Basic Chants for the Assembly:

Part I

Developing a Core Repertoire

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Benedictine Father Columba Kelly is the director and composer for the Gregorian Schola at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana. He is considered one of the foremost experts on Gregorian chant in the United States. Father Columba holds a doctorate in Church music from Musica Sacra in Rome. He has set the current *Lectionary* text for St. John's Passion to the traditional, ancient tone for this proclamation (www.ocp. org/20016TL). His memories of the Second Vatican Council are found in *Voices from the Council* (www.ocp. org/12222TL).

On May 9, 1964, Dom Eugène Cardine, secretary of Study Group XXV, presented a memo to the Consilium in which he stated that paragraphs 54 and 117 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* expressed a need for a more simple collection of Gregorian chants. The *Kyriale Simplex* appeared on January 30, 1965, but failed to be promoted by the Congregation of Rites. Abbot John Prou of the abbey of Solesmes once remarked that this book and the *Graduale Simplex* "were among the best kept secrets of the Second Vatican Council"! Article 75 of the USCCB document *Sing to the Lord* (OCP 20995TL) renews that request for a basic repertory of chants that will be capable of being sung by every worshipping community. It also proposes some basic building blocks of simple chants: Sanctus XVIII and Agnus Dei XVIII. To these, I would add Gloria XV in both Latin and English for use by any worshipping community, large or small. Along with these pieces I will propose some guidelines based on the current Solesmes teaching on how to sing these chants.

### Getting started: Speak then sing

One of the most important acclamations to be sung is that of the response to the Preface, the Sanctus. One of the most ancient and simple chants of the Sanctus is that found in Mass XVIII. It is a continuation of the melodic patterns used for the Preface and forms an intimate link with it. Eucharistic Prayer II responds to this chant by continuing the eucharistic prayer with the words "Lord, you are holy indeed." Eucharistic Prayer III continues in a similar manner with the words "Father, you are holy indeed." From this it is clear that the Sanctus chant is intimately bound into the eucharistic prayer itself.

Before singing the melody of this Sanctus, have your group speak the text together with great care for its diction and its meaning. Then sing the melodic setting as "sung speech" in the same rhythmic flow and word/phrase accentuation. In line with these suggestions is the following paragraph that was added to the end of the Preface to the *Liber Hymnarius* of 1983: "The [performance instructions] given here flow from the perfect correspondence of a sacred text to a Gregorian melody. It is for this reason that singers who show respect for the Latin diction, by that very fact already possess the greater part of what is required to execute well a Gregorian piece."

Since English is the native tongue for most of us, it should be no problem to apply this principle to an English-language setting modeled on the same melodic formula of the original Latin Sanctus. For this reason, I suggest that your group begin by speaking the English-language setting given below as a solemn proclamation in a good speech rhythm. The word accents should receive adequate stress and lengthening, while the other syllables should be spoken very softly and more quickly. Take a breath at the end of each phrase or sense unit. That breath should be an energetic one that uses the diaphragm muscle. It should feel like being pushed up by the spring of a swimming pool diving board. That kind of energetic breath launches the next phrase. The singers should speed up at the beginning of each new phrase and coast softly to the end of each phrase. The effect will be that of rocking back and forth on a swing. When there are two or more notes on a single syllable, move quickly to the last note and give it the full value of that syllable, as for example on the accents of the words "Hosanna" and "highest." Using that same type of speech rhythm, sing the melodic setting itself. **[Ex. 1, p. 19]**
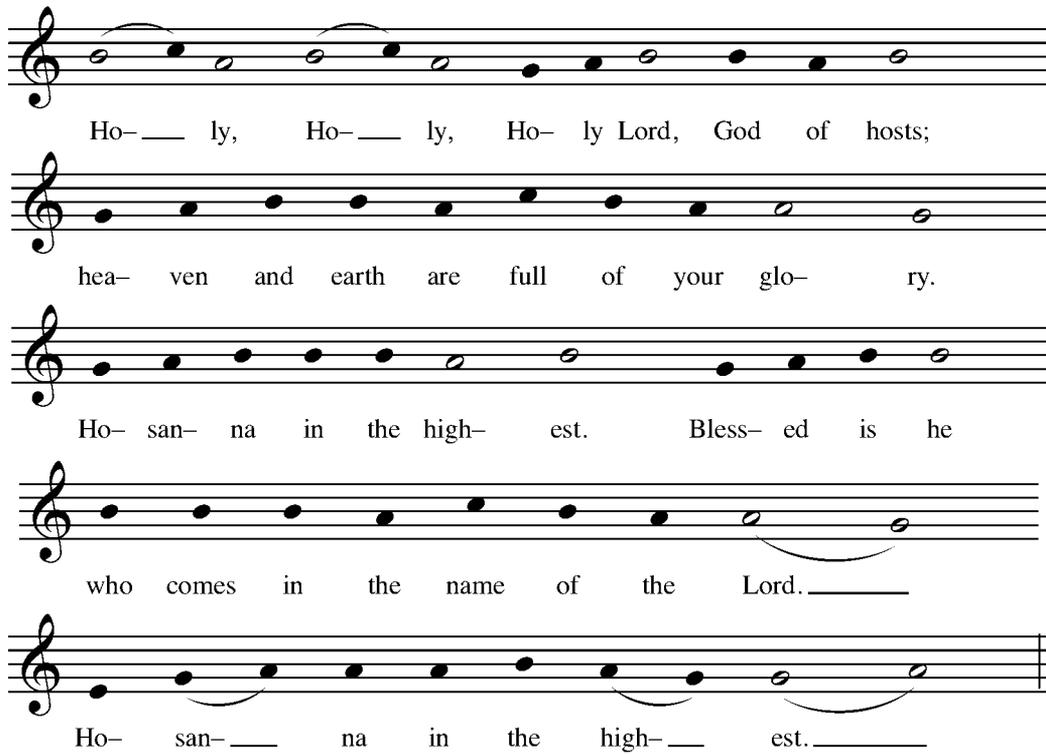
Ho—___ ly, Ho—___ ly, Ho— ly Lord, God of hosts; hea— ven and earth are full of your glo— ry. Ho— san— na in the high— est. Bless— ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord._____ Ho— san—___ na in the high—___ est._____

Text: ICEL. Music: Centonized by Columba Kelly, OSB; © 2005, St Meinrad Archabbey.

Note that the melody for the first two words has been modified to ensure that the first syllable of those words is given the accentual stress, and not the last syllable! The text is that of the newly revised translation that will become the official version in the near future in the revised Order of Mass. (It has not yet been promulgated for use in the US.)

First English, then Latin

After working with their own language, the singers should be ready to apply the same practice techniques to the original Latin version. Add stress and length to the first syllable of the word "Sanctus" and then soften the final syllable. Apply the same technique for all the word accents of the Latin text. Have the singers speak the Latin text with great energy and only then let them sing the melody itself. [**Ex. 2**]

Ex. 2
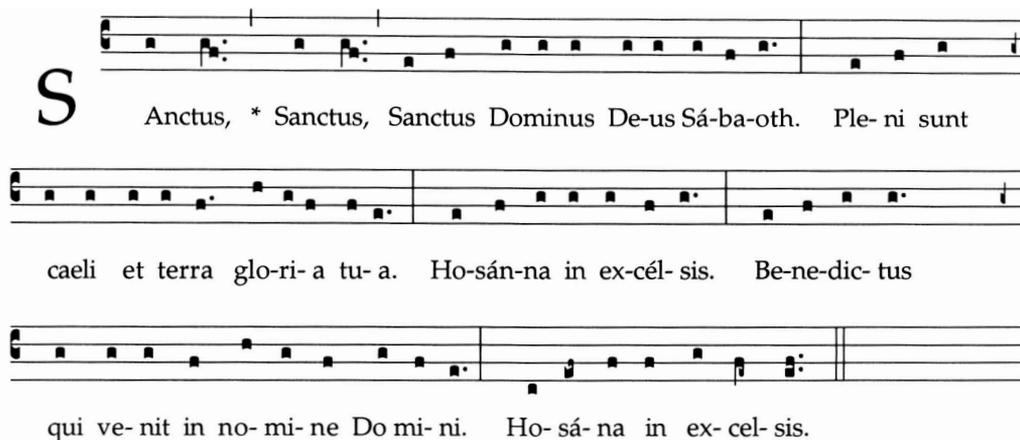
S Anctus, * Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus De-us Sá-ba-oth. Ple- ni sunt caeli et terra glo-ri- a tu- a. Ho-sán-na in ex-cél- sis. Be-ne-dic- tus qui ve-nit in no- mi- ne Do mi- ni. Ho- sá- na in ex- cel- sis.

Text and Music: Chant; *Graduale Romanum*, 1974.

The Agnus Dei of Mass XVIII is another chant that was designed to follow the natural flow of the Latin language and can be easily learned by an assembly. Start first with the following English adaptation and then apply the same feel of flowing speech to the original Latin version: **[Ex. 3, 4]**

Speed up at the beginning of each new phrase and coast softly to the end…. The effect will be that of rocking back and forth on a swing.

Ex. 3

Lamb of God, you take a– way the sins of the world: have mer–cy on us. (2)

Lamb of God, you take a– way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

Music: Centonized by Columba Kelly, OSB; © 2005, St Meinrad Archabbey.

Ex. 4

A–gnus De – i, qui tol – lis pec – cá – ta mun – di: mi – se –

ré – re no – bis. A–gnus De – i, qui tol – lis pec – cá – ta

mun – di: mi – se – ré – re no – bis. A – gnus De – i,

qui tol – lis pec – cá – ta mun – di: do – na no – bis pa – cem.

Text and music: Chant; *Graduale Romanum*, 1974.

In the Roman Rite, the Gloria is the only hymn that has an official place in the Mass. At first, only the bishop could intone it, and so it was only used when the bishop presided at the Mass. Later, the newly ordained were allowed to intone it at their "First Mass." Then it was permitted for any priest to intone it on solemn feasts such as Christmas and Easter. Finally, its use was extended to all feast days and to all the Sundays outside of the Advent and Lenten seasons.

The Gloria from Mass XV is the only truly congregational setting of the Gloria in the entire *Kyriale* collection. (A possible exception would be the Ambrosian Gloria, borrowed from the Ambrosian Rite.) Unlike the more through-composed settings of the Gloria that are found in the *Kyriale*, this setting is based on a psalm-tone pattern and uses only the notes of the pentatonic scale, a scale common to many cultures. The Amen, with its semitone interval, was a later addition to this Gloria. Try speaking the text as a group with careful attention to the flow of the words and their accentuation. Begin each phrase with a downbeat breath and spring forward by increasing the tempo to the next accent, then coast to the final accent of each phrase. The effect is like that of swinging back and forth on a swing, or riding the gentle swells on a large body of water. **[Ex. 5, p. 21]**
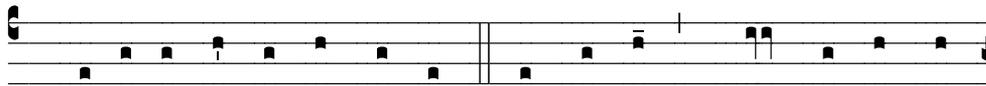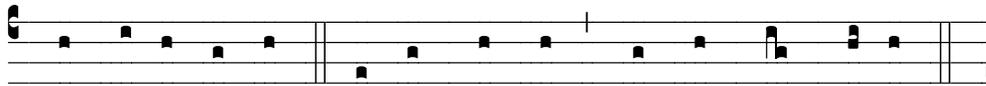
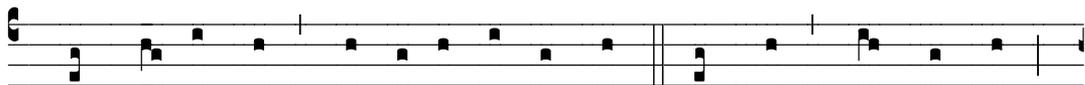Glo- ry to God in the high- est, **and on earth peace to peo- ple**

of good will. We praise you, **we bless you,** we a- dore you,
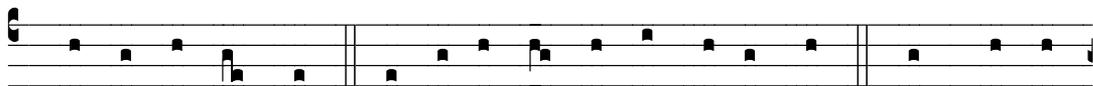
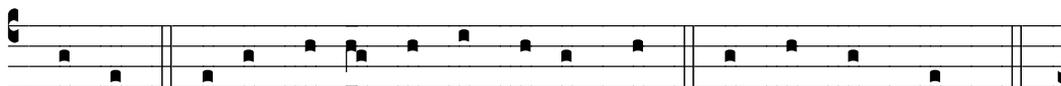**we glo- ri- fy you,** we give you thanks for your great glo- ry,

Lord God, heav- en- ly King, O God, al- might- y Fa- ther.

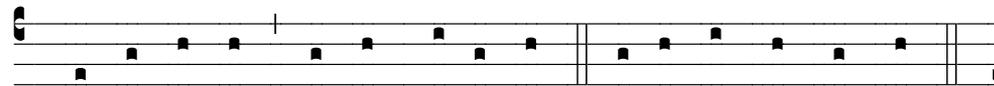Lord Je- sus Christ, on- ly- be- got- ten Son, **Lord God, Lamb of God,**

Son of the Fa- ther, you take a- way the sins of the world, **have mer- cy**

on us; you take a- way the sins of the world, **re- ceive our prayer,**

you are seat- ed at the right hand of the Fa- ther, **have mer- cy on us.**

For you a- lone are the Ho- ly One, **you a- lone are the Lord,**

you a- lone are the Most High, Je- sus Christ, **with the Ho- ly**

Spir- it, in the glo- ry of God the Fa- ther, A- men.

Text: ICEL. Music: Centonized by Columba Kelly, OSB; © 2009, St Meinrad Archabbey.

To master this style of "sung speech," it would be good to start with the English-language setting and then apply the same feel to the Latin setting of this Gloria. The English text is that of the new translation that will be used in the revised Order of Mass.

Accents and resonant space

Liturgical Latin used stressed accents, similar to what we experience in speaking English. In singing the Latin version, be sure to have enough energy built up on each accent to carry you rapidly and lightly to the next accent, until you can coast to the last accent of the phrase. This will help avoid a "punched" singing of each syllable of the text. Both Latin and English chant need a resonant space. According to Allan Kozinn in his *New York Times* review (July 2, 2009) of the newly renovated Alice Tully Hall, even Beethoven symphonies need a hall with a natural resonance: "During those silences you should hear the notes just played hanging in the air, supporting and seconding the power of the music just heard and creating a tension that anticipates the music to come." Then the pauses for breath at the end of each phrase in the Gloria XV chant will not sound empty, but will be full of tension for what is to come. **[Ex. 6]**

> **To master this style of "sung speech," it would be good to start with the English-language setting and then apply the same feel to the Latin setting of this Gloria.**

GLORIA XV

Priest — Gló - ri - a in ex - cél - sis De - o. *All* — Et in ter - ra pax

ho - mí - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - tá - tis. Lau - dá - mus te.

Be - ne - dí - ci - mus te. A - do - rá - mus te.

Glo - ri - fi - cá - mus te. Grá - ti - as á - gi - mus ti - bi

pro - pter ma - gnam gló - ri - am tu - am. Dó - mi - ne De - us,

Rex cae - lé - stis, De - us Pa - ter o - mní - pot - ens.

Dó - mi - ne Fi - li u - ni - gé - ni - te Je - su Chri - ste.

Dó - mi - ne De - us, A - gnus De - i, Fí - li - us Pa - tris.

Qui tol - lis pec - cá - ta mun - di, mi - se - ré - re no - bis.

Qui tol - lis pec - cá - ta mun - di, sú - sci - pe de - pre - ca -

ti - ó - nem no - stram. Qui se - des ad déx - te - ram Pa - tris,

mi - se - ré - re no - bis. Quó - ni - am tu so - lus san - ctus.

Tu so - lus Dó - mi - nus. Tu so - lus Al - tís - si - mus,

Je - su Chri - ste. Cum San - cto Spí - ri - tu, in gló - ri - a

De - i Pa - tris. A - men.

Text and Music: Chant, Mode IV; *Graduale Romanum*, 1974.

In an address given in 2004, Abbot Philip Dupont of Solesmes told his Roman audience: "Why not ask Gregorian chant to reveal its secrets in the languages and in the cultures of our time? That which was the fruit of one of the greatest cultural turnovers in the history of the Church, could it not help us to face the challenges of our time? And to lead finally all peoples to sing 'the great deeds of God in our own tongues' (Acts 2:11)."

Chant Resources

For further development of a core repertoire, I recommend the use of the *Liber Cantualis*, published by Solesmes and available from OCP (12244TL; www.ocp.org/12244TL). More English-language settings of the ordinary of the Mass are available in a collection entitled *The Saint Meinrad Kyriale* from the following Web site: saintmeinradmusic.org. Another helpful St. Meinrad publication is *Liturgical Music for the Priest and the Deacon at the Eucharist*. A practical manual for singing prayer tones, the prayers of the faithful, the Exsultet, and more, this book comes with a CD offering sung examples. A more extended treatment of these chants appears in *Chanting on our Behalf* by Paulist Father Ricky Manalo (OCP 6138TL; www.ocp.org/6138TL). Other chant-style settings of liturgical texts are available for free download on the Web site sacredmusicproject.com.

Part Two of *Basic Chants: Developing a Core Repertoire*, which will appear in the 2010 Ordinary Time 2 issue of *Today's Liturgy*, will show how the various musical forms of these basic chants can support the liturgical forms that make up our Sunday Eucharist.