

# Introduction to the singing of Prayer Tones

Prayer Tones are a form of “sung speech.” They are a set of pitch patterns designed to intensify the public proclamation of an important text. The important text in this case, is the celebrant’s prayer offered in the name of the entire worshipping community. As a form of “sung speech,” proper phrasing, word rhythm and accentuation constitute the essential foundation for the effective use of these Prayer Tones.

The singing style to be used for these Prayer Tones is that of good solemn public proclamation. For that reason, one should move as if “leaning” toward the next accent in the sentence. Each accent will then be a “springboard” leading the voice toward the next accent. The last accent of a phrase, or a sentence, should be treated as a point of “arrival.” For this reason, the final accent – and all the syllables that might follow – should be sung more softly and slowly than the rest of the phrase that has preceded it. In general, try to increase the energy and tempo at the beginning of each new phrase and let it relax and slow down as one approaches the final accent of each phrase. The relaxation and slowing down will be greater at the **Final Cadence form** that ends the body of the prayer and at the **Final Doxology Cadence** that concludes the entire prayer text.

1. The Opening Prayer for the 1st Sunday of Advent is given as a first example:

1 /

Let us pray. ‡

/ (–)

All-powerful God, ∞

2 1 /

increase our strength of will for doing good \*

1 /

that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming †

2 1 /

and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, •

2 1 /

where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, \*

/ –

one God, for ever and ever. Δ Amen.

Sing the melodic patterns indicated by the special signs for this Opening Prayer in the following manner:

### For the Body of the Prayer

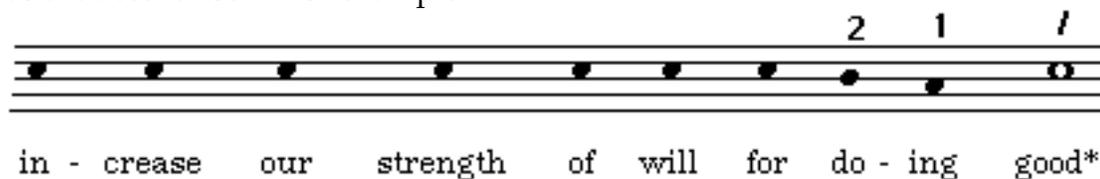
1) Use the **Initial Flex** ( ‡ ) for the first phrase of the Opening Prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number "1" ) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:



2) Use the **Direct Address Accent** ( ∞ ) to mark off an opening clause of direct address (e.g., "All-powerful God"). Since the clause used in the example ends with an *oxytone* (a one-syllable accented word), both the accented black note and the lengthened whole note that follows it, are sung to that one-syllable word. For example:



3) Use the **Mediant Cadence form** ( \* ) to mark off a principle phrase, or sense unit, of the body of the prayer. It will often have a colon ( : ), a semicolon ( ; ), or at least a comma ( , ) to indicate it. This mediant cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the phrase. Any extra syllables after the final accent of this phrase are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:



4) Use the **Intermediate Flex** ( † ) to mark off any subordinate clause(s) that occur after the Mediant Cadence of the prayer. This flex has one note of

preparation (indicated by the black note) before the final word accent. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch that is used for the accented syllable. For example:

that Christ may find an eager welcome at his com - ing

The musical notation shows a single staff with a series of notes. Above the staff, the numbers '1' and '1' are placed above the notes corresponding to 'com' and 'ing', indicating accents. The notes for 'com' and 'ing' are marked with a '1' above them, and the notes for 'ing' are marked with a '1' above them.

5) Use the **Final Cadence form** ( • ) to conclude the body of the prayer text. The body of the prayer text will always have a period at its conclusion. This Final Cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the text. Any extra syllables after the final accent are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

and call us to his side in the king - dom of heav - en,\*

The musical notation shows a single staff with a series of notes. Above the staff, the numbers '2', '1', and '1' are placed above the notes corresponding to 'heav', 'en', and the final accent, indicating preparation and accents. The notes for 'heav' and 'en' are marked with a '2' above them, and the notes for 'en' and the final accent are marked with a '1' above them.

### For the Doxology of a Prayer

4) Use the **Mediant Cadence** ( \* ) for the phrase that ends the invocation of the Trinity (i.e.: "... and the Ho-ly Spír-it"). This flex has two notes of preparation and is identical to the **Mediant Cadence form** as given above in example #2).

For example:

where he lives and reigns with you and the Ho - ly Spir - it,\*

The musical notation shows a single staff with a series of notes. Above the staff, the numbers '2', '1', and '1' are placed above the notes corresponding to 'Spir', 'it', and the final accent, indicating preparation and accents. The notes for 'Spir' and 'it' are marked with a '2' above them, and the notes for 'it' and the final accent are marked with a '1' above them.

5) Use the **Final Doxology Cadence** ( Δ ) for the final phrase of the doxology. If the last accent of this phrase is an *oxytone* (e.g.: "God"), the final two notes (indicated by whole notes) are sung over that single syllable. For example:

one God, for ever and ev - er.Δ

The musical notation shows a single staff with a series of notes. Above the staff, a '1' is placed above the note corresponding to 'God', indicating an accent. The final two notes are whole notes, indicating they are sung over the final syllable.

2. The Communion Prayer for the 1st Sunday of Advent is given as a second example:

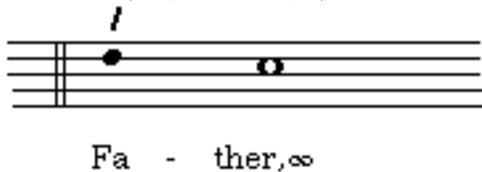
1 /  
 Let us pray. ‡  
 /  
 Father, ∞  
 1 /  
 may our communion ‡  
 2 1 /  
 teach us to love heaven. \*  
 1 /  
 May its promise and hope †  
 2 1 /  
 guide our way on earth. •  
 1 /  
 We ask this through Christ our Lord. ‡

### For the Body of the Prayer

1) Use the **Initial Flex** ( ‡ ) for the first phrase of the Opening Prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number "1" ) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:



2) Use the **Direct Address Accent** ( ∞ ) to mark off an opening clause of direct address (i.e., "Father,"). For example:



3) Use the **Initial Flex** ( ‡ ) to mark off a subordinate clause near the beginning of the prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number "1" ) before the final word accent of the phrase. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch used for the accented syllable. For example:

may our com-mun-ion†

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a melody of five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, and B4. Above the notes, a '1' is placed over the B4 note, and a slanted bar line is placed over the C5 note. The text 'may our com-mun-ion†' is written below the staff.

4) Use the **Mediant Cadence form** ( \* ) to mark off a principle phrase, or sense unit, of the body of the prayer. It will often have a colon ( : ), a semicolon ( ; ), or even a period ( . ) to indicate it. This mediant cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the phrase. since the word “love” is a strong single-syllable word, both of the preparation notes are used for it. Any extra syllables after the final accent of this phrase are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

teach us to love heav-en.\*

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a melody of seven notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, and G4. Above the notes, a '2' is placed over the B4 note, a '1' is placed over the C5 note, and a slanted bar line is placed over the A4 note. The text 'teach us to love heav-en.\*' is written below the staff.

5) Use the **Intermediate Flex** ( † ) to mark off any subordinate clause(s) that occur after the Mediant Cadence of the prayer. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number “1” ) before the final word accent. Any extra syllables that occur after that accent are sung to the same pitch that is used for the accented syllable. For example:

May its promise and hope†

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a melody of five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, and B4. Above the notes, a '1' is placed over the B4 note, and a slanted bar line is placed over the C5 note. The text 'May its promise and hope†' is written below the staff.

6) Use the **Final Cadence form** ( • ) to conclude the body of the prayer text. The body of the prayer text will always have a period at its conclusion. This Final Cadence has two notes of preparation (indicated by the two numbers) before the final accent of the text. Any extra syllables after the final accent are sung to the same pitch as the accent itself. For example:

guide our way on earth.●

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a melody of five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, and B4. Above the notes, a '2' is placed over the B4 note, a '1' is placed over the C5 note, and a slanted bar line is placed over the B4 note. The text 'guide our way on earth.●' is written below the staff.

### For the Short Doxology

Use the **Initial Flex** ( ‡ ) for the concluding phrase of the Short Doxology. This flex has one note of preparation (indicated by the number "1" ) before the final word accent of the phrase. For example:



The musical notation shows a single staff with a treble clef. It contains eight notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on C5, a quarter note on B4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on G4, and a half note on F4. Above the staff, a "1" is placed above the G4 note, and a "/" is placed above the F4 note. Below the staff, the text "We ask this through Christ our Lord.‡" is written.

*Fr. Columba Kelly, OSB*