



These qualities [of holiness, good artistic form, and universality] are to be found in the highest degree in Gregorian chant, which is consequently the chant proper to the Roman Church . . . The ancient traditional Gregorian chant must, therefore,

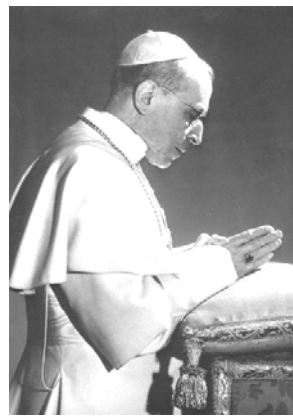
in a large measure be restored to the functions of public worship . . . Special efforts are to be made to restore the use of the Gregorian chant by the people, so that the faithful may again take a more active part in the ecclesiastical offices, as was the case in ancient times.

Pope St. Pius X (1903)



Voices, in preference to instruments, ought to be heard in the church: the voices of the clergy, the choir, and the congregation. . . . [N]o instrument, however perfect, however excellent, can surpass the human voice in expressing human thought, especially when it is used by the mind to offer up prayer and praise to Almighty God. . . . In order that the faithful may more actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian Chant, so far as it belongs to them to take part in it. It is most important that when the faithful assist at the sacred ceremonies . . . they should not be merely detached and silent spectators, but, filled with a deep sense of the beauty of the Liturgy, they should sing alternately with the clergy or the choir, as it is prescribed.

Pope Pius XI (1928)

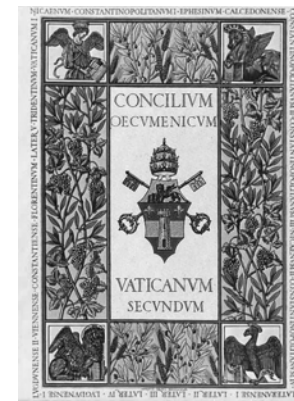


Gregorian chant, which the Roman Church considers her own as handed down from antiquity and kept under her close tutelage, is proposed to the faithful as belonging to them also. In certain parts of the liturgy the Church definitely prescribes it; it makes the celebration of the sacred mysteries not only more dignified and solemn but helps very much to increase the faith and devotion of the congregation. . . . A congregation that is devoutly present at that sacrifice in which our Savior, together with His children redeemed with His sacred blood, sings the nuptial hymn of His immense love, cannot keep silent, for “song befits the lover” (Saint Augustine, *Sermon 336*), and, as the ancient saying has it, “he who sings well prays twice.” Thus the Church militant, faithful as well as clergy, joins in the hymns of the Church triumphant and with the choirs of angels, and, all together, sing a wondrous and eternal hymn of praise to the most Holy Trinity in keeping with words of the Preface, “with whom our voices, too, Thou wouldst bid to be admitted.”

Ven. Pope Pius XII (1947)

It is the duty of all those to whom Christ the Lord has entrusted the task of guarding and dispensing the Church’s riches to preserve this precious treasure of Gregorian chant diligently and to impart it generously to the Christian people. . . . In the performance of the sacred liturgical rites this same Gregorian chant should be most widely used and great care should be taken that it be performed properly, worthily, and reverently.

Ven. Pope Pius XII (1955)



The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy. Holy Scripture, indeed, has bestowed praise upon sacred song, and the same may be said of the fathers of the Church and of the Roman pontiffs who in recent times, led by St. Pius X, have explained more precisely the ministerial function supplied by sacred music in the service of the Lord. Therefore sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action, whether it adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites. . . . Accordingly, the sacred Council, keeping to the norms and precepts of ecclesiastical tradition and discipline, and having regard to the purpose of sacred music, which is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful, decrees as follows.

113. Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song, with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people. . . .

114. The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted . . .

115. Great importance is to be attached to the teaching and practice of music in seminaries, in the novitiates and houses of study of religious of both sexes, and also in other Catholic institutions and schools. To impart this instruction, teachers are to be carefully trained and put in charge of the teaching of sacred music. . . .

116. The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as characteristically belonging to the Roman liturgy, with the result that, other things being equal, in liturgical actions Gregorian chant takes possession of the first place. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations [by chant's pride of place], so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action. . . .

Second Vatican Council (1963)



The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting the different roles assigned by Christ and allowing all the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise. Active participation certainly means that, in

gesture, word, song, and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship, which is anything but inert or passive. Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening: indeed, it *demand*s it. Worshippers are not passive, for instance, when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant and the chants and music of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active. In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be countercultural.

Pope St. John Paul II (1998)



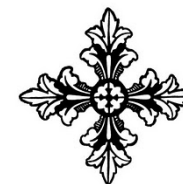
In the art of celebrating, liturgical song has a pre-eminent place. Saint Augustine rightly says in a famous sermon that “the new man sings a new song. Singing is an expression of joy and, if we consider the matter, an expression of love.”

The People of God assembled for the celebration sings the praises of God. In the course of her two-thousand-year history, the Church has created, and still creates, music and song which represent a rich patrimony of faith and love, a heritage that must not be lost. Certainly as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another. Generic improvisation or the introduction of musical styles which fail to respect the meaning of the liturgy should be avoided. As an element of the liturgy, song should be well integrated into the overall celebration. Consequently everything—in the text, in the melody, in the execution—ought to correspond to the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, the structure of the rite, and the liturgical seasons. Finally, while respecting various styles and various sufficiently laudable traditions, we desire, as was requested by the Synod Fathers, that Gregorian chant be suitably esteemed and employed as the chant proper to the Roman liturgy.

Pope Benedict XVI (2007)

I wish to thank you for the precious service that you render: the music that you perform is not an accessory or only an external ornament of the liturgy, but *it is liturgy itself*. You help the whole assembly to praise God, to make his Word enter into the depths of the heart: with song you pray and help others pray, and you participate in the song and prayer of the liturgy that embraces the whole of creation in glorifying the Creator.

Pope Benedict XVI (2012)



THE CHURCH SPEAKS

about

Gregorian Chant

AT MASS.

Intr. 4.

R O-rá-te * caé-li dé-su-per, et nú-bes plú-ant
 jú-stum : ape-ri-á-tur tér-ra, et gé-rminet Salva-
 tó-rem. *Ps.* Caéli enárrant gló-ri-am Dé-i : * et ópera
 mánu-um é-jus annúnti-at firmamén-tum. Gló-ri-a Pá-
 tri. E u o u a e.