

## GREGORIAN CHANT

\*\*\*The history of Gregorian Chant begins before the birth of Christ. Chant is based upon the songs sung in the synagogues and middle Eastern countries. It's fascinating to know that some of today's chants are based upon the actual songs which Jesus sang when he was living in Jerusalem.

Gregorian Chant was adopted by the Christian Church in about the 6th Century and it quickly became an essential part of Christian worship. It was named after Pope Gregory the Great who unified all the chants into one collection. This soon became an essential part of monastic worship and monks would write new chants and take them from monastery to monastery.

Eventually there was sufficient Gregorian Chant for all the services—approximately nine a day, seven days a week and even more on great feast days. In the early days the chant wasn't copied into books. It had to be memorized and it would take monks many years to learn all the different songs. Eventually they worked out a way to write music down, and words and notes were copied into one large book which all the choir monks would gather round and sing from.

After many centuries plainchant became very complex, and people would even sing bawdy lyrics to the chants. By the way, the name "plainchant" doesn't mean the music is boring! Quite the reverse—it's from the old French "*plein chant*" meaning "full singing".

Gregorian Chant is a beautiful form of music—peaceful, and meditative. Many people like it because it gives a glimpse into something beyond this world.

It never ceases to amaze one at the popularity of Gregorian Chant—it seems to be particularly suited to the present age when people seek the spiritual, and desire contact with a world beyond their own.

\*\*\*(excerpted from [www.music-for-church-choirs.com](http://www.music-for-church-choirs.com))

**SUGGESTION:** The next time you have the opportunity to listen to the Choir in your Church, or if you are visiting a Church, it would be a nice gesture if you could compliment the Director of the Choir. Remember all the hours that they have practiced. Many Choir groups are expected to process outside when there is a special Liturgical Ceremony. For some, that would be quite an accomplishment, as we have a difficult time walking and talking...let alone singing, reading music and walking!

**May God bless our Choir!**



Mary Immaculate of Lourdes  
NEWTON, MA

## The Choir



### *A Prayer for Members of Choirs*

*Bless us, O Lord, who lead Your praise.  
What we sing with our lips help us  
to believe in our hearts,  
and what we believe in our hearts  
help us to practice in our lives;  
for Jesus Christ's sake.  
Amen.*

## **The Choir**

### **The Loft... The Proper Placement**

\*The choir is supposed to be part of the worshipping community. Is there anybody who thought that because the choir was in a choir loft the members weren't really at Mass? Choir lofts support the fact that the choir's location shows that it has a special liturgical purpose.

The choir is supposed to be placed in a location where its participation is facilitated. Choir lofts are built in the best part of a church for this. The choir is elevated, giving it a clear view of everything happening at Mass and the sound (if the church has been constructed properly) carries much better from the loft than some other portion of the church.

The choir is also supposed to be able to participate sacramentally in Mass, i.e., receive Holy Communion. As long as the choir can get down from the loft there isn't any problem with the choir being in the loft.

The reality of the choir is that if it can be seen, it serves as a distraction to the faithful at Mass. The choir is constantly busy, switching pages, taking cues, changing positions and occasionally dropping music. Placing the choir in plain view of everyone is not only a distraction to the faithful, it is a distraction to the choir members who may get flustered when in plain view.

In 1903 Pope Saint Pius X ordered that choirs should be hidden behind screens if they were too noticeable in church. His reasoning is still sound today.

If the choir is facing the congregation, it isn't directing its music towards the proper focal point. In fact, it will have its back to what is most important, namely, the Eucharist.

\*(excerpted from: [www.catholicliturgy.com](http://www.catholicliturgy.com))

## **List of Duties of a Choir Member**

**\*\****With choir membership comes a number of specific duties. While each choir has unique membership expectations, most groups generally outline a list of membership responsibilities that include rehearsals, private preparation, and the anticipated commitment during a calendar year or performance season. Religious choirs may have additional membership duties revolving around feast day performances, especially if the parish celebrates the Tridentine Mass.*

### **REHEARSALS**

Choirs generally expect members to be on time and prepared for rehearsals. Many choirs have weekday rehearsals in the evenings. Some rehearse an hour or two before a worship service or performance. Members should arrive early to properly warm up their voices for a rehearsal. If missing a rehearsal is unavoidable, a choir member should let the choir director know as soon as possible in case a substitute is needed.

### **PREPARATION**

Choir membership typically requires additional practice time at home beyond rehearsals. Because choir directors generally select music in advance of worship services or performances, a choir member should obtain any sheet music and accompanying CDs early in order to practice at home prior to a rehearsal. Going over the music at home ensures rehearsals will run as efficiently as possible.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Choirs typically require participation during Sunday worship services as well as special holiday performances. A choir member should commit to normal weekday rehearsals as well.

\*\* (excerpted from: [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com))