

CATECHESIS #14

June 9, 2019

Why do we have responses when the Psalms are read or sung?

The Psalm that follows the First Reading, called the Responsorial Psalm, is our opportunity to respond to the Word of God we just heard. The Psalms, a collection of 150 ancient Jewish songs, prayers, poems and hymns were sung by the Jews, with one person leading a group in a call-and-response or with two groups of people responding to each other. This practice was taken up by the early Church and continues today when we repeat the response during the Responsorial Psalm.

The Psalms are the official prayer of the Church. For over 3000 years, the psalms have been prayed by the people of God. Even Jesus and the Apostles would have learned and prayed the psalms from childhood. There are different types of psalms: some tell stories, some are songs of praise and others are prayers of repentance. At times we do not know how to pray, how to express what is deep in our heart in words. In the psalms, there are always words for whatever we may be experiencing. When praying the Psalms, we are invited to make the words our own. St. Augustine says of the Psalms that "everything which is written here is a reflection of us."

The Psalms mirror human emotions from sorrow, lament and depression to joy, praise and celebration. More importantly, they reveal God's heart for us. They show the deep love which exists between God and His people. They mention God's mercy more than one hundred times. God uses song to teach His children to trust him and to abandon themselves to him in prayer. He wants us to know He is the God of mercy, ever ready to forgive, console, and encourage his children. Let us open our hearts both to make these words our own and to receive what God is saying to us in the Psalms.

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/bible/introduction-to-the-old-testament/psalms>

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/psalms>