

A note on physical posture

The Divine Office is a tradition in the pre-modern sense. This means that while there is no single right way to say it, there is a corpus of custom which a decent regard for the holy liturgy obliges one to respect. Incorporate these postures as you will.

Following Vatican II the Church requests that we make:

- A little sign of the cross on the lips at the opening of the Office of Readings,
- A regular sign of the cross at the opening of the other hours, and
- A regular sign of the cross at the opening of the Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis.

The Ceremonial of Bishops invites us to bow our heads when:

- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned together,
 - “Jesus” is said,
 - “Mary” is said, and
 - the saint of the day is mentioned.
- * n.b., Though not mandated in the Ceremonial, it is the custom to make a head bow when the pope and local bishop are mentioned.

Beyond these points, we make note of these general customs:

- The prayers ought to be said facing east,
- One stands from the opening verses until the end of the first line of the first psalm,
- Unless one is acting as cantor or hebdomadarian, one sits for the psalms,
- Everyone stands from the short reading until the conclusion. The possible exception are the Preces, which in former times was said kneeling,
- One might make of the sign of the cross at the closing blessing at Lauds, Vespers, and Compline,
- At the Marian anthem at Compline one stands on Solemnities and Feasts, including Sundays, and kneels at all other times.

Concerning roles:

- The cantor is the leader. He intones the opening verses until the first stanza of the hymn inclusive, the short reading, the Gospel canticle, he sings the introduction at the Preces, the Pater, Collect, and Dismissal,
- The hebdomadarian “rides shot gun” at the Office; he is the assistant to the cantor. He leads the antiphons and the first line of each psalm, the Responsories, and the Preces themselves (but not their Introduction nor the Pater),