

# Gregorian Chant

## History

The Gregorian chant style of worship can be traced back to about AD800, during the reign of Charlemagne over the Frankish Kingdom (modern day France, Germany and Switzerland). It is named after Pope Gregory the Great (Pope between 590 and 604). Charlemagne wanted the Roman Catholic Church to sing the Psalms as they did in Rome. The chants were therefore first sung in Latin but in more modern times they have also been translated into English. For the next few hundred years the different chants were just passed down orally through the generations until the first written document was made in the 11th century.

## Style

The beauty of Gregorian Chant is in its simplicity, hence sometimes referred to as plainsong. The chants are sung a capella and in unison, with no harmonies and no accompaniment, and stay within one octave. The value is placed on the words and not so much the music, as it is vital that every word can be heard clearly. The lyrics are mostly taken from Psalms and more recently from liturgy (eg from the Common Book of Prayer, first published in 1549), and these are used in two main types of service; Divine Office and celebration of Mass.

## Example Lyrics:

### Gloria

*Latin (Gloria in excelsis Deo = Glory be to God on high) - Sung in either English or Latin at the start of the service. Not sung in Lent or Advent.*

Gloria in excelsis Deo  
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.  
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.  
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.  
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,  
Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe,  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.  
Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis;  
Qui tollis peccata mundi,  
suscipe deprecationem nostram;  
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,  
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus.  
Tu solus Dominus.  
Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.  
Cum Sancto Spiritu,  
in gloria Dei Patris.  
Amen.

*Glory be to God on high,  
and in earth peace, good will towards men.*

*We praise thee, we bless thee,  
we worship thee, we glorify thee,  
we give thanks to thee for thy great glory.  
O Lord God, heavenly King,  
God the Father Almighty.*

*O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ:  
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer.  
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,  
have mercy upon us.*

*For thou only art holy;  
thou only art the Lord;  
thou only, O Christ,  
with the Holy Ghost,  
art the Most High in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.*

**Sanctus**

*Latin (Sanctus = Holy) - Sung in either English or Latin.*

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.  
Hosanna in excelsis.*

*Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God of hosts,  
heaven and earth are full of thy glory:  
Glory be to thee,  
O Lord most High.*