

Tridentine Community News

June 19, 2022 – External Solemnity of Corpus Christi

Chant Settings of the Mass

If you have been attending the Tridentine Mass for a while, you have surely noticed that at High Masses, when the choir does not sing a polyphonic Mass, we sing Gregorian Chant settings of the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. You may have also noticed that each of these settings is designated by a number (e.g.: Mass XI) and usually by a name (e.g.: *Orbis Factor*).

In the 19th century, the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes, in France, became a center of scholarship for Gregorian Chant. With the support of the Vatican, Solesmes (www.solesmes.com) has standardized chant notation and publishes numerous books on the subject. Interestingly, the chant we know today as popularized by Solesmes is actually somewhat different from ancient chant, but that is a topic for another day.

There are 18 chant settings of the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei). Some have names as well as numbers. Although some are meant for certain liturgical occasions, in practice they are often used outside of their intended purposes:

- I – *Lux et Órigo* – For Paschal (Easter) time
- II – *Kyrie Fons Bonitátis* – For First Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- III – *Kyrie Deus Sempitérne* – For First Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- IV – *Cunctipotens Génitor Deus* – For Second Class Feasts (customarily used on Feasts of the Apostles)
- V – *Kyrie Magnæ Deus Poténtiæ* – For Second Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- VI – *Kyrie Rex Génitor* – For Second Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- VII – *Kyrie Rex Splendens* – For Second Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- VIII – *de Ángelis* – For Second Class Feasts (very popular)
- IX – *Cum Júbilo* – For Feasts of Our Lady
- X – *Alme Pater* – For Feasts of Our Lady (rarely heard)
- XI – *Orbis Factor* – For Sundays throughout the year (popular)
- XII – *Pater Cuncta* – For Third Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- XIII – *Stelliféri Córditor Orbis* – For Third Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- XIV – *Jesu Redémptor* – For Third Class Feasts (rarely heard)
- XV – *Dominátor Deus* – For Christmas Commemorations & Ferias (rarely heard)
- XVI – For Ferias throughout the year (rarely heard)
- XVII – For Sundays in Advent and Lent
- XVIII – *Deus Génitor Alme* – For Advent, Lent, and, in modified form, for Requiems (popular and commonly used in the Novus Ordo)

In addition, there are several “*ad libitum*” (optional) Kyries, Glorias, Sanctuses and Agnus Deis, the most popular of which is the Ambrosian Gloria. The Ambrosian Rite is native to the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy.

A music program must balance a desire to expose its congregation to a wide variety of Mass settings with the need to repeat certain settings more often than others in order to help the faithful become familiar with, and indeed memorize, them. Tridentine Music Directors generally favor Masses VIII and XI because they are relatively easy to learn. In a sense, they have become famous for being famous, as they are employed at most Latin Mass sites. Mass XVIII has also gained popularity at Novus Ordo Masses in recent decades, as it the simplest of all to sing. Any effort to reintroduce Latin into the Mass should be applauded. (One could argue that we have EWTN to thank for setting a good example in with Latin chant in their Novus Ordo Masses.)

The image shows a musical score for a Gregorian chant. The title is "IV. — In festis II. classis. I. (Cunctipotens Genitor Deus)". The score is written on a four-line staff with square neumes. The lyrics are: "Y-ri e e- lé- i-son. iij. Chri- ste e- lé- i-son. iij. Ky-ri- e e- lé- i-son." The score includes a large initial 'K' and a 'C' for 'Cunctipotens'. There are also some smaller initials like 'X. s.' and 'iij.'.

Distinct from the Mass settings, there are six versions of the Credo. Most Latin Mass sites in North America primarily use Credo III, a particularly mellifluous and memorable melody. In Europe, Credo I rivals III in popularity.

Tridentine choirs typically use the *Liber Usualis* (commonly known as just the “Liber” [LEE-bear]) as their main music reference, though that book is losing ground to Benjamin Bloomfield’s convenient Chant Tools app and web site.

The Liber contains not only the Ordinaries, but also the Propers (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory & Communion Antiphons) of the Mass. Many Liber editions were produced, with Latin or English rubrics, with chant or modern notation, and with various years of publication. The best of the lot, the 1963 Liber with chant notation and English rubrics, was recently reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications (www.pcpbooks.com).

Solesmes’ current publications are available in North America via Oregon Catholic Press (<https://www.ocp.org/en-us/latin-and-chant>). These books are primarily intended for use in the Novus Ordo, although the Ordinaries have obvious application in the Traditional Mass. Two of the more popular books are the 1974 *Graduále Románum*, the equivalent of the Liber for the Novus Ordo, containing the Latin Propers and Ordinaries of the Mass; and the *Liber Cantuális*, a subset of the *Graduále Romanum* containing only the Ordinaries of the Mass. Some Mass settings contain multiple versions of one piece. For example, Mass XI contains multiple Kyries; we usually use Kyrie B. Note that the Solesmes books’ designation of the multiple options does not always match the Liber Usualis’ designation. For example, Mass XI Kyrie B per Solesmes is the only Kyrie the Liber publishes for Mass XI. Here in metro Detroit and Windsor, priests find the thin blue *Liber Cantuális* useful at the altar because it provides the notes for the Asperges and both versions of the Vidi Aquam, the beginning of the Gloria, and the Ite, Missa Est.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 06/21 6:00 PM: High Mass at *Our Lady of Good Counsel, Plymouth* (St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Confessor) – Celebrant: Fr. Clint McDonell