *Sacred Music*, 137, no. 1 (Spring 2010), pp 72–75.

verisimilitude of the practice, but there are some differences: 1) it was then the principal musical piece of the whole Mass; there was as yet no other consistently-sung proper and of the Ordinary of the Mass only the Sanctus: 2) we have no record of how it was sung or what the music was; the triviality of the present practice suggests that we have not quite recovered it yet; 3) Although the General Instruction on the Roman Missal makes no distinction between the gradual and the psalm² but describes the function of the responsorial psalm as meditation. The continuous tradition of at least the last millennium places a great value upon the meditational function of melismatic chants—the gradual, alleluia, and tract of the Mass and the responsory of the office. I once asked ‘what is the purpose of the responsorial psalm?’ and received the answer, ‘to give the congregation something to do.’ I contend that is about all it does; there is scant meditational value to the incessant repetition of a trivial refrain.

But this method of psalmody was also employed in the Divine Office. John Cassian reports that psalmody for the monks of Egypt was sung by a soloist, with the monks listening in a meditative way, making no vocal response. He reports, however, that in Gaul, the custom was for the monks also just to listen, but at the end of the psalm to rise and sing the Gloria Patri in loud voice. Various monastic practices detail the division of solo singing of psalm verses among monks, usually based upon seniority, sometimes beginning with the abbot. The body of monks would sometimes respond with a refrain.

When rather little information is at hand, it is possible that the definition of one word in the documents may determine diametrically opposed descriptions. ‘Antiphon’ itself is one such word. A point of departure is the definition of Isidore of Seville (560–636) in his early seventh-century *Etymologies*, written toward the end of his life:

Antiphon, which comes from the Greek, means reciprocal utterance, namely, two choirs singing psalms alternately in balanced alternation from one to the other. . . . between responsories and the antiphon the difference is this in responsories one [singer] says the verses, whereas in antiphon-verses the choirs alternate.³

There is some disagreement among musicologists about how long the solo singing of the psalmody in the Divine Office continued. In some of the other documents that Edward Nowacki quotes, ‘antiphon’ refers to the verses of the psalm sung in alternation, and he extends this to the

² It speaks of the ‘responsorial psalm,’ but this is the designation of the gradual chant in the oldest manuscripts.

³ Book 6, ch. 19, sec. 7–8, cited by Edward Nowacki, ‘The Earliest antiphons of the Roman office,’ in *Chant, liturgy, and the inheritance of Rome: Essays in honour of Joseph Dyer*, ed. Daniel J. DiCenso & Rebecca Maloy, Henry Bradshaw Society, Subsidia, VIII (London, 2017), pp. 81–142, here p. 85.

Rule of the master and the *Rule of St. Benedict*. Joseph Dyer contends that the *Rule of the master* of the late sixth century still describes solo singing, but Edward Nowacki claims that the psalms were sung by the whole community in alternation of the sides of the choir, following Isidore's definition of 'antiphon.' He proposes that the antiphons for feast days were introduced only in the last decades of the seventh century. Dyer sees the singing of antiphons to solo psalmody as a continuation of that monastic practice even until the Carolingian era.⁴

Nowacki believes that there was a development of antiphons for the feast days only at the end of the seventh century, at about the same time that the Mass Propers were being developed, similar to the theory of James McKinnon, amounting to a 'properization' of the office, to use McKinnon's term.⁵ The traditional view is that the ferial antiphons, those for the weekday offices, were an earlier historical layer and the foundation for the development of the festal antiphons. This is a theory propounded by Dom Jean Claire of Solesmes, but it has met with considerable opposition. Nowacki points out that the ferial antiphons do not occur in significant numbers in manuscripts until very late, tenth century, and this undermines their role as foundational.⁶ I believe that this is not a good argument: There are some ninety ferial antiphons; they are simple and a majority of them have texts from the very psalms they accompany, and would be sung weekly. For monks who have the entire psalter from memory, it is not beyond possibility that they could remember these antiphons, which would not have to be written down until much later. This is a situation similar to hymns and the Ordinary of the Mass; the melodies for these were recorded in manuscript much later than those of the Mass propers. Most Mass propers occur once in the year, while hymns and the ordinary are sung much more frequently; this should account for their notation only later.

The original body of festal antiphons may well stem from the late seventh century, and they serve particular liturgical purposes. Michel Huglo has described their function: 'To convey concisely through their texts the spirit of a particular feast. The theological and spiritual aspects of feasts and seasons as reflected within the psalms and canticles are highlighted by the imagery

⁴ Joseph Dyer, 'Monastic Psalmody of the Middle Ages,' *Revue bénédictine*, 99 (1989), pp. 41–74; *ibid.*, 'The Singing of Psalms in the Early Medieval Office,' *Speculum*, 64 (1989), pp. 535–78.

⁵ James McKinnon, *The Advent project: The later seventh-century creation of the Roman Mass proper* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 150; *ibid.* 'Properization: The Roman Mass,' in *The temple, the church fathers, and early Western chant* (Aldershot, 1998), pp 15–22.

⁶ Nowacki, 'Earliest antiphons, 87.'

of the antiphons. Further, when juxtaposed with the regular psalmic cursus sung week by week, various antiphons may summon quite different resonances from the same psalms on different occasions, while themselves acquiring an increasing wealth of meaning.⁷

This is what I propose to illustrate—the various liturgical functions of the antiphons in relation to their psalms.

The proper texts of the liturgical year, both Mass and Office, constitute a history of salvation recounted week-by-week from the Annunciation through Christmas, the Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, to Pentecost and the season beyond. The focal point of this history is the gospel of the Mass of each of the important days. But this gospel is reinforced by a patristic homily at Matins, and the antiphons to the Magnificat at first and second Vespers and the antiphon to the Benedictus at Lauds. These antiphons, while brief, are vivid enough to be the means of repeatedly recalling the gospel story through the day. While the gospel story may be for the congregation a means of information, this is not its principal function; rather, it serves to celebrate and renew the known history of salvation in a ceremonial way; thus I contend that it is most appropriate that the gospel of the feast-day Mass always be sung, to convey its legendary character and to transcend the impression that it is just for information;⁸ its singing underlines the link with the antiphons to the Benedictus and Magnificat.

But the antiphons to the psalms of the office also serve to heighten the sense of the difference of the various feasts, even though they accompany the same psalms. A good example is Psalm 109 (110 in the newer numbering). In the extraordinary form, it is the first psalm of Vespers on practically all feast days, whether following the Dominical or the Marian sequence of psalms.⁹ I have surveyed the antiphons for this one vesper psalm¹⁰ and found eighty-seven different antiphons, the sources of whose texts vary, from the psalm itself, from other Old Testament texts, or a cycle of narrative from the New Testament, a citation from the life of a saint, or simply original texts pertaining to the feast.

The first verse of a psalm is its title verse, the text by which the psalm is known. It is sometimes used as the antiphon, and when this is done, it indicates the significance of the whole

⁷ Huglo and Halmo, ‘Antiphon.’

⁸ Cf. William Mahrt, Editorial, ‘Gospel,’ *Sacred Music*, 140, no. 1 (Spring 2013), pp 3–5.

⁹ The psalms for Vespers of the Lord and of most male saints are 109, 110, 111, 112, and 113; for the Blessed Virgin and of most female saints, 109, 112, 121, 126, and 147.

¹⁰ I have surveyed the usage of the *Antiphonale Monasticum* (Tournai, 1934) to avoid antiphons newly composed for the *Antiphonale Romanum* of 1912.

psalm. In the case of Psalm 109, the first verse is the antiphon to the psalm for ordinary Sundays, over half of the Sundays of the year:¹¹

Dixit Dominus Domino meo:	The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right
Sede a dextris meis.	hand: Until I make thy enemies thy footstool.

On this day, the Lord's Day, the overall Messianic content of the psalm is most pertinent, indicated by its initial verse.

Since Ps. 109 is the initial psalm of most feast days, including feasts of the Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and those of both men and women saints, it receives numerous other antiphons as well. On the Second Vespers of Christmas Day, a complete verse of the psalm (verse four) forms the antiphon:

Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae, in splendoribus sanctorum, ex utero ante luciferum genui te.	With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength: in the brightness of the saints, from the womb before the day star I begot thee.
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This is a crucial verse for Christmas, for on Christmas Day, the liturgy celebrates a double mystery, the eternal begetting of the Son from the Father, and the earthly birth of Jesus Christ. The first of these is the subject of the Mass Propers of the Midnight Mass, and this text (*Tecum principium*) is the basis of the gradual of that Mass. But in that Mass, the gospel text is of the earthly birth (a decree went out from Caesar Augustus). The earthly birth is the subject of the Mass Propers for the Third Mass of Christmas, the Mass in the Day, *Puer natus est* (A child is born unto us), while the gospel of that Mass refers to the eternal begetting (In the beginning was the word). For normal Vespers, *Tecum principium* at Christmas is a somewhat long antiphon, but its text, 'ante luciferum genui te,' is crucial to Trinitarian theology. It occurs in this form in the Septuagint, but in the Masoretic text it is ambiguous. It appears that the seventy elders clarified its meaning, presumably under inspiration, and so it is also highly significant that it heads the Vespers of Christmas Day.

Psalm verses as antiphons are often adjusted, often abbreviated, to suit the day. Edward Nowacki has compiled a table of over a thousand antiphons showing the adjustment of their

¹¹ The division of verses for chanting the Divine Office sometimes differs from the conventional division of the scripture. Thus verse one in the Vulgate Bible reads 'Dixit Dominus Domino meo: sede a **dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.**' **For chanting, it is broken into two verses; thus the antiphon as given is the complete first verse.**

scriptural texts to suit the particular feast day.¹² Sometimes this adjustment is moderate, as in the case of the antiphon to Psalm 109 for Second Vespers of feasts of Apostles and Evangelists:

Juravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum: Tu es sacerdos in aeternum.	The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: thou art a priest forever.
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The text states most of verse five, but omits its conclusion ‘according to the order of Melchisedech.’ Now apostles share in the priesthood of Christ, but the emphasis is not just upon the Eucharist, but upon all aspects of his priesthood, including suffering martyrdom. Perhaps this abbreviation also conforms to the usual brevity of antiphons (23 instead of 33 syllables).

But other antiphons are more substantially adjusted, as for Epiphany:

Ante luciferum genitus, et ante saecula, Dominus Salvator noster hodie mundo apparuit.	Begotten before the day-star and before the ages, the Lord our Savior today appeared to the world.
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The portion of verse four concerning the begetting of the Son from the Father is summarized, but the eternity of this begetting is made more explicit by adding ‘et ante saecula’ before the longer statement about apparition to the world. This has resonances with the antiphon to the Magnificat for the same Vespers, *Tribus miraculis*, which summarizes three particular Epiphanies in three ‘hodies’; Today the adoration of the magi; today, the Wedding at Cana; and today the baptism of Christ. But in the antiphon to the psalm, the Epiphany phenomenon is appearance to the whole world.

Antiphons to Psalm 109 are drawn from other books of the Old Testament. The antiphons to this psalm for the Sundays of Advent are each drawn from prophets—Joel, Daniel, or Habakkuk. For example, for the First Sunday of Advent

In illa die stillabunt montes dulcedinem, et colles fluent lac et mel, alleluia. (<i>Joel 3:18</i>).	In that day, the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey, alleluia.
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Several antiphons are drawn from New Testament texts, but when this is done, they are often in a cycle of five antiphons for the vesper psalms, which constitutes a continuous narrative of the feast. The most prominent of these is for Easter.

(i) Angelus autem Domini descendit de caelo, et accedens revolvit lapidem, et sedebat	For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming up, rolled
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¹² Nowacki, ‘Earliest antiphons,’ pp 91–142.

super eum, alleluia, alleluia. *Matt. 28:2b*

(ii) Et ecce terræmotus factus est magnus: Angelus enim Domini descendit de cælo, alleluia. *Matt. 28:2a*

(iii) Erat autem aspectus ejus sicut fulgur: vestimenta ejus sicut nix, alleluia, alleluia. *Matt 28:3*

(iv) Præ timore autem ejus exterriti sunt custodes, et facti sunt velut mortui, alleluia. *Matt. 28:4*

(v) Respondens autem Angelus dixit mulieribus: Nolite timere: scio enim quod Jesum quæritis, alleluia. *Matt. 28:4*

back the stone, and sat upon it.

And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven.

His countenance was as lightening, and his raiment as snow, alleluia, alleluia.

For fear of him the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men.

And the angel answering, said to the women, Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus.

The account of the appearance of the Angel to the women at the tomb is literally drawn from the Gospel of St. Matthew. One might have expected antiphons of some deep theological significance, but instead it is the whole concrete story of the spectacular initial manifestation of the Resurrection as an extraordinary event, with the terror of the soldiers and the words of the Angel to the women. Similar narrations can be seen for Ascension and Pentecost, though in these cases, since the same antiphons are sung at both Lauds and Vespers, the cycle is less complete: the fourth place, being the Canticle of the Three Children at Lauds, gets an antiphon which pertains to that canticle, and so there is a gap in the narrative cycle.

Sometimes a narration of a significant story is given for a saint. An exceptional one is for St. Joseph: the first Vespers uses antiphons drawn from the Gospels pertaining to Joseph, beginning with his mention in the geneology, through the Annunciation, to Joseph taking Mary into his home.

(i) Jacob autem genuit Joseph, virum Mariæ, de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus. *Matt. 1:16*

(ii) Missus est Angelus Gabriel a Deo ad Virginem desponsatam viro, cui nomen erat Joseph, de domo David: et nomen Virginis Maria. *Luke 1: 26–27*

(iii) Cum esset desponsata Mater Jesu Maria Joseph, antequam convenirent, inventa est in utero habens de Spiritu Sancto. *Matt. 1:18*

(iv) Joseph vir ejus, cum esset justus, et nollet eam traducere, voluit occulte dimittere eam. *Matt. 1:19*

(v) Angelus Domini apparuit Joseph,

Now Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to

dicens: Joseph fili David, noli timere accipere Mariam conjugem tuam: quod enim in ea natum est, de Spiritu Sancto est: pariet autem filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum. *Matt. 1:20–21*

Joseph saying; Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.

The Second Vespers of St. Joseph narrates in a succinct way the story of the finding in the Temple.

(i) Ibant parentes Jesu per omnes annos in Jerusalem, in die solemni Paschae. *Luke 2:41*

The parents of Jesus went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch.

(ii) Cum redirent, remansit puer Jesus in Jerusalem, et non cognoverunt parentes ejus. *Luke 2:42b*

When they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and the parents knew it not.

(iii) Non invenientes Jesum, regressi sunt in Jerusalem requirentes eum: et post triduum invenerunt filium in templo, sedentem in medio doctorum, audientem et interrogantem eos. *Luke 2:45–46*

Not finding Jesus, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him: and it came to pass that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.

(iv) Dixit Mater ejus ad illum: Fili, quid fecisti nobis sic? Ecce pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te.

His mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

(v) Descendit Jesus cum eis, et venit Nazareth, et erat subditus illis. *Luke 2: 51*

Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.

A remarkable set of antiphons is sung for feasts of the Blessed Virgin,

(i) Dum esset rex in accubitu suo, nardus mea dedit odorem suavitatis. *Song of Songs, 1:11*

While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour of sweetness.

(ii) Læva ejus sub capite meo, et dextera illius amplexabitur me. *2:6*

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me.

(iii) Nigra sum, sed formosa, filiæ Jerusalem: ideo dilexit me rex, et introduxit me in cubiculum suum. *1:4, 3*

I am black but beautiful, daughter of Jerusalem; therefore the King loved me and brought me into his chamber.

(iv) Jam hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit: surge amica mea, et veni. *2:11a, 13*

For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone: arise, my love, and come.

(v) Speciosa facta es et suavis in deliciis tuis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

Fair and sweet wast thou made in thy delights, O holy Mother of God.

The first four of these are drawn with slight adjustment from the first two books of the Song of Songs; the last is a general paraphrase, which makes direct application to the Blessed Virgin.

While this book has been understood as the love of God for his people, an additional meaning has been his love for the Blessed Virgin, and even the love of the people for her. The frequent occurrence of the Common of the Virgin gives this set of antiphons some prominence.

Other antiphons simply state something pertinent to the feast day, including, for example, *Stetit Angelus* for the feast of St. Michael, here drawn from the Apocalypse::

Stetit Angelus juxta aram templi, habens thuribulum aureum in manu sua. (8:3)	An Angel stood near the altar of the temple having a golden censer in his hand.
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This antiphon summarizes the first verse the contents of the offertory of the Mass for St. Michael:¹³

Stetit Angelus juxta aram temple, habens thuribulum aureum in manu sua, et data sunt ei incensa multa: et ascendit fumus aromatum in conspectu Dei, alleluia. (<i>Apoc. 8: 3,4</i>)	An angel stood by the altar of the temple, having a golden censer in his hand; and there was given to him much incense was given him in plenty, and the smoke of the perfumes ascended before God.
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Antiphons are drawn from the *vita* of a saint, for example, *Ingressa Agnes*.

Ingressa Agnes turpitudinis locum, Angelum Domini praeparatum invenit.	Agnes entered the place of shame, and found the Angel of the Lord ready.
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These are some of the kinds of antiphons and cycles; there are many other very beautiful ones among the eighty-seven antiphons to Psalm 109.

These few examples may show the remarkable variety in antiphons to a single psalm, albeit one of the most prominent psalms in the office, each antiphon providing a context that appropriates the psalm to the particular occasion. This has been described by Edward Nowacki as the ‘properization’ of the Divine Office in comparison with the properization of the Mass, as described by James McKinnon in his *Advent Project*, this development is placed by Nowacki at the end of the seventh century, about the same time as McKinnon’s Mass Propers.

I speculate that this making specific the frame of reference for a common text such as a psalm might have been a factor in the development of the Mysteries of the Rosary. The rosary was the ‘poor man’s psalter,’ having had one hundred fifty psalms in imitation of the Biblical

¹³ Cf. ‘Word-painting and formulaic chant,’ In *Cum angelis canere: Essays on sacred music and pastoral liturgy in honour of Richard J. Schuler*, ed. Robert A. Skeris (St. Paul, 1990), pp 113-144, reprinted in William Mahrt, *The musical shape of the liturgy* (Richmond, Va., 2012), pp 185–216.

Psalter; the mysteries serve a similar function to each decade of the rosary as the antiphons serve to frame a psalm by a particular context.

While the texts of the proper antiphons provide a wide and various range of contexts for the stable set of one hundred fifty psalms, it must be remembered that the normative form of the Divine Office is chanted; The music to which these antiphons are sung creates a variety and diversity of contexts of a greater magnitude that do the texts alone, differentiating each occurrence of a psalm and making each office remarkably memorable.

Each antiphon is sung in one of eight modes; while a mode can be seen as a scale, it implies much more—a pattern of final, reciting tone, and melodic figures elaborating upon final and reciting tone. The distinction between antiphon melodies can be seen particularly in the beginnings of melodies. For example, *Tecum principium*

The image shows the beginning of the antiphon 'Tecum principium' in two staves. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text: 'Tecum princi- pi- um in di- e virtutis tu-æ, in splendo ribus-'. The second staff contains the melody for the second line of text: 'sanctorum, ex utero ante lucife-rum genu- i te. e u o u a e'. The notation is in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is characterized by a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a prominent reciting tone on the word 'principi-um'.

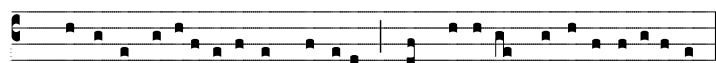
This begins with a figure characteristic of mode one, by which a number of antiphons begin, and elaborates this by centering on the reciting tone, then works its way down to the final, while *Stetit Angelus* (Example 2) has quite a contrasting beginning, also characteristic of a number of antiphons:¹⁴

The image shows the beginning of the antiphon 'Stetit Angelus' in two staves. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text: 'Stetit Angelus juxta aram templi, habens thuribulum'. The second staff contains the melody for the second line of text: 'aureum in manu su- a. e u o u a e'. The notation is in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is characterized by a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a prominent reciting tone on the word 'Stetit'.

Scholars have classified the melodies in about fifty types, to which some twelve hundred antiphons belong. It is this system of melody types that must have aided in the memorization of such a large repertory of antiphons. As an example of melody types, the antiphon for the

¹⁴ Cf. Charles M. Atkinson, 'The parapteres: nothi or not?' *The musical quarterly*, 68 (1982), pp 32–59.

Purification, *Lumen ad revelationem gentium* (Example 3), has the same melody type as *In pace in idipsum* (Example 4) for the Tenebrae of Holy Saturday:



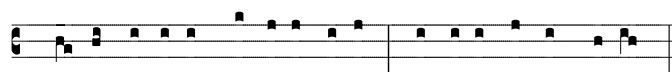
Lumen ad revela-ti-onem gentium, et glo-ri-am plebis tuae Isra-el.



In pa-ce in id- ip-sum, dormi- am et requi-es-cam. e u o u a e

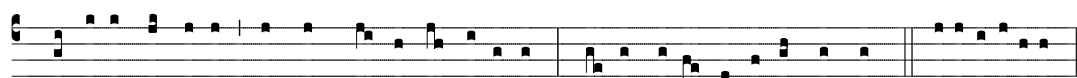
But there are significant differences: *Lumen* has twenty-three syllables, *In pace* has fifteen. The former has mainly one note per syllable, while the latter sets two notes to several syllables to accommodate the same sequence of pitches. The very beginnings of the two antiphons differ as well. *Lumen* begins with an accented syllable, which is set to a high note, while *In pace* begins with an unaccented syllable, which is set to a low note. There is an additional significance to the difference: chants which begin on high notes often set texts which represent something that comes from on high, which is certainly the case with ‘A light to enlighten the nations.’

The antiphon provides a distinctive melodic shape to its text, which is often a psalm verse, sometimes two. Since psalm verses have a characteristic poetic structure, *parallelismus membrorum*—each verse is constituted of two, sometimes three, complete and complimentary statements, and this gives rise to bipartite melodic shapes, notably of the psalm tones. In a psalm tone, the first half of the verse rises to a high point, and after a pause descends to a point of repose as in the psalm tone for Dixit Dominus:



Di-xit Dominus Domino me-o: * se-de a dextris me-is.

. Antiphons represent this same *parallelismus*, sometimes with a significant difference between halves: for instance, in the antiphon *Juravit Dominus*:

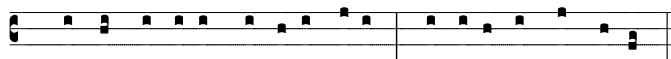


Juravit Dominus, et non poeni-te-bit e-um: Tu es sacerdos in aeternum. e u o u a e

the first half rises quickly to its peak, after which the second half descends through a lower set of pitches and rises back to the final. The first half states that the Lord has sworn, and the second half what he has sworn in his own words. The second half is set to clearly lower pitches, and this represents the gravity and dignity of the voice of the Lord. This is a convention that can be seen

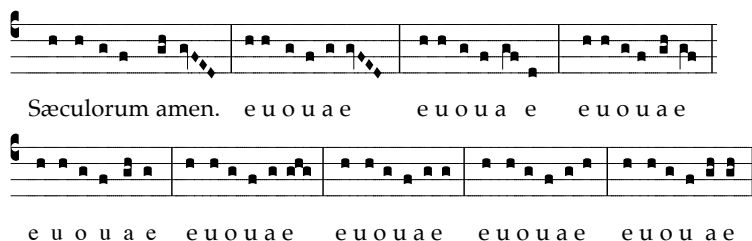
in the voice of Christ in the passions or in the narrative of the Wedding at Cana in the communion antiphon *Dicit Dominus implete hydrias aqua*.¹⁵

While the antiphon provides a distinctive melodic shape for its text, it also prescribes the melody to which the entire psalm is chanted, the psalm tone. For example, the psalm *Dixit Dominus* for *Juravit Dominus* is sung to a quite simple mode-eight psalm tone (as above), while it is sung to a somewhat different mode-four A* tone for *Stetit Angelus*:

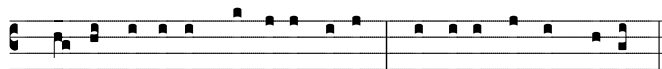


Di-xit Dominus Domino me-o: * se-de a dextris me-is.

Since the eight psalm tones (nine, including the *tonus peregrinus*) are easily remembered, the chant books do not show them with the antiphons. However, their endings vary more, to the extent that the chant books prescribe the psalm-tone endings, called *differentiae*. A psalm almost always ends with the doxology, which concludes “saeculorum amen.” The vowels of those syllables, *euouae*, are given with musical notation, indicating the ending of the psalm tone. Mode one has nine *differentiae*:



The psalm tones for modes 2, 5, and 6 have only one ending, mode seven has five, the others a few. I can attest that after having sung *Dixit Dominus* as the antiphon on Sundays for most of the year to the same psalm tone, when a saint’s day occurs which requires another difference, instead of *euouae 7c* (above) it is *euouae 7d*:



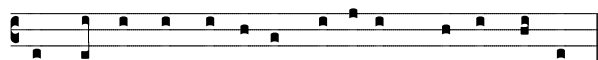
Di-xit Dominus Domino me-o: * se-de a dextris me-is.

The color of each verse of the psalm is affected, and it creates an elevated effect; this slight difference is thrilling.

¹⁵ Cf. William Mahrt, ‘Two narrative communions: *Dicit Dominus, implete hydrias aqua* and *Fili, quid fecisti nobis sic?*’ *Sacred Music*, 134, no. 3 (Fall 2007), pp 21–24.

Medieval theorists claim that the shape of the *differentia* is to provide for a smooth transition back to the repeat of the antiphon at the end of the psalm. This is probably true for most of the cases, since the antiphons generally begin around the final, and if the psalm tone ends on the final or a step below or above the beginning of the antiphon, it seems to be a smooth transition, something that could be a fortunate coincidence, since not all differentiae do form a smooth transition. An interesting example illustrates:

There are five antiphons for the Baptism of Christ that come from a Byzantine tradition, beginning with *Veterem hominem*:



Ve- te- rem ho-mi-nem re-novans, Sal-va-[] tor
 Te qui in Spi-ri- tu et ig- ne pu- ri- fi- cas
 Bap- ti- sta con- tre- mu it, et non au- det tan- ge- re
 Ca- put dra- co- nis— Sal- va- tor con- tri- [] vit
 A- qua com- bu- rit— pec- ca- tum [] ho- di- e,

All five antiphons use the same melody with slight adaptations; each begins the same. But the differentiae for them vary, as illustrated in the example, 7d, 7a, 7b, 7a, 7d in a chiasitic arrangement:



In this case, the *differentiae* provide a beautiful variation between the five psalms, whose antiphon melodies do not. I estimate that in many cases, the choice of *differentia* is as much to do with providing a refreshing variety as it is to create a smooth transition.

It is important to be realized that it is the antiphon that determines the mode of the chanting of the psalm. In fact, most psalm-tone differences do not end upon the final of the mode; this is simply because these endings are not the conclusion of the psalm, rather the conclusion, ending with its proper final, comes with the repeat of the antiphon at the end of the psalm.

The singing of one hundred fifty psalms in a week requires a certain efficiency; the psalm tones cannot be too elaborate or they would extend the liturgy too much. Yet, to these simple tones, the antiphons provide a grateful melodic complement; their length is also economical, just enough for a refreshing refrain before continuing with the next psalm. By their variation in text and melody and therefore of the psalm tone and differentia, a musical variation supports the ‘properization’ of the Divine Office. It gives beautiful and effective projection of the entire history of salvation through the course of the year, from the Annunciation through Christmas, the

public ministry of Christ, his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, to Pentecost and the beginnings of the Church. The Assumption of Mary completes the cycle, and the lives of the saints fill in the whole year's events with significant witness. Thus the use of Psalm 109 through the year, reflected through eight modes and eighty-seven antiphons, and in relation to the other psalms of the office and their varying antiphons, gives a variety that makes it a significant inclusion, a suitable component of a beautiful office.