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# NPM CANTOR NEWSLETTER

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**Lent: Ash Wednesday, March 6  
through Wednesday of Holy Week, April 17**

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**Lent summons us, and enables us, to come back to the Lord  
WHOLEHEARTEDLY and in every aspect of our life.**

-Pope Francis' Message for Lent

Dear Members of the NPM Cantor Section,

*During Lent, we are asked:*

*to seek the Lord in prayer and reading Scripture,  
to serve by giving alms, and  
to sacrifice through fasting.*

Recently, as I perused a myriad of Lenten publications given out by my parish, I stumbled upon a prayer booklet, *Five Minutes with the Word: Lent 2010*. Many of you probably have taken one of these free publications and perhaps you've even prayed with them. I'd like to share with you a little from this book.

The author offers a series of prayer suggestions based on scripture, such as **choosing a time and a place for prayer**: "*Make it a specific time dedicated only to prayer – a time when you are alert and clear.*" *Psalm 92:2-3*.

Another interesting and excellent suggestion is to **write in your journal**. When preparing for the Sunday liturgy, taking time to answer the following questions about the psalm may help it come to life:

- What has God said to you?
- What do you want to carry into the day to keep your mind fixed on Jesus?
- What petitions will you keep close to your heart?
- What practical action will you take in response to what God has shown you?

In this edition of the Newsletter, we are including for the first time another excellent tool to help you prepare for Mass: the **Psalmist Preparation reflections from *Living Liturgy***. Special thanks to our Newsletter editor, Susan Groeschel Lovelette, for securing the permission to share these reflections with you!

God Bless,

Tammy Schnittgrund  
Chair, NPM Cantor Steering Committee



## Spread the Word about NPM’s Silent Auction 2019!

The Silent Auction at the National Convention offers a fun and exciting experience for donors and bidders alike, with all proceeds going to NPM’s operating fund.

### Can you help?

As you give alms this Lent, please prayerfully consider supporting NPM by donating, bidding, and spreading the word to help make this year’s Silent Auction the best ever!

**What can you donate?** - anything you create or would like to purchase! Consider pooling resources with your colleagues to donate unique treasures. Here are some items that have had bidders trolling, positioning, and cajoling as they strategized how best to win the bid:

- commissions by well-known composers
- hand-written manuscripts
- artwork, paintings, photographs, glasswork
- quilts, crocheted and embroidered items

- gift cards to national chain restaurants and hotels,
- time share or vacation options

- handmade crafts
- gift baskets of all kinds
- gift certificates for a service

### How can you donate?

1. Write a brief description of the item, including an approximate value; 2) send it by email (with “NPM” in the subject line) to Anne Ketzer, Silent Auction Chairperson, [aketzer@aol.com](mailto:aketzer@aol.com); and 3) await her reply.

### Your donation to NPM benefits you, too!

- It is fully tax-deductible.
- It will be displayed beautifully with your name (or anonymously, if preferred).
- Your business cards and/or brochures may be included to promote your business!
- It will be seen by thousands of attendees and exhibitors!

### Whether or not you donate, please plan ahead to bid!

**Support NPM** by purchasing gifts for family, friends, colleagues, babysitters, or something for the one watching your house while you’re at the convention. **Buy gifts for your music ministers** to show gratitude for their sacrificial service to the parish. Is there a special celebration coming up in your family or parish? **Commission a new song** (for cantor, choir, congregation or an instrumental) to celebrate a First Eucharist, a Marriage, an Ordination, an anniversary, a retirement!

How fitting it would be to commission a new musical work written precisely for a Church opening, closing or consolidation. You will rejoice with the psalmist!

### Sing to the Lord a new song!

Ps 96:1



Have a comment about the Newsletter?

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

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.

## Readings for Ash Wednesday and Sundays during Lent March 6 through Palm Sunday on April 14 (Year C)

### Psalmist Preparation Reflections - A Gift from Liturgical Press

In this and the next three issues of the NPM Cantor Newsletter, we are pleased to include Psalmist Preparation reflections with the links to the readings. Liturgical Press has graciously permitted us to share these texts from *Living Liturgy for Music Ministers™ Year C • 2019*, by **Brian Schmisek, Katy Beedle Rice and Diana Macalintal**. This excellent resource is “intended to assist music ministers in their preparation for the liturgy” and includes:

- the readings and responsorial psalms for every Sunday of the liturgical year, as well as for certain solemnities and Ash Wednesday;
- reflections on the gospel readings;
- brief commentaries connecting the responsorial psalm to the readings;
- **reflections to assist psalmists with preparing for proclamation of the psalms;** and
- prayers provided for musicians to use with their own spiritual preparation for their ministry.

May these reflections inspire your preparation for ministry and your proclamation of the psalms!

Each Psalmist Preparation text included below is from *Living Liturgy for Music Ministers, Year C 2019*. Copyright 2018 by Order of Saint Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Used with permission.

### March 6, 2018 - Ash Wednesday - Year C

### Psalm 51

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 12-14, 14 and 17 with the refrain from verse 3a:

**Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

#### *Psalmist Preparation*

In the nineteenth century, Polish Rabbi Simcha Bunim taught that everyone should carry two notes, one in each pocket—the first saying, “I am but dust and ashes,” and the second, “For my sake was the world created.” Today we come to receive the ashes on our foreheads symbolizing our own sin and mortality, but we also look ahead to the baptismal font of Easter and the empty tomb that conquered death. As you prepare to lead the assembly in this psalm of repentance, how do you balance these two truths of our sin and God’s mercy?

### March 10, 2019 - the First Sunday of Lent - Year C

### Psalm 91

Psalm 91: 1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, with the refrain from cf. 15b:

**Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

#### *Psalmist Preparation*

Throughout each of our lives there will be desert experiences where we undergo isolation and distress. In those times, the psalmist tells us, God is with us. How have you experienced God in times of distress?

**March 17, 2019 - the Second Sunday of Lent - Year C****Psalm 27**

Psalm 27: 1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14, with the refrain from verse 1a:

**The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

*Psalmist Preparation*

Today's psalm is one of trust and of desire. We know God and yet we yearn to know God more fully. We live in God's kingdom, and yet we long for the complete fulfillment of that kingdom. How do you experience the deep desire to see God's face in your own life?

**Preparing for Liturgies Celebrating the Scrutinies**

For the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of Lent, you will find below the readings from Year C, as well as the readings from Year A, which are the alternate readings to be used during liturgies celebrating the Scrutinies. Be sure to prepare the psalm you will proclaim.

“The scrutinies should take place within the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies,” which are celebrated on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent; the readings with their chants are those given for those Sundays in the Lectionary for Mass, Year A. In every case the ritual Masses “Christian Initiation: The Scrutinies” are celebrated and in this sequence: for the first scrutiny the Mass with the gospel of the Samaritan woman; for the second, the Mass with the gospel of the man born blind; for the third, the Mass with the gospel of Lazarus.”

*(Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (146))*

**March 24, 2019 - the Third Sunday of Lent - Year C****Psalm 103**

Psalm 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11, with the refrain from verse 8a:

**The Lord is kind and merciful.**

*Psalmist Preparation*

In the readings for this Third Sunday of Lent it is your role to proclaim the good news of God's never-ending mercy and compassion. How have you experienced this mercy in your own life?

**March 24, 2019 - the Third Sunday of Lent - Year A - 1st Scrutiny****Psalm 95**

Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9, with the refrain from verse 8:

**If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

*Psalmist Preparation*

Psalm 95 is quite a prophetic challenge. The first two strophes are easy to sing as you call the community to praise and worship God. The third strophe, however, is not so easy. How do you challenge the community about its fidelity to God? You can do this with integrity only if you have first applied the psalm's message to yourself. When do you harden your heart against God? Who challenges you to reopen your heart?

**March 31, 2019 - the Fourth Sunday of Lent - Year C****Psalm 34**

Psalm 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, with the refrain from verse 9a:

**Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.***Psalmist Preparation*

In Psalm 34 we hear the line, “Glorify the Lord with me, and let us together extol his name.” Reflect on your ministry of leading the people of God in prayer. How do you invite the assembly to pray with you?

**March 31, 2019 - the Fourth Sunday of Lent - Year A - 2nd Scrutiny****Psalm 23**

Psalm 23: 1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6, with the refrain from verse 1:

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.***Psalmist Preparation*

How might your singing of Psalm 23 reveal that you have encountered and recognized Jesus as the Shepherd who lights your way along the path of faith and fidelity? How might your face shine with his Light? What within you and around you sometimes competes with this Light, and how does Jesus lead you out of this darkness?

**April 7, 2019 - the Fifth Sunday of Lent - Year C****Psalm 126**

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

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

Today’s psalm is a powerful message of hope in despair. Consider a person in your life who needs this message. Proclaim this psalm as if you were singing directly to this person.

**April 7, 2019 - the Fifth Sunday of Lent - Year A - 3rd Scrutiny****Psalm 130**

Psalm 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, with the refrain from verse 7:

**With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.***Psalmist Preparation*

As I practice singing this responsorial psalm, I hear God asking me to trust in the promise of the resurrection. I hear Jesus asking me to believe that he is “the resurrection and the life” (gospel).

What strengthens my belief in Christ as the resurrection and the life is...

My ministry as psalmist helps the assembly grow in belief when I...

**April 14, 2019 - Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion - Year C****Psalm 22**

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24 with the refrain from verse 2a:

**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?***Psalmist Preparation*

Despair and hope live side by side in Psalm 22. The first verses bespeak the most terrible suffering. But the last verses give glory to God who does not “stay far off” when trouble comes (NABRE). To be a disciple, one must follow Jesus to Calvary. Are you ready?

[To meditate upon The Seven Penitential Psalms and the Songs of the Suffering Servant, click here to hear the recordings!](#)

## Using the USCCB's Calendar for Lent

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has placed a wonderful calendar on its [page about Lent](#). Click open the door of any day, and you will find a



specific invitation to Read, Reflect, Pray and Act. It is a beautiful way to keep and deepen your focus on the prayer, fasting and almsgiving to which we are called. **Below is a sample from the Calendar.** Whether used daily or occasionally, we pray this handy resource will help you maintain your Lenten journey while practicing for Easter!

### First Sunday of Lent

#### READ

Today's [Gospel](#) tells the story of Jesus's journey into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

#### REFLECT

"Every day, but particularly in Lent, Christians must face a struggle, like the one that Christ underwent in the desert of Judea, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil, and then in Gethsemane, when he rejected the most severe temptation, accepting the Father's will to the very end.

It is a spiritual battle waged against sin and finally, against Satan. It is a struggle that involves the whole of the person and demands attentive and constant watchfulness." (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, March 1, 2006)

#### PRAY

Add this prayer from Catholic Relief Services to your daily prayer time today, asking Jesus to [meet you in the desert](#)

#### ACT

With Jesus's response of "One does not live on bread alone" in mind, think of what ways you can feed your spiritual life this Lent. Decide to do something during this Lenten season that will nurture your relationship with God. Consider reading one of the Psalms on Saturdays, challenge yourself to fast from speaking any negative or critical word on Fridays, or do an act of generosity on Mondays.

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## NPM Cues for Cantors! Tips and Tools for Cantor Ministry

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

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### 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 sixth 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 it. I have written the following to be helpful to you whether or not you have the book in hand.

**Taste and see that God is Good!**

## My God, My God, Why Have You Abandoned Me?

### Singing Psalm 22

It is easy to sing a psalm of praise and thanksgiving, not so easy to sing a lament. As cantors, every year on Passion Sunday we sing verses from perhaps the best-known and most painfully wrought lament: Ps 22. What do we need to know about its content and structure, and its role in the Liturgy of the Word on Passion Sunday to proclaim the meaning of its words?

### Content and Structure of a Lament

Chapter 8 of *Becoming the Psalms* describes the content and structure of a psalm of lament, using Ps 13 as a typical example:

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
 How long will you hide your face from me?  
 How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
 and have sorrow in my heart all day long?  
 How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?



Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!  
 Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,  
 and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";  
 My foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love,  
 my heart shall rejoice in your salvation  
 I will sing to the LORD,  
 because he has dealt bountifully with me.  
 (New Standard Revised Version: "NRSV" trans.)



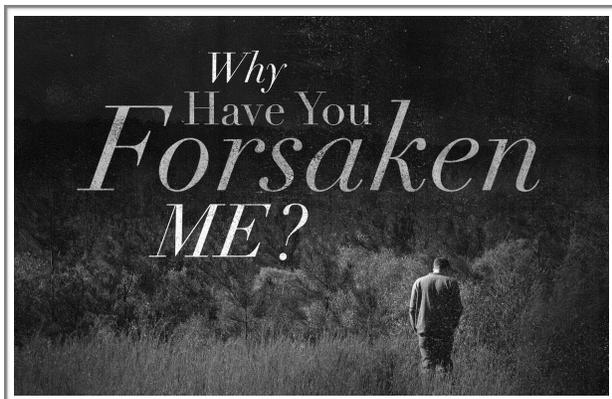
The lament begins with a cry to God for help. The person praying faces grave danger from an enemy, or illness, or disaster. No specific names or details are given to identify the source of the suffering. But the emotional turmoil is communicated with exquisite imagery: the pain deep "in my soul," the sorrow carried in the "heart all day long," the fear of slipping into "the sleep of death." As in a number of psalms of lament, the pain is augmented by the sense of God's silence and absence: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" Yet in the end the psalmist proclaims trust in God who will grant salvation. The cry of pain becomes a song of rejoicing.

The literary structure of the lament communicates a transformation within the heart of the one praying, a transformation that takes place through the very praying of the psalm. The voicing of the pain and the crying out for help, even when God seems absent, opens the heart and mind of the pray-er to a changed understanding of his/her situation. God is not absent, but present in the suffering. The suffering does not presage the end of life, but the beginning of salvation. For those who trust in God, lament always becomes joy.

### The Content and Structure of Ps 22

Whereas Ps 13 is short and the moment of movement from lament to trust is clearly delineated, Ps 22 is much longer and alternates between lament and trust. (The text of Ps 22 is too long to include in this brief article; please refer to whatever translation you have at hand. The references here are from the NRSV.)

In verses 1-2, God is totally absent, the pray-er's sense of having been abandoned deep and despairing. In verses 3-5, the psalmist remembers how his/her ancestors trusted in God and were saved. The psalmist returns to lament in vv. 6-8 with graphic images of how deep the



suffering is: I am not human, but a worm, scorned and despised by the people. Vv. 9-11 proclaim the tender closeness of God who “took me from the womb” and “kept me safe on my mother’s breast.” In vv. 12-18 the psalmist is no longer surrounded by God’s care, but by wild bulls, roaring lions, and mad dogs. Worst of all, it is fellow human beings who perpetrate this evildoing, gloating as they do. All the psalmist can do in vv.19-21 is beg God for aid.

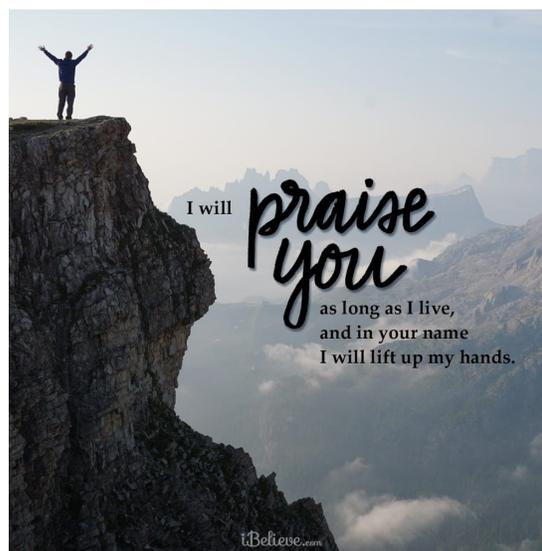
Vv. 22-31 are a prolonged hymn of praise to the God who saves.

This praise is proclaimed to an ever-widening circle:

brothers and sisters,  
all the descendants of Israel,  
all who seek God,  
all the earth  
and all nations,

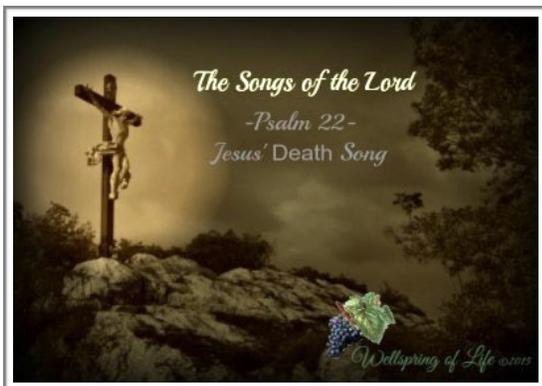
those from the past who have died  
and those of the future not yet born.

To every corner of creation and every reach of history the psalmist cries  
“[God] has done it.”



## Singing Ps 22 on Passion Sunday

We sing only a few verses of Ps 22 on Passion Sunday, but these verses capture the rhythm between lament and praise expressed in the entire psalm. These verses, and the whole psalm, parallel the rhythm of Christ's entire life. As we hear proclaimed in the second reading for this day, Christ Jesus emptied himself of the trappings of divinity in order to take on the fullness of being human, even to the point of death. Because of his self-giving, God has exalted him above all things in heaven and on earth (Phil 2:6-11). His death on the cross became his—and our—resurrection.



In the proclamation of the Passion on this day,  
 Jesus' arms, stretched wide on the cross,  
 embrace the presence of God.  
 Jesus' death on the cross  
 is not the absence of the Father,  
 but the presence of the Father fully embracing him  
 just as he fully embraces us with his forgiveness.  
 The cross is not Jesus' destruction,  
 but his glorification.

We sing in these verses, then, not only the suffering of Christ but also his triumph.

We sing the paschal mystery of death and resurrection.

We sing to every corner of creation and every reach of history  
 that death is never the end of our story, life is.

That is God's promise and God will do it!

## For Reflection

- Read and pray the entirety of Ps 22. How is this psalm the prayer of Christ? How is it your prayer?
- How in your own life has God led you through great suffering to rejoicing in his salvation?
- How can you sing the selected verses of Ps 22 on Passion Sunday so that the assembly hears the movement from suffering and lament to trust in the God who saves?

God bless your proclamation of the psalms throughout the season of Lent!

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.

