

Children's Chant

for the

Third Millennium



*A resource for Catholic schools and
parishes ~ especially for teachers and
children at Key Stage 2*

Richard Scott

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Please feel free to reproduce the contents of this resource.

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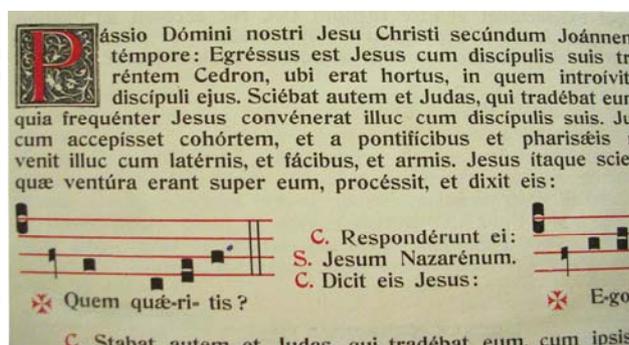
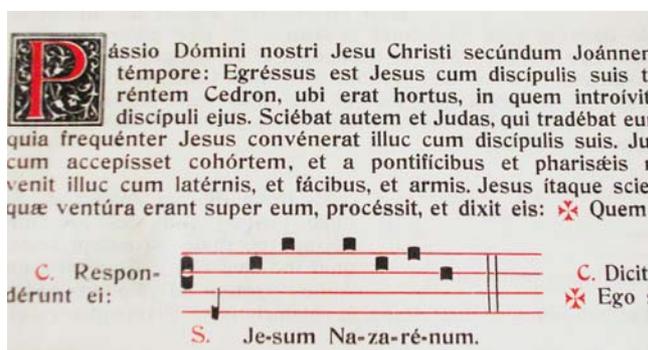
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Picture 1: Chants for the Singing of the Passion on Good Friday

Pictures showing the opening of the singing of the Passion on Good Friday:

- (1) from the Book for the narrator- "Chronista" - (above);
- (2) from the Book for Jesus - "Christus" (below right);
- (3) from the Book for the other parts (crowd etc) - "Synagoga" (below left).



FOREWORD

Welcome to this introduction to Plainchant - also called 'plainsong' or 'Gregorian chant'. This resource is especially designed for Catholic Primary School teachers and pupils at Key Stage Two but will hopefully prove useful to parish musicians and choirs as well!

The course has been conceived as a very basic introduction or 'taster' to plainchant. It is designed to be accessible to teachers whether or not they have an experience of the chant of the Church. I hope that it will awaken a desire to find out more.

This resource is the fruit of a life long passion for the music of the Church - and also the experience of singing in church and leading church choirs. In particular I have drawn on my own work in Catholic primary schools introducing children to plainchant and helping them to sing it in church for the liturgy.

This has been, for me, a labour of love. I have been amazed at the receptivity of young children to plainchant. I am also very realistic about the difficulties of introducing plainchant to children and teachers. We are now surrounded by a celebrity pop culture, and many of us have never heard plainchant sung in all its beauty. In many parishes this has not happened for at least two generations, if it ever was sung well before. As a result the chant of the Church can seem alien. However, as I can demonstrate in this resource, connections can be made between popular musical culture and chant. The examples that I use to lead both children and teachers on from this culture to the treasures of the Church's chant may not be to everyone's taste; they may not stand up to scholarly criticism (I am not a professional musician); yet they have proved useful and they have worked for me and my singers in school and church, and, above all, they have proved to be fun!

“Children’s Chant for the Third Millennium” consists of five simple lessons - each of 20-30 minutes duration (with extra time needed for follow up activities if so desired) - as well as suggestions for taking your study of plainchant further. The aim is to help teachers and pupils discover the chant of the Church and to grow in appreciation for it, together with a little singing. The aim is not to learn to sing proper pieces of chant without fault; you do not need to be especially musical to follow this resource, nor do you need to be able to read music. It is hoped that a subsequent resource will focus more on how to sing the chant and on plainchant musical notation.

Most children love to sing; they do not approach different types of music with pre-conceived prejudices. For us as adults this sometimes sadly prevents us from being open to new types of music. This said there are great difficulties today in encouraging *boys* to sing. Peer pressure, image, and other interests all militate against boys making full use of their God given unbroken voices. I have found that a bias towards stimulating interest in boys for choral music is very necessary today in our schools. I make no apologies, therefore, for the way in which I concentrate (particularly in lesson 3) on boys voices - not only from a historical point of view but as a way of awakening interest today, to help boys see that it can be ‘cool’ to sing.

The rationale for this resource is the teaching of the Catholic Church on liturgical music. It often surprises Catholics to find out what this teaching really entails. This is not the place for a full discussion of such matters. Suffice to say that the Church does not regard all types of music as equally acceptable or valuable for use in the liturgy. The Church teaches that plainchant “should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”¹ She teaches that the “treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care” and that choirs “must be assiduously developed.”² Plainchant is therefore fundamental to the way that we, as Catholics, worship God with our voices. This has been the

¹ VATICAN II *Sacrosanctum Concilium* December, 1963 in A. Flannery (ed.) Vatican Council II – The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, new revised edition (1992), p.32.

² Ibid. p.32

constant teaching of the Church, renewed and re-emphasised at the Second Vatican Council and ever since.

This same Council also emphasised, once again, the importance of the Latin language in the life of the Church. Some decades ago it was, of course, possible to walk into Mass in any Latin rite Catholic Church in the world and to hear the same words in the same language: Latin. This universality has now been largely forgotten, yet it is desirable to recapture its spirit (a move towards this is made in the fun introduction to Latin in Lesson Three). There are few things more moving for Catholics who know how to sing just a little in Latin than to be present at an international gathering of Catholics such as a World Youth Day Mass or a Mass in St Peter's Square in Rome where a simple Latin chant is sung – the sense of being in communion with Christians all over the world is very great in such a context. There is another aspect to the use of the Latin language: its words and phrases, unlike modern English, are relatively stable; they are subject to few changes over the centuries and over the world. This can only help to give those who have some little knowledge of the language in the Church a greater sense of connection to history and to the Church in every time and place.

But this introduction to chant is not a language lesson. It is an experience in religious music making for children.

My hope and my prayer is that, as a resource it will prove to be of some help in fulfilling the Church's vision in our own day.

Richard Scott

Feast of Pope St Pius X,
21st August, 2010

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Each lesson includes:

- ~ teachers notes - for class input;
- ~ activities for the children;
- ~ references to the relevant tracks on the accompanying C.D.;
- ~ (sometimes) photocopiable materials - lyrics, pictures for enlarging and projecting.

The appendix includes two pieces that can be sung in church at Easter and at Corpus Christi (or at the time of Holy Communion at any Mass). Unfortunately there are not accompanying C.D. tracks for these chants.

This booklet is designed so that you may either follow the 5 or 6 lessons in order OR simply dip in to use material as you may think it is relevant.

A Note on Musical Pitch

The pitch of most of the chants sung on the accompanying C.D. hovers around or below the B flat below middle C. This may be a technical point but it is highly relevant:

The C.D. chants (for the most part) are sung by *men* - this means the children will need to sing an octave higher when joining in, at their natural high pitch.

This pitch may be considered a little high for children who are used to little singing apart from humming along to pop tunes. Often, nowadays, children's songs are set too low. Children should easily be able to manage the pitch proposed - however their voices may need a little stretching.

LESSON ONE - INTRODUCTION

Fan-dabydozy!

What do we think of when we hear the word ‘chant’?

We chant as part of a group, in enthusiasm and approval, and, at times, disapproval.

E.g. ‘Hip, hip, hooray!’, ‘Come on you Blues!’, ‘Loo-oo-ser!’

Football chants are familiar to us. Coventry City has a very simple one: “Sky Blue Army”;

“o way, o way, o way, o way, o way, o-o way” is used at football matches all over England [*C.D. Track 1*]³

Now compare football chants like these to simple pieces of plainchant – chants that have been used by the Church for over 1,000 years: “Amen” and the simple Easter “Alleluia” [*C.D. Track 2*].

The Church and football chants have these things in common:

- ~ They are sung all together by a large group of people who are really enthusiastic and committed (fans – fans of a football team and fans of God’s team, the Church);
- ~ The words and music have their own natural rhythm – they don’t need a beat;
- ~ The music comes out of/is written *for* the words – the words are not set to music that already exists.

³ The famous Catholic composer Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934) was a fan of Wolverhampton Wanderers. He would sometimes cycle 50 miles from his home in Malvern to Wolverhampton and back again. He composed a chant for his team.

Monks Making Money

In recent years plainchant CDs and music downloads have become increasingly popular – thanks to recordings made by monks and nuns. Plainchant is great chill out music, music to help us unwind in the bath; or background music for meditation or to set a prayerful mood at church.

But plainchant is much more than this. It's there for us to sing, not just to listen to. We need to be swept up by it, like football fans at the stadium.

The question is: how do we sing it?

Karaoke

Many of us love the song 'Angels' by Robbie Williams [**Track 3**]. It's become a classic. Many of us can sing along when we hear it on the radio for the umpteenth time. Our style of singing is 'karaoke' - we imitate a pop artist, we do a solo, we slur the notes together & maybe we put on an American accent, just for effect: this is exactly how we do NOT sing plainchant.

Roman Rap

If you are new to singing plainchant it takes a bit of getting used to!

There is no regular beat to the music but the chant has a different kind of rhythm.

We may hear *this* rhythm by comparing a rap song to a piece of chant.

Listen to "There ain't no party like a Catholic party" [**Track 4**] - a rap song by Fr Stan Fortuna, a Franciscan friar from New York.

Now listen to part of the "Stabat Mater" [**Track 5**] - a plainchant song that invites us to share Mary's experience at the foot of her Son Jesus' Cross.

Notice for both pieces of music: the sound of the words and the rhyme of the words makes the rhythm.

How to sing Plainchant

- ~ We are not doing a solo, even if we sing on our own.
We are part of music that's much bigger than us, *bigger* than a pop star or a pop group, music that reaches back 100s and 1,000s of years into history and across the world.
- ~ We sing with our natural voice, the way we normally speak.
We do not put on a different accent—an American accent!
- ~ We let the sound of the words come out clearly.
- ~ We sing quietly enough to hear the people singing on each side of us.
We do not SHOUT!

ACTIVITIES

Say and sing football chants that you know. If several children sing the same chant they should sing *together* so that the words come out clearly and the footballers & supporters gain inspiration (instead of hearing a rabble like dis-jointed sound!)

Say or sing (a suitable!) rap that you know. The children could compose their own raps. Compare these raps to the “Stabat Mater” chant.

Sing “Amen” and Easter “Alleluia” [*C.D. Track 2*]. Sing it:

- (1) In pop or karaoke style (as if you were auditioning for the “X” Factor” or “Britain’s Got Talent”);
- (2) In plainchant style.

♪ LYRICS ♪

Track 4:

*There ain't no party like a Cath-o-lic party
Coz a Cath-o-lic party don't stop!*

Track 5:

*Stabat Mater dolorosa,
Juxta crucem lacrimosa,
Dum pendebat Filius.*

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.

*Cuius animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.*

Through her heart His sorrow sharing,
All his bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had passed.

LESSON TWO – GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS (1)

Speaking Out

Our children learn how different life was in Britain in times gone by. They learn about the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain. They learn about the start of the Middle Ages (Medieval times) that lasted until Tudor times and King Henry VIII. When people sang in those days it was very different from now.

Some children find it difficult enough to make their voice heard in a small classroom. But Medieval boys had to sing clearly enough (sometimes on their own) so that people would hear them at the other end of a huge cathedral – and all this without the help of microphones.

It's no wonder that the listeners - the Medieval audience - needed some extra hints so that they could follow what was being sung.

Singing the Message

Listen to the piece of chant, 'I was walking down the street one day...' [**Track 6**].

This is so-called Anglican chant, one way of singing the Psalms used especially in the Church of England. The words have been changed!

Notice how the tune changes in special places - in the middle and towards the ends of sentences. So the music helps us to make sense of what is being said.

In plainchant something similar happens.

Listen to the Sung Gospel [**Track 7**] and read the text of the Gospel that accompanies it.

Notice how there is a special tune to tell us that there is a comma or semi-colon or colon in the middle of the sentence – and a different tune for the end of a sentence, and the end of the reading. We call these points in the song ‘inflections’. The word inflection comes from the Latin *flectare* which means to bow the knee. The changes in the chant at these points are like little musical bows or genuflections (kneeling down).

There is even a tune to tell us when a question is being asked.

Listen and notice how the ‘question tune’ emphasises what most of us do when we are asking a question with our speaking voice: we raise our voice a little (we go higher) just before the question mark. Some people go up a lot at the end of sentences even if they aren’t asking questions, especially Australians!

In the Middle Ages not many people could read and write. If you worked in the church - if you were a priest, a monk, a nun, or a singer - you would learn lots of the Bible Readings and songs off by heart (the same ones kept coming round each year). When you heard them being sung in church you could tell how far you were through them because of the special tunes we have been looking at. Then you could be ready for what was going to happen next.

ACTIVITIES

Imagine how different it would have been to make a speech or sing a song in front of a big audience in Medieval times. What about microphones, Power point etc.? How did people manage without all this technology?

(The following activity is best suited to a large space such as a school hall):

One child stands up to say (not shout!) something - a sentence - so that everyone else (even at the back of the hall) can hear. Can everyone hear? Is he or she getting the message across? (e.g. an instruction: “No football after school today because the pitch is too muddy”).

Another child stands to ask a question to the whole hall. Can everyone hear the question?

If not, what could we do to get the message across more clearly without shouting?

Answer: **Sing it!**

The children ask some questions. Notice how the sound (pitch) of their voices go higher at the end of the question.

Children can be encouraged **NOT** to do this when simply speaking or making statements (it seems to be a current habit but it makes the person speaking seem to lack self-confidence - as in the habit of interjecting the word “Yeah?” frequently into conversations).

♪ LYRICS ♪

Track 7, Sung Gospel: Luke 2: 41-3 & 46-51

(a combination of R.S.V. & J.B versions)

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.

When He was twelve years old they went up for the feast as usual.

And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents did not know it.

After three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all who heard Him were amazed at His answers.

And His Mother said to Him, "Son, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you."

And He said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

But they did not know what He meant.

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.

And His Mother kept all these things in her heart.

LESSON THREE - GETTING the MESSAGE ACROSS (2)

Off By Heart, and Off the Wall Haircuts

Let's go back in our imagination to the days before print outs from computers and to the days when books were very expensive to reproduce...

How did the boys who sang in churches and cathedrals and the girls who sang in convents know what to sing (boys and girls as young as 7 or 8 years old)?

~ If they were part of a small group doing a solo they would gather around a huge chant book (it would cause a problem if one child was only 1 metre (about 3 feet) tall and another child 1.5 metres (about 5 feet) tall!) – *see the Picture on the Front Cover!*

OR

~ They learnt lots of words and music off by heart.

~ And they used clues to help them remember what was coming next:

clue no. 1 – the special tunes that told them where they were in a sentence, or if a question was being asked;

clue no. 2 – special signs made by a conductor's hand and fingers – known as 'Guido's Hand' – showing when to go up and down, to sing higher or lower [*Picture 3*].

A Day in the Life of a Choirboy in the Middle Ages

Life for the Medieval choirboy was tough.

The Medieval choirboy lived in a boarding school next to the cathedral or monastery. He had to share a room with lots of other boys. He had to get up really early in the morning to sing in church. He wasn't allowed his own hairstyle but looked like a 'mini-monk' [Picture 4].

He had to learn lots of Latin off by heart - and would get punished by being flogged if he was too slow at learning it. Sometimes he had to do jobs for the adult priests and monks - like serving them their food at mealtimes.

However, life could have its advantages...

You were with your friends all day and all night long. It was exciting getting up in the middle of the night (e.g. at Christmas) to sing in a big church lit only by candles. At some times in the year the choirboys would become superstars and dress up as prophets or angels or soldiers and sing from the church rooftop or in a procession going through the busy town centre. Over Christmas one of them would be chosen as a 'Boy Bishop' and lead a service in church - and then the Boy Bishop and his friends would be waited on hand and foot at a banquet by the adult priests and monks. Oh, and they had to drink beer (ale) every day of the year (because the water was not clean enough)!⁴

⁴ See Alan Mould [The English Chorister - A History](#), Continuum (2007), chapters 3-6, especially pages 55-59. Much of the information in this chapter is taken from Alan Mould's brilliant history.

ACTIVITIES

Look at the Pictures from Chant Books & the Missal [*Pictures 1 & 6*];

OR, better still, ask your parish priest to show you some beautiful Missals and Chant Books from church, if your church still has some.

Based on the information in “A Day in the Life of a Choirboy in the Middle Ages”, and on your own research draw and write either:

~ a comic strip of your own special day as a Medieval choirboy, such as Christmas Day, Palm Sunday or Easter Day

OR

a diary entry for one of these days.

Research the Boy Bishop ceremonies and act them out in class.

One way to do this is to act out the legend of St Nicholas who rescued three girls from being sold into slavery by sneaking three bags of gold coins into their father’s house. The poor father then let them stay at home. The Boy Bishop (with a wooden stick for a crozier or bishop’s staff, with a mitre - triangular shaped bishop’s hat - and a cloak) could distribute gold chocolate coins to members of the class!



Picture 4: Medieval Choirboys

Notice the adult priests & monks with their faces showing (on the left at the bottom); the choirboys have their backs to us (top of picture) but you can just see the little circles on top of their heads—their shaved tonsures, the same hairstyle as the adults.

LESSON THREE – LEARN LATIN, HEAR HEBREW, GO GREEK

Use **Activities 1 & 2 on page 29** for this lesson. After these have been completed:

notice that a lot of the names of the children come from the Latin language. We know that Latin was the language that was used by the people of the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus. It soon became the language of the Catholic Church. Most of the chants of our Church are written in Latin.

There is a story about one of the greatest of the popes from early Christian times. He was pope Gregory the Great. He was worried that lots of English people were still not Christian. He sent St Augustine to preach to the English people. There is a famous story about how this happened (*see page 28*) - but pope Gregory is also famous because some people say he started off plainchant; that's why some people call it 'Gregorian' chant. They say that the Holy Spirit flew down to pope Gregory's ear and sang into it all the chants

Well, pope Gregory didn't invent plainchant all by himself. However, he loved it and wanted more people to love it. He loved Latin too.

Latin Lovers

We can easily become Latin lovers like pope Gregory the Great.

There are many fun ways to introduce yourselves to Latin. **Activities 3-6 on page 30** will help you.

One day pope Gregory saw some fair haired English slave boys for sale in Rome. He asked where they were from. They were 'Angles' someone replied; and pope Gregory said: "Not Angles but Angels" (Non Angli sed Angeli); and decided to send St Augustine to England to convert them to the Catholic Faith.



Picture 5: Pope Gregory the Great

Notice the Holy Spirit, in the shape of a dove, top left. The Holy Spirit is singing the chants into the pope's ear and the monks are writing them down.

ACTIVITIES

(1) Listen to Track 2 again – the ‘Great Amen’ and simple Easter Alleluia. Ask the children what language you think these words are?

They are, in fact, Hebrew words – Hebrew, the language of the Jewish People – words we say and sing so often in church. Of course, this is the language that Jesus and Mary knew; the language that the first Christians knew.

(2) Ask a few of the children to say their names out loud. Now see if the children can guess what languages these names come from. Think again about some of the names that sound English:

Felicity = happy (Latin)

Rex = king (Latin)

Peter = rock (Latin)

Lucy = light (Latin)

Stephen = crown (Greek)

Basil = king (Greek)

Aaron, Adam, David, Jonathan and so many other names are Hebrew and from the Bible.

A good activity is for the children to research the meaning of their own names.

Latin Listening

(3) Listen to “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer” in Latin
[Track 8]

(4) Listen to the Stabat Mater [*Track 5*] once again.

Notice words such as: 'gladius' - like the word gladiator, because it means a 'sword'; 'cor' - this means 'heart' (think of an apple core at the heart of an apple) - 'through her heart the sword had passed'.

(5) Listen to the verses from Psalm 78 (77) [*Track 9*].

Notice words such as: 'crapulatus' - no, this is not rude, it means 'drunk' (with wine); 'posteriora' - like the English word 'posterior' this means 'behind/backside/bottom'. So, in English: 'the Lord, like one drunk with wine, hit all His enemies on the backside'(!)

(6) Listen to Tracks 11 & 12.

The Litany of Saints is a special song to ask all the Saints in heaven for their help. It is sung at really important times, for example on the night before Easter when people are baptised, or when a new priest is made, or before the Church chooses a new pope or bishop.

One of the most famous Litanies of Saints took place in Rome in April 2005 just after pope John Paul the Second (the last pope) had died. The cardinals - the men in the red hats - sang the Litany. They were asking the prayers of the Saints to help them choose a new pope (our pope, Benedict XVI).⁵

Learn, as a class, to sing your own Litany of Saints, using the children's own names. Sing it in English, with everyone responding 'Pray for us'; sing it in Latin with the response 'Ora pro nobis'. Track 10 will help you to do this. It is fun to sing the Litany in a Procession with the Cantors at the front, the children walking behind in pairs, perhaps around the school hall or another suitable space, perhaps even outside.

⁵ See [youtube litany of the saints: Litany of the Saints from John Paul II's Funeral](#) - I cannot find a video or youtube clip of the litany being sung at the conclave of cardinals for the election of the new pope but there are various litanies to be heard and seen on line - including the old litany used at the papal coronation Mass!

LESSON FOUR – The WHOLE WORLD and HEAVEN too!

People of Other Faiths

Catholics love Latin because it is our language, the special language of the Church. But, as we have seen, Latin is not the only language of chant. There are Greek chants. There are Christian chants in many other languages.

And chant is not just for Christians.

Chant is used all over the world by people of different religions - like the Muslims. You may even have some Muslim children in school. They might be able to read or sing to you something in their own language of Arabic. Muslim boys who go to special mosque schools are amazing - they learn long passages of Arabic from their holy book the Qur'an off by heart. They don't exactly sing the Qur'an but they don't just say it aloud either. They make a sound in between singing and saying! Some of these boys learn the whole of the Qur'an off by heart! It would be like us learning pages and pages of Latin off by heart at school. But this is quite possible. We have already seen that Medieval choirboys aged 7 or 8 did this - and lots of Catholic children have been doing it for hundreds of years. Our grandparents and great grandparents learnt some Latin to use in church - and we can do the same today.

Yes, chant is used all over the world. When I was singing a piece of plainchant to year 6 children recently one boy said he thought it sounded a bit like 'Bollywood' music - Hindu people have their own chants and 'Bollywood' music is partly based on them.

So chant is alive here and now in our world. It is a fantastic form of music that has been used throughout history. Its roots are older than Latin or the Catholic Church; it reaches back into the Jewish past (Old Testament times) and beyond, into far off ancient history.

Jesus and Chant

It is amazing to notice how old some of the chants are that we can still use in church today.

Think of some of the really old churches that are around, like the old parish churches or cathedrals. They are very old - some are over 1,000 years old. The things inside the churches can be very old too - like the statues, the stained glass, the paintings on the walls, decoration on the ceilings. But none of these things are as ancient as some of the chant that could be sung there. In fact some of our plainchant is the ONLY thing in church (apart from the words of Jesus and the words of the Old Testament in the Bible) that goes back so far into history.

It is wonderful to know that Jesus and His disciples sang some chants that sound very much like some of the chants we still have today. Jesus and his disciples, like all Jews, loved singing the psalms in their own special language of Hebrew. At His Last Supper with His friends the disciples Jesus sang some psalms. One of them was Psalm 113 – “When Israel came out of Egypt.” There is a chant for this psalm that some experts think goes all the way back to the time before Jesus.⁶ It is called the *tonus peregrinus* in Latin, which means the ‘pilgrim tune’.

Our Catholic Mass is based on what Jesus did at His Last Supper. So it would be really special to use some of the chants at Mass that may go back as far as Jesus! We can even sing them in our own special language of Latin. So much good new music has been written for the Mass - but wouldn't it be great to use some chants that could help us to sing along with God's own Son!

⁶ See [P.D.F] Matthias Olof Lundberg [Historiographical Problems of the Tonus Peregrinus](#). Scholars differ as to the origins of this chant melody. Some have found a Hebrew chant melody that is very similar. However, Willi Apel [Gregorian Chant](#), Burns & Oates (1958) p.213 thinks it is of Gallican origin (c. 9th century).

ACTIVITIES

(1) Listen to Tracks 13, 14 & 15.

They show us that chant is **WORLD-WIDE** and **LONG-LASTING**:

- ~ *Track 13*: a piece of **GREEK** (Byzantine) chant—the word “Alleluia”;
- ~ *Track 14*: the **ADHAN**—the **MUSLIM CALL** to **PRAYER**;
- ~ *Track 15*: ancient **HEBREW** chant—Psalm 23 (22) as it might have been sung by the Jewish people at their Temple in Jerusalem 3,000 years ago.

♪ LYRICS ♪

The Adhan: (English translation of part of the text)

God is the greatest (x4)

Come to prayer (x2)

Come to success (x2)

God is the greatest (x4)

There is none worthy of worship except God.

ACTIVITIES

(2) Activity for Muslim children

If there are some Muslim children in your class ask them to speak some prayers in Arabic out loud; some may even be able to write some Arabic script for you.

If they are brave enough they might be able to demonstrate some Muslim Prayer to the class (words and actions). This will need careful preparation, e.g. the provision of prayer mats.

I have witnessed Muslim boys praying devoutly in front of their classmates and noticed how beautiful and moving other children found this.

(2) Listen to *Track 16*.

Part of PSALM 114 (113) sung to the ‘tonus peregrinus’.

♪ LYRICS ♪

(English translation)

*When Israel came out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from among a strange people;
Judah was his holy place,
Israel his own land.
The sea looked but ran away,
The river Jordan turned back;
The mountains skipped like rams,
The hills like lambs.*

ACTIVITY

Ask the children to feel their pulses – placing their hands on their hearts or wrists (they might have done this exercise in Science before). Find out from them if there is a regular, constant beat – or whether it varies.

Ask the children in what circumstances they can feel or even hear their pulse (e.g. when doing vigorous exercise).

This activity tells us more about the nature of plainchant.

Like their own heartbeats - which vary in speed and are very flexible and changeable according to the circumstances - chant does not need a regular and constant 'beat'. Yet there is a rhythm to chant - this is found in how the music fits in with the stresses of the words (just as our own pulse fits in with the stresses placed on our own bodies).

Normally our pulse is hidden away inside us - we do not usually feel or hear it. The rhythm of chant is similar - it is hidden away, but it is there.

Other types of music need a 'beat' - rock, pop, dance, R&B. But chant does not need this. There is something very natural about chant. It does not have to be 'made' or put together artificially in a recording studio.

Other forms of music need musical instruments. Chant doesn't. These musical instruments change from time to place. But chant is worldwide and changeless.

ACTIVITY

Ask the children to give some examples of the noises that different animals make – out loud!

Give examples of animals that walk on the earth, of fishes in the sea, and of the birds who fly.

Notice:

- (1) In the sea there is a lot of silence;
- (2) The animals on the earth do a lot of screaming, shouting and grunting;
- (3) The birds of the air sing!

Chant is a type of music that teaches us to be very deep like the sea - it is quiet, reflective music that gets us in touch with the rhythms of our own bodies and the words we speak. Chant also teaches us to sing like the birds. A lot of music - even some singing - in our world today is animal like. There can be too much 'beat' and not enough melody. The beat helps us to get in touch with our 'animal' nature - for example violent rock music or dance music that is designed to make us forget we are thinking, speaking beings.

Chant, however, is one type of music - a very fundamental type of music - that raises us up as human beings. It lets us know that we are not only in the presence of the singing birds but of the Angels. It lets us know that we are not only bodies but that we have souls too. And that body and soul we look forward to singing for ever with God and each other in Heaven.⁷

⁷ See Pope Benedict XVI A New Song for the Lord , Crossroad Publishing Co. (1996) p.160. In this book the then Cardinal Ratzinger drew on a saying of Ghandi who refers to three habitats of the cosmos each with its own musical mode of being: fish, silent in the sea; animals, screaming and shouting; birds, singing in the air. We humans have a share in all three. We "carry the depths of the sea, the burden of the earth, and the heights of the heavens" in ourselves. Ratzinger goes on to observe that proper liturgical music such as plainchant "liberates us from ordinary, everyday activity and returns to us once more the depths and the heights, silence and song." We "sing with the angels". We are "silent with the expectant depths of the universe" (all p.160).



Picture 5: ***Lapidavérunt***

From the Gradual of the Mass for St Stephen's Day (26th December).

Notice how the square notes rise high and then repeat, blow by blow, on the highest note.

LESSON SIX -TAKING THINGS FURTHER

If you are interested in building on the work we have done so far I offer you a few tips to take things further.

Chant gives birth to more music

ACTIVITY

Listen to the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) of Mass XVIII [*Track 17*]

This Sanctus forms part of one of the simplest settings of the Mass. Traditionally it is used at funerals (Requiem Masses).

The way that this Sanctus has been used in the history of music teaches us something very wonderful about plainchant. This chant, so simple and beautiful (but boring if sung badly), has been used by composers as the foundation of some of the most amazing music for funerals in the Catholic Church. In fact the chants of the Church became the building blocks for all other music written in Western Europe during and after the Middle Ages. This development continues to the present day. So without plainchant we literally would have little other music to enjoy!

In our study so far we have heard how in chant there is always only one 'tune'. We all sing the same notes together.

But, at some time in the history of music in Europe (about 1,000 years ago) singers started to experiment by putting harmonies to the chant - another voice would sing one or two notes to a different tune than the normal one. This development was called ‘organum’ (think of an organ that can sound many different notes at the same time). It can be heard in its simplest form by listening to *Track 21*.

Track 21 is the “Amen, Alleluia” at the end of the Easter Sequence: a song that tells the story of the visit of Mary Magdalene to the Tomb of Jesus on Easter morning (the Sequence is sung before the Gospel reading on Easter Day). We hear the “Amen, Alleluia” sung in two parts, by different voices.

ACTIVITIES

♪ Listening ♪

We can experience plainchant as the foundation of other music by listening to two recordings.

Track 19 is part of the Sanctus of the Requiem Mass by Thomas Luis Victoria (1548-1611).

Victoria was a priest from Spain. He wrote his Mass setting in 1605 (at the end of Tudor times in Britain).

Notice how his piece begins with the first word “Sanctus” in plainchant.

Track 20 is part of the Sanctus of the Requiem Mass by Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986).

This Mass setting was first sung in 1947. Notice how much more modern it feels than the setting by Victoria.

It is based on the same plainchant of Mass XVIII (which we hear at the beginning of the piece on the word “Sanctus”, and, if we listen carefully, woven into the harmonies as several voices sing different ‘tunes’ together).

♪ SINGING ♪

Learn to sing the Sanctus of Mass XVIII. Learn it in English and in Latin.

Track 18 will help you learn this piece.

Persuade your parish priest and the musicians at your church to let you introduce the Sanctus to them at Sunday Mass.

Start learning by singing the 3 words “Sanctus” (only 2 different notes each to learn).

Pay attention to my C.D. commentary on how to sing the word “Sanctus” like waves breaking on the sand of the sea shore. Follow *Track 18* for the rest of the piece.

Perhaps some children could learn just the “Hosanna” parts and others the rest.

Dividing the children between boys and girls is a good way of proceeding - introduce a competitive element to increase motivation!

In the Mood

So far we have discovered a few different types of plainchant pieces:

- ~ **Hymns** - like the “Stabat Mater” [*Track 5*]
- ~ **Bible Readings** - like the Sung Gospel [*Track 7*]
- ~ **Parts of the Mass** - like the “Sanctus” (Holy, Holy, Holy)
[*Track 17*]
- ~ **Psalms** - [*Track 9*]
- ~ **A Litany asking the Prayers of the Saints** - [*Tracks 10 & 11*]
and much more...

The pieces we have heard have been quite simple. Usually there have only been 1, 2, or 3 notes to each part of a word (to each syllable).

But there is a lot more to plainchant than we have met so far.

There are many more complicated, exciting and beautiful pieces. Some of these have as many as 30 notes to each syllable. They stretch the voice from the lowest to the highest notes. They help to create a mood - they help us to *feel* what the Latin words are telling us. I like to call this Painting with Music. Every picture tells a story and some pictures make us feel sad or happy or excited or peaceful. And it is the same with some pieces of plainchant.

ACTIVITY

Find out about St Stephen, one of the first followers of Jesus.

If you have any altar server boys or girls in your school they should be able to tell you a bit about him - because St Stephen is their special, patron saint.

Find out how St Stephen died (in a horrible way by being stoned to death) - because he tried to tell people how much Jesus loved them.

Find out about his feast day (26th of December, the day after Christmas Day).

♪ Listening ♪

Listen to *Track 22* and look at *Picture 5* on page 38.

This is part of a chant for St Stephen's Day. It sets the word "lapidaverunt" - they threw stones.

Painting with Music

There are many other examples of painting with music in plainchant. Here are just a few you may wish to listen to:

~ **Going Up and Down:** part of the "Rorate Caeli Desuper" (Drop down, you heavens from above) [*Track 23*]

~ **The sound of the Trumpet:** "sound the trumpet" from the Easter Exsultet [*Track 24*]

~ **Birds tweeting:** the beginning of the antiphon "Passer invenit sibi domum" from Psalm 84 (83), vv. 1-2 (the sparrow has found herself a house) [*Track 25*]

The Rorate Caeli is easy enough for you to learn and use in Advent. The other pieces are more difficult.

The last of these pieces - for the last Sunday in the Church's year, just before Advent - is the "**Christus Vincit**" [*Track 26*]. I would recommend this to any school choir to learn. You can practise it by marching around the school hall like Roman soldiers.

①

Look and see the Bread of An-gels,
 Food for us and all our tra-vels,
 The true Bread for God's true children,
 Which to dogs may not be thrown

②

O good Shep-herd Je-sus, hear us,
 Feed us, love us, guide us, teach us,
 May we see the good a-round us,
 Guests at the true feast of Love.

“Ecce Panis Angelorum”

Part of the **Corpus Christi Sequence** by St Thomas Aquinas. I have translated the last two verses of the Sequence into ‘child friendly’ English, using the original plainchant melody.

(Easter Vigil, Easter Morning)

Angels
(Boys) *p* Whom do you seek in the se - pul - chre?
O ci - ti - zens of earth.

Women
(Girls) *p* Je - sus, of Na - za - reth cru - ci - fied,
O ci - ti - zens of heaven.

Angels
(Boys) *f* He is not here, He has ri - sen as He told
us be - fore; go there - fore and tell
He has ri - sen, say - ing:

All *ff* Al - le - lu - ia, the Lord has ri - sen to - day,
the strong lion, Christ the Son of God.
De - o gra - ti - as!
Al - le - lu - ia!

The "Visitatio Sepulchri"

I have adapted this chant and translated the original Latin into child friendly English. It may be sung as part of an Easter drama with boys and girls dressing as the Angels and the three Marys at the empty Tomb of Jesus. Adult voices (male and female) may then join at the section marked "All".

I am indebted to Alan Mould's research into this chant in his book The English Chorister, Continuum (2007), pp63-65, with the Latin text and music of the Visitatio printed on p.64.

Extendit manus

P a- ter noster, qui es in cæ- lis: Sancti- fi-
cé- tur nomen tu- um: Advé- ni- at regnum tu- um:
Fi- at vo- lúntas tu- a, sic- ut in cæ- lo, et in terra.
Pa- nem nostrum quoti- di- á- num da no- bis hó- di- e:
Et di- mít- te no- bis dé- bi- ta nostra, sic- ut
et nos di- mít- ti- mus de- bi- tó- ri- bus nostris.
Et ne nos indú- cas in ten- ta- ti- ó- nem.
R. Sed lí- be- ra nos a ma- lo.

Picture 6: *The Paternoster*

A facsimile of the Paternoster - the Our Father - from the 1962 Missal. The priest sings the prayer alone with his hands extended ("extendit manus") and the people reply with "But deliver us from evil."