

Music

“Gregorian Chant in the Spiritual Life”, Article 1, August 2020

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the “end of the spiritual life is that man unite himself to God by love.” It is by acts of charity that the soul is united with God, which presupposes an act of the intellect. Through the intellect, religious sentiment or unction can be spurred by prayer, scriptural texts, spiritual reading, and many other treasured facets of Holy Mother Church. Yet, Gregorian chant proves to be especially efficacious in rousing the soul to deep devotion. The sacred and tranquil character of chant harmonizes the human person in his entirety to the worship of God and the ordering of the whole life to Him.

Gregorian chant is sacred because its intent is to raise the mind and heart to God. As Dom Jacques Hourlier notes in *Reflections on the Spirituality of Gregorian Chant*, each of the notes were “composed with much prudence and wisdom, in order to elucidate the meaning of the words.” The composition is hinged on the text and its melodies were set to decorate it. Thus, through melody and unmetered rhythm, the “meaning of the text becomes richer and intelligible.” Yet, chant “adds nothing to the rational content of the message. But it puts it in a light that enhances intelligibility; it goes so far as to transcend the intellectual content of the message, thus bringing us into the realm of the inexpressible.” In other words, we are better inspired by the chanted text to deep devotion. Hence, chant “expresses the noblest sentiments through its essential features. Because of this, it has an educational value which first touches our musical sense, and finally our entire being... Gregorian chant is the model for every other form of music.” The soul is enraptured by the movements of these simple notes, yet, as mere signs they point to the Author of beauty.

Through the gift of Faith, the intellect points the will to God as the One Whom all affections must be poured upon, and thereby all the emotions are at rest. Gregorian chant – particularly in its proper setting in the liturgy – acts as a “preparation that leads to the very threshold of the mystical life.” Moreover, the music not only strips the soul of her obstacles, but “actually leads us into Someone’s Presence, it introduces us to One who knows us more intimately than we know ourselves.” Thus, the person is ordered to the worship of God with little or no self-interest. Consequently, there is harmony in the person.

As St. Augustine says, “*cantare amantis est*” or “singing is a characteristic of the true lover,” one cannot help but to burst forth into song that expresses all the sentiments that the soul is feeling. This type of music can only be heard in silence. And to “sing” in such a way, one must already be in a habit of giving their “fiat” to do the Will of God, to have purged themselves of self and their own “illusions of God.” One’s “fiat,” purged in the school of the Holy Spirit, becomes a delightful canticle to God. The souls who have written the sublime melodies of chant have, to some degree, rested in this purifying fire of charity. The quest for love, however, is not for a privileged few but for all people. Sainthood is not only for religious and priests, but for everyone. One may not know how to compose music, but by desiring God the soul has already started “humming” a tune to her Lover.

Music
“Stabat Mater”, Article 2, September 2020

In this month of September, we meditate on Our Lady of Sorrows, the suffering Mother of the Man of Sorrows, Jesus Christ our Lord. Throughout history, man has depicted our Lady in many forms of art, whether in paintings or statues. The chant *Stabat Mater* provides another avenue to depict our Lady in art with deep devotion. One only needs to read a few stanzas to feel, in a sense, the blade that pierced the Sorrowful Heart of Mary. By meditating on the words and letting the music affect the emotions, one can enter this mystery of the Sorrowing Mother of God.

When we attend to the words of this chant, we are transported into the scenes and emotions of the Passion. We enter Calvary and see Mary: “At the Cross her station keeping, Stood the mournful Mother weeping, Close to Jesus to the Last” (trans. Fr. Caswall from *St. Jean Brébeuf Hymnal*). The chant begins already with the summary of a glorious moment in Mother Mary’s life: She chooses not to flee, but to keep to Her station, mourning at the foot of the cross of Her Son “to the last.” The remaining nineteen verses reflect the subject of the faithful Mother while weaving together our desires to stand next to Her. We ask Mary to “make me thy co-mourner truly” and to sorrow “till my life is o’er.” Then we beg to taste “All His bitter torments feeling, In the cross my spirit reeling, In His blood my senses drown.” Our imagination is saturated with the image of the bloodied God-man. We ache with love. Yet, we behold the fact that God willed to die with an everlasting Love. His Love flows by the flowing of His blood. Thus, by the very texts, we are enraptured in the mystery of God’s love. As we add music to the words, the notes help us to touch the mystery.

The melody is simple and repetitive for all twenty verses, but nonetheless disposes the listener to maintain focus. As we listen to the chant, we are wrapped in the bitterness of the Blessed Mother caused by the perfect love and sacrifice of Her Son. The music acts like oil to the soul, loosening and penetrating the intellect, the will, and the emotions. At the same time, the soul peers into the sorrowing Heart of Mary stricken by the crucified Lord due to our sins. The horror of our sins becomes ever more concrete. Yet, there remains – especially in this Faith of ours – the paradox between the sorrow of our sins that crucified our Lord and the overflowing joy of a redeemed people! We are so inundated with such contrasts that we become soberly intoxicated with love. Moving beyond emotions and intellect, our heart converses with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. *Cor ad cor loquitur*, heart speaks to heart, as St. John Henry Newman says. The heart begs the Beloved to share in His sorrows.

The *Stabat Mater* is one of many channels to fulfill the desire for a deeper devotion to our suffering Jesus and Our Lady of Sorrows. The chant could be sung as a devotional on September 15, every Friday in the Stations of the Cross, or after the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. By listening, or better yet, chanting the *Stabat Mater* we begin to taste the agony of the Mother and Son but with sweet serenades that console the loving Hearts.

Music

“The Terrible Beauty of the *Dies Irae*”, Article 3, October 2020

As we continue in the month of October, it would be a good idea to begin preparing for the solemnities of All-Saints and All-Souls Day. In a particular way, meditating on the chant sequence *Dies Irae* is edifying because it focuses on the general judgement of the world through the media of poetry and music. This simple chant provides a foretaste of judgement day that sobers the listener. In a sense, one can feel the dreadful tone of the chant. But what is it about the chant that gave it its character? By exploring the text and its influence on the actual melody, we understand in a deeper sense the severity of that day of reunion – or for those unfortunate, the day of condemnation – known as judgement day.

Distinction must be made between the particular judgement and the general judgement. The former occurs after death “where all that has ever been done or spoken or thought during life shall be subjected to the most rigid scrutiny” (Trent Catechism). Any soul that is in the state of grace is rewarded with Heaven, but the soul in the state of mortal sin is judged damned. The general judgement is when all peoples “shall stand together before the tribunal of their Judge, that in the presence and hearing of all human beings of all times each may know his final doom and sentence” (Trent Catechism). Those who are already rewarded or damned will remain so, but the consequences of their words, thoughts, and actions – both public and secret – will be laid bare for all to see. The general judgment vindicates the injustices committed throughout history, as well as put to the light the good that combated evil. Ultimately, the scrutiny of all that occurred in history is to fulfill and give praise to the justice of God and Divine Providence. In light of this, the genius of Holy Mother Church has composed a chant to invite Her children to feel the weight of so important an event.

The first verse of the *Dies Irae* begins without preface or delay to set the tone, *Dies irae, dies illa, Solvet saeculum in favilla, Teste David cum Sibylla*, “the day of wrath, that awful day, shall reduce the world to ashes, as David and the Sibyl prophesied” (The Liturgical Year, vol. XV). Then the next verse continues the same mood, *Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando Judex est venturus, Cuncta stricte discussurus*, “how great will be the terror, when the Judge shall come to examine all things rigorously!” Nothing else needs to be said or commented about the text; the words already lend themselves to the tenor and weight of such an event. We see the intense scrutiny given to us by the word *stricte*, “rigorously”; nothing will be left unchecked or uncovered. The serious tone continues until verse eight where it gradually switches to hope, *Rex tremendae majestatis, Qui salvandos salvas gratis, Salva me fons pietatis*, “O King of awful majesty, who of thy free gift savest them that are to be saved, save me O fount of mercy!” The verse begins with admiration of the glory of God and it inspires a trembling reverence, but at the same time it calls to mind the redemptive act of Jesus. The perspective of this text is the soul that is praying the chant while still living on earth, but also looking forward to that day.

Thus, the entirety of the chant is always sung with a trust in the mercy of God by

placing all hope in Him. The soul, however, must already be repentant and be ready to accept God's mercy and love. In light of this love, the chant no longer has a punishing tone, but a chastising tone, edifying the soul to remain steadfast and to preserve to the end. The soul that remains in sin and continually rejects the mercy of God even unto death will only receive the punishment that is due according to Divine Justice, in which case the chant becomes a condemnation. Nevertheless, from both perspectives, the severity remains despite a soul's disposition to God. To reinforce the message of the text, music is added.

According to the musical tradition of the Church, the melodies of the chants are structured by modes which are "disposition[s] of sounds and intervals in a melody, with respect to a base determined by the tonic note" (*Laus in Ecclesia*). For musicians, these are also known to be forms of scales and there are eight in total. But to put jargon aside, modes are what set the "mood" or "feeling" of the chant whether serious, joyful, sad, or jubilant. Each chant is set to a particular mode and the *Dies Irae* is set to the first mode or mode 1, which is peaceful or tranquil with order. In the beginning of the chant, however, the mode is different and more serious which is characteristic of the second mode or mode 2. For example, when listening to the chant, the melody begins with a motif that sounds harsh and uncomfortable to the ears. Later the melody plunges into the lower notes, as if summoning all the dead or perhaps a symbolic gesture of the damnation of souls. Yet there is a contrast in verse 18 where the mode of peace and tranquility seems to shout triumphantly in its melody. Here the text is reinforced: *Judicandus homo reus: Huic ergo parce, Deus*, "guilty man, that he may be judged; spare him, then O God!" Then the last verse ends the whole chant in hope, *Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem*, "O tender Lord Jesus, give them eternal rest." At first there seems to be a contradiction between the first few verses and the ending, but the purpose is to reinforce the grave responsibility to save one's own soul while pointing to the hope of Christ that will bring repentant souls to Heaven. The mercy of God is present throughout the chant; the tone in which it begins reminds us of our weakness, forgetfulness, smallness, and abasement, but at the same time it urges us to always run back to God into the arms of His mercy. Hence, mode 1 is specifically chosen to set the message of peace and calm. The chant must be sung or listened to in this perspective of God's perfect mercy and perfect justice; man is infinitely lower than God, but those baptized and repentant are His adopted children in Christ. From this viewpoint, we can better understand how to be edified by the *Dies Irae*.

With all meditations, we must always attend to how we are living, whether we are following the Commandments and living the virtues or not. Two avenues are presented in this approach. For those who are beginning or have recently repented, God is viewed as a punishing God that seems to loom over our entire lives. Such a love or relation is known as servile fear. Those who have continually worked to stamp out vices or have been given a light from their moment of repentance, however, will see God as the loving Father Who loves with the most tender love. This is filial fear or the fear of offending a most loving God. The second perspective is necessary to grow in the love of God and also to interpret the *Dies Irae*, otherwise the soul remains stunted in servile fear and is unable to grow. True repentance is born from a deep and disinterested (selfless) love for God where all attachments to sin are removed. The soul is moved

by the love of God, always panting like the deer in Psalm 41 for the refreshing streams of God's love. In this respect, the *Dies Irae* is no more than an inspiration for the soul to be as pleasing as she can be to her Bridegroom on that day when she is called. Judgement Day no longer seems to be a day of dread, but of infinite consolation for the elect. But, like the foolish virgins spoken of in scripture, those who did not prepare will not be admitted because they were not loyal to God's grace. This is the "double-edged" sword of the *Dies Irae*.

The *Dies Irae* is both a warning but also a consolation that continually keeps the soul sober in her passions and helps maintain focus on the main prize, Jesus Christ. There are many more meditations that can be done with this powerful chant, but it would take a lifetime to exhaust. Nonetheless, the *Dies Irae* serves as a love letter to the faithful soul to always remain confident in her Bridegroom despite all earthly trials; it will be worth it in the end. The Lord seems to say, "never despair" or, more accurately penned, "Be not afraid." We therefore live in hope to be ready when the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, calls us to eternal life.

Music
“*Christus Vincit*”, Article 4, November 2020

In the previous newsletter, Bro. Augustine spoke of the need for silence and praying to God in the midst of trials. These times of uncertainty and tribulation are definitely the best times to enter into silence and simply be in the presence of God by quieting the soul “as a little child on its mother’s lap” (Psalm 130:2). Whatever the outcome that results from the presidential election or whatever causes damage to Christian unity, Jesus Christ is Lord yesterday, today, and forevermore. I will not explain much of the chant, *Christus Vincit*, but I will mention a few portions that will help direct our prayers. To hear the whole piece, look it up online. *Christus Vincit* was originally named *Laudes Regiae* or the *Royal Praises*. It was the custom for popes and kings – as well as the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire – to have chanted the *Laudes Regiae* to pronounce both the coronation of a new king and give praise to the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. Yet, the history of this type of praise dates back even to the commanders, generals, and emperors of ancient Rome for victories in battle. That being said, for the Church *Christus Vincit* praises the victorious King Who conquered death by death and opened the gates of Heaven to all believers!

Holy Mother Church in Her wisdom and genius composed the *Laudes Regiae* not only to praise Jesus Christ but also to petition the merciful God for grace and protection. In particular, the first petition is for the unity of the Holy Church of God, then for the Holy Pontiff, local bishops, and finally for rulers and citizens. The list goes on with plentiful invocations to the Saints in Heaven as well. For us, the chant is a testament of unshakable hope but also a call to heroic perseverance.

The tone of the chant instills in the listener a heroic fervor to fight for the King despite the bone-biting chill of darkness and the fatiguing barrages of Hell that the Church faces. Jesus Christ has already won, and He has promised that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against Holy Mother Church (Mathew 16:18). *Christus Vincit* already speaks for itself; we only need to pray the chant with unswerving confidence in Him Who conquers, reigns, and governs all nations! As the saintly pontiff, John Paul II, always said, “Be not afraid!” And in fact, it is but a quote of the King Himself (Mark 5:36). We are to continue marching in life with the banner of the King, that is, the Cross – our only hope, *spes unica* – and sing with all the Saints and angels in Heaven: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat!*

Music
“Christmas Caroling”, Article 5, December 2020

Whenever we hear Christmas carols on the radio or in the store, our memories are stirred to the images of our childhood: the twinkling lights on the tree, the bone-chilling frost of a wintry night, the mixed aromas of cinnamon and scented pine cones, or the sound of wrapping-paper ripping. These carols contain so many memories! Yet how did these carols come to be? And how are they so “Christmassy?”

Carols pre-date Christian antiquity by about a thousand years and were mainly pagan songs to mark the winter solstice. As Christianity spread, however, Christendom soon took shape and replaced the pagan celebrations. Instead of pagan songs, hymns were composed to coincide with the liturgical season. A Roman Bishop in the year 129 AD had the hymn “Angel’s Hymn” composed to be sung in the liturgy for Christmas in Rome. St. Ambrose composed *Veni Redemptor Gentium* as a catechetical and apologetical tool to oppose the Arian heresy. Yet, it was not until the 13th century when St. Francis of Assisi created the Nativity Scene where hymns and canticles were developed. By the 19th century, people began to assemble in groups of carolers. Known as “waits,” these groups of singers gathered to perform for passers-by, who traditionally thanked them with drinks or treats. We see this referred to in *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* in the text “come bring us some figgy- pudding.” Caroling continues today whether on street corners, house-to- house, or within families.

Yet, what makes these tunes so popular are the stirring melodies that are paired with sonorities that provoke our memories of Christmas. The “Christmassy” flavor of carols is mixed with nostalgia of the festivities that celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. *Joy to the World* or *Silent Night* are songs that bring intense and contagious joy. Even after the Christmas Mass we feel the urge to shout “joy to the world” because the Lord is here! Jesus Christ is the reason for our celebration. The only response is to cry out with joy! Invite the family and perhaps start a tradition! Sing a few carols here and there during the Christmas season and maybe a few advent carols to build up to Christmas. It is truly a time to be merry because God sent His Son to redeem us all.

Music

“The Silence of Lent”, Article 6, January 2021

As we near the end of the Christmas season, we see near the horizon the advent of Lent. Historically speaking, Holy Mother Church would enter into the three weeks of *Septuagesima* which is translated to “the seventy days” before Easter. According to Dom Gueranger in his “Liturgical Year,” the season of *Septuagesima* is “one of serious thought.” Although we celebrate the beauty and loveliness of the little Child born to us in Bethlehem, He is soon to attain the fullness of His age particularly in His baptism. Therefore, we are to consider the “debts we have contracted towards that infinite justice, which is about to punish the innocent One instead of us the guilty.” We are to excite our hearts to sorrow and mourning over our souls. Even though *Septuagesima* is a tradition that exists only in the Extraordinary form calendar, it is not limited to it in terms of pious practice. The main message, nonetheless, is repentance and penance.

Dom Gueranger reflects that the time of *Septuagesima* should be seen as looking forward to Easter. In other words, it is none other than the countdown to Easter. The time of Lent is analogous to our time here on Earth and the preparation for the Heavenly country. This entails the necessary suffering that has to be undergone for sanctification by closely imitating the divine Victim.

Holy Mother Church provides a plethora of practices for an edifying Lent and a fruitful Easter. She tempers many elements of the Liturgy to a near solemn silence, particularly in the realm of music. Fasting on music demonstrates both the necessity for the people of God to enter into deeper contemplation on the Passion of Christ while at the same time serving as a penance. An observance of both the people and the musicians.

In the following articles, we will explore the mystery of Lent by observing the music and even ruminating on the texts of these subdued chants. Some musical jargon will be used, but in the end the whole message will be wrapped-up to make relevant, in common terms, these musical things that seem to be only accessible to the musician or the elite.

Although chant may only be sung by a few, it is not limited to the choir. Holy Mother Church, in Her genius, composed these pieces for Her children to meditate on, and they are inebriating for those who thirst to hear them. This journey of Lent is made manifest through the music that accompanies it. Let us therefore embark in this expedition in exploring the serenades of Lent.

Music

“Fasting from the Organ”, Article 7, February 2021

Oftentimes the concerns, duties, and anxieties of the world saturate our souls so much that we begin to dissipate and, if left unchecked, we fall into acedia, a small step toward a cold hatred of God. Fortunately, He instituted a season to renew our fervor to offer penance, prayer, and good works in reparation for our sins and the sins of the world! Holy Mother Church has prepared the way for Her children to reassess their priorities and recollect in order to come back to the road of Christian perfection. Particularly in Lent, Holy Mother Church has tempered the liturgy by subduing certain elements of it—such as the organ—to encourage the faithful to practice penance, declaring that it may only be used to support the singing or on solemnities and feasts. This is to give emphasis to the voice, the principle instrument of the Liturgy. In this article we will see why the organ is put to a near silence and why the human voice is given great importance.

When the organ is mentioned some may immediately think of Toccata in D Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach (the stereotypical “scary” piece) while others may think of wedding pieces such as “A Midsummer’s Night Dream” by Felix Mendelssohn or the “Bridal Chorus” by Richard Wagner. For many, the organ is typically known as a “loud” and “grand” instrument. Especially in the seasons of Christmas or Easter, the organ is usually harnessed to express the sublime joy that radiates from the depths of the soul. Yet, the organ can also play like a chirping bird or lament with groans like a soul in travail. In short, the organ is far more versatile than people think, but its greater service still is to support and embellish the divine instrument: the human voice.

Pope Saint Pius X in his *motu proprio, Tra Le Sollecitudini*, states that, “as the singing should always have the principal place, the organ... should merely sustain and never oppress it.” The General Instruction of the Roman Missal also emphasizes that the organ is to sustain the singing of both the choir and the people. Therefore, the organ serves as a foundation especially if the choir or the people are timid when they sing.

Since singing takes principal place, this rule is even more pertinent in Lent. By restraining the organ, the voice is heard clearly. Sometimes the organ overpowers the voice and at other times it encourages the people to sing louder. But this Lenten fasting from organ music invites the faithful to look interiorly, to listen to Holy Mother Church sing, to recollect, and remain in quiet. The organ disappears and what is left is the echo of a distant chant like that of remnant incense floating in the air. Hence, the Liturgy moves in a gentle rhythm between chants, readings, and actions that stills the dissipated soul to return to God. Lent brings the soul from the noisy world and the fast-paced duties of work to enter into loving silence. This silence is not an absence of sound but of ordered sound that serves as physical models for the soul to imitate and reorder itself. Then the soul is recollected with renewed vigor to suffer with loving patience for the promise of the Life to come. In this way, music during Lent should lead the faithful to contemplate.

The organ is an exceptional instrument and can aid in making palpable the mysteries of the Liturgy. However, the voice and the chants that are composed for it can plumb the mysteries far deeper than any other musical instrument. For this reason the Church heightens the voice during Lent to contemplate the mysteries of the Lord's Passion.

Music

“The Mystery of Christ, Humbled and Exalted”, Article 8, March 2021

The Catholic Church has ready a repertoire of chants that hold pride of place in the liturgies of Holy Week, but none can compare to the gradual *Christus Factus Est*. [The gradual is usually a text from Scripture placed between the Biblical Reading and the Gospel. It has been replaced in the Ordinary Form by the Responsorial Psalm. -Editor] Perhaps one of the most beautiful of all these chants, *Christus* not only strengthens the soul after having endured her Lenten practices, but propels her to meditate on the sublime mystery of the death of Jesus Christ. By listening to the melody and ruminating on the texts, we can see the reason for its place in the liturgies of this magnificent week.

What great sentiment! What incredible warmth the melodies soar with! We have only to read those familiar texts of St. Paul to understand this joy, “Christ became obedient for us unto death, even death on a Cross,” and he goes on exhorting, “therefore, God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every Name.” When one listens to the monks of Solesmes or of Santo Domingo, we hear that joy of St. Paul with the first three notes of “*Christus*”, an anticipation of His salvific action. And for whom? “*Pro nobis*” for us! The “*nobis*” is elongated in melismatic fashion! Then we begin to soar with the word “*obediens*” to emphasize the obedience of the second Adam that undoes the first. Finally, we are led to the underlying theme, “*mortem autem crucis.*” We ruminate on “*crucis*,” the cross, and let it seep into our souls. Robert Fowells, in his *Chant Made Simple*, describes the meaning behind the notes. The three repercussive f - notes of “*crucis*” are a reminder of the nails driven onto the hands and feet of Jesus; then the pattern f-e-g-a is a reminder of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, followed by the final motif, f - a - g - a, representing the joy of the Resurrection. One who is not versed in music need only to listen to the tension and resolution of the “*crucis*” to understand the hidden sentiment. However, we have yet to reach the climax of the chant!

The verse begins to climb on the word “*Deus*” [God], then exclaims like a trumpet on “*exaltavit*” [exalted], after which the melody is propelled on to the word “*illum*” [Him]. The melody ascends like a plume of incense and remains in the air like misty residue, filling the whole space with the fragrance of “*illum.*” The melody invites the soul to ruminate on this word “*illum*” and to relish this mystery that no words can articulate. Then the soul ponders “*nomen*,” the name that is above every other name. The word “*nomen*” rings like a fadeless echo that continually reverberates in the memory of our minds; we are entranced with the image of Jesus exalted by His death on the Cross. We can see why Holy Mother Church has composed this chant and has chosen it for Holy Week due to the profundity of the message and the efficacy of the composition in elucidating this mystery. Although, *Christus* is placed in different liturgies between the Extraordinary and Ordinary Forms of the Mass, it nonetheless prepares the faithful to meditate on the Passion of the Lord.

In the Extraordinary Form, the *Christus* is set in the liturgies of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday; while in the Ordinary Form it is chanted on Palm Sunday and Good

Friday. Regarding the latter form, the chant remains as an optional gradual before the Passion gospels of Palm Sunday and Good Friday, disposing the faithful to meditate on the Passion. Similarly, the Extraordinary Form prepares the faithful incrementally over these three days. In the first day, Maundy Thursday, the chant only mentions Christ and His obedience to the point of death, then later during the night it is repeated, but with the addition of His death on the Cross. Finally on Good Friday before the Passion according to St. John, *Christus* is sung in full because Jesus is now exalted by His crucifixion. Holy Saturday repeats the theme to cultivate the double sentiment of sorrow and anticipatory joy. In effect, the souls of the Church are constantly chewing on this theme throughout Holy Week and are soberly inebriated while being sedated from the chaos of the world. Yet, these same souls that devoutly meditate with the Church in Her liturgies are able to, in a sense, touch this mystery of the death of Christ.

The intangible is made tangible by the synthesis of text and melody, and we are able to imagine in our minds the great drama of Calvary. Without the material elements of the liturgy, we will have a far greater difficulty painting the image of the event in our hearts. Music in this instance, particularly chant, makes palpable the Divine mysteries, especially that of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Christus Factus Est* simply brings to the fore - and keeps us present to - the Face of love that reflects the love of our Father in Heaven

Music
Article 9, April 2021

“I am risen, and I am always with you...” These are the first words of the introit leading to the Mass of Easter Sunday. They are the words of Jesus. There is no need of explanation; we only need to repeat the words in our heart, “I am risen... I am always with you...” They are enough to fill the soul with a sigh of peace. After the travails of the forty days of Lent or of the birth pangs of life the soul hears the voice of her Bridegroom, “I am risen, and I am always with you...” We may be experiencing many trials, and they seem to be increasing exponentially without any stop in sight, but God provides moments of reprieve and peace because He is “always with you.” And these are just the first words; there is more encouragement to come!

The Lord consoles us further with His presence as psalm 138 is quoted, “you have placed your hand upon me, alleluia; your wisdom has been shown to be most wonderful, alleluia, alleluia.” The wisdom, *scientia*, or knowledge of God extends beyond us, and at the same time His hand guides us because He has “searched me and knows me,” and He knows, “when I sit down and when I rise up.” God knows our weaknesses and thus upholds us. He knows how to navigate us around our obstacles and ultimately bring us to Himself. Hence, we see how wonderful is His wisdom. However, the voice that sings the chant is not only us, but is primarily Jesus Christ Who sings and prays on our behalf.

As the choir chants the introit, the choir represents Holy Mother Church, the Bride of Christ, chanting with the Bridegroom. Thus, we witness a sacred duet. However, this does not exclude those of us who are not singing, but rather invites us through the heart the act of the will to join with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Then the entire sentiment of Jesus unfolds before us like the sunrise that dispels the mist of the seashore, or the unveiling of a secret meadow, or the beholding of a mountain range. What we experience is the immensity of God’s love for us where the only thing we can do is to gaze back lovingly. And we remind ourselves of St. John’s exhortation in his letter that charity consists in this: “not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10, Douay-Rheims) Therefore, we have our hope in Jesus Christ through His Passion and Resurrection: “I am risen and I am always with you.”

During this Easter Season we are to rejoice because we are Easter people, as Pope St. John Paul II says, and our song is "Alleluia!" Our mourning is done, we are but to sing joyfully to the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever!