In the worship of God in the Old Testament, the singers sweetened worship by the devout music of the Temple. The melodious chanting of the Psalms pierced the Temple veil, and came before the glorious presence of God in pleasing tones.

In our Christian worship, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI exhorts us to pray “that the beauty of God may give to the liturgy its full splendor through liturgical music, and open at the same time a window to heaven.”

Not surprisingly the early Church, with its Jewish heritage, brought this style of ancient and revered style of chanting into the Christian liturgy. This style of Jewish chanting, “cantillation,” is preserved in the Church’s Sacred Liturgy, for example, with the chanting of Prophecies, Epistles, and Gospels in the sung forms of the Mass.

The exuberant and expressive spirit of the Jewish chants, which is preserved in the Gregorian repertoire, is not bound by musical meter, as Dr. Abraham Binder has observed: “The rhythm of Biblical chant is of the irregular or asymmetrical brand. To place it behind rigidly spaced bar lines is to imprison its ancient and authentic character. Biblical chant is not influenced by and musical metric tropes, but rather by the accentuation ingrained in the text, which determines its musical flow.”

In the Divine Office of Tenebrae (“Shadows”), which are “hours” of the “Divine Office” during the Sacred Triduum of Holy Week, we see a splendid example of how Catholic liturgy preserves the ancient Jewish style of liturgical chanting, “cantillation,” as the lector sings the Hebrew letters with a florid of notes.

Whether the Resurrection Choir and Orchestra is singing Mozart’s acclaimed “Coronation Mass,” or the St. Cecilia Choir is singing a famous Mass of Palestrina, when we get to the *Et incarnátus est* during the *Credo*, everyone kneels down. But why?

The custom of genuflecting at the *Et incarnátus est* was introduced in the thirteenth century at the influence of Saint Louis IX. Rev. Geoffrey of Beaulieu, O.P., the confessor of Saint Louis IX King of France for over twenty years, once described how the king was much edified by the custom that when *Credo* was chanted, all profoundly bowed at the words *Et homo factus est*.

King Saint Louis was then inspired to further emphasize this reverence by commanding that in his Royal Chapel and in the other churches of his kingdom, people not only to bow, but also to devoutly kneel. In this act of humility, all genuflected to adore the Incarnate Son of God. This custom spread throughout the entire Church.

**Music in the Spiritual Life**

At a young age, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity was an accomplished pianist, renowned in France for her talent. She attended the Conservatory of Dijon from the age of eight, and spent hours every day practicing at the piano.

As she matured and sought God, she translated these beautiful, melodious sounds from the piano into the chambers of her heart, the very strings of her soul.

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity recognized that music creates true beauty outwardly thus bringing the soul to communion with the Holy Trinity, and simultaneously can create an even more beautiful inner symphony when the soul sings for God in an unrestrained hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity wrote: “A praise of Glory is a soul of silence that remains like a lyre under the mysterious touch of the Holy Spirit so that He may draw from it divine harmonies; it knows that suffering is a string that produces still more beautiful sounds; so it loves to see this string on its instrument that it may more delightfully move the heart of God…”

**Singing from the Heart**

When someone sings, words just are not enough. If you sing without putting your heart into it, your singing is “lugubrious”—it is like it is just fulfilling a function, getting the job done—there is no joy.

When we sing we need to sing from the heart, especially when it comes to prayer. What God wants from us is sincerity of heart—genuine desire—that unceasing desire to be with Him, to remain in His presence, to please Him, to do His Will. Thus, sacred music is only sacred when the soul sings.

The wonderful sacred melodies we enjoy in Gregorian chant have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, even as the sacred words, taken from Sacred Scripture, were so inspired. The melody of the Gregorian chant helps us to lodge the holy words we sing deep in our hearts where, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, we may “treasure them” in order the better to “ponder over them.” Many holy souls over century upon century carefully guarded both melody and text so that subsequent generations might benefit from the Church’s sacred song.

We ought to follow the advice of Pope Saint Pius X, who told us to meditate on the sacred words of the liturgy before making music before the Lord. If the renewal of liturgical music today is to bear lasting fruit, then each of us must cultivate a liturgical piety based on profound and prayerful meditation on the Word, and the sacred music of the liturgy is here to assist us as we raise hearts and minds in prayer.
Sunday, May 10

To Spring

Music for Violin & Piano featuring music by Beethoven, Dello Joio, Grieg, and Vaughan Williams

Presented by
Kate Carter, Violin
Louise Chan, Piano

Funds raised go to support the sacred music at St. John Cantius

1:45 pm Lunch & 2:30 pm Performance
Join us in the Church Hall for the Performance.

Get tickets at the door or online at www.cantius.org

Saturday, April 25

All the World’s a Stage

The Seven Ages of Man - Their Exits and Entrances Through the works of William Shakespeare

Presented by
The Northwestern University Shakespeare Ensemble
Linda Gates, Director

On the Occasion of Shakespeare’s 451st Birthday

$15 (adults) - $5 (youth) - $10 each (seniors age 65 & students)
Funds raised go to support the sacred music at St. John Cantius

6:00 pm Performance
The performance will be in the Church Hall. A reception follows.

Get tickets at the door or at www.cantius.org
As the Patrons of Sacred Music strive to present the finest music at the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, we hope that the artistry & beauty of our music will help many people rediscover the beauty of God, whose voice is heard so clearly through music. We realize that without financial development, the continuance of sacred music would be in jeopardy. Thus, in solidarity with the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius, whose mission it is “to restore the sacred,” the Patrons of Sacred Music are now conducting a “Raffle Fundraiser” fundraiser to support the choirs and orchestras at St. John Cantius as they make their musical offering before God.

After the 12:30 p.m. Latin High Mass on Sunday, June 14, 2015, all are invited to come to the church hall at 2:00 p.m. where we will offer concessions for purchase (pizza, soda, candy, popcorn, etc.). At 3:00 p.m. we will present a live recreation of an old radio show about a crime fighter, “The Green Hornet,” featuring Jay Warren on our Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ, with the “Those Were the Days Radio Players.” Tickets for “The Green Hornet” are $10 for general admission and $5 for kids under 12. After “The Green Hornet” show we will have the raffle drawing. It is not necessary to be present to win. Order tickets to attend “The Green Hornet” online at www.cantius.org or call 1-800-838-3006 & ask for “The Green Hornet.” We hope you will support this modest effort to make it a great success! I thank you in advance for your support and interest. May God bless the sacrifices you make to assist us in restoring the beauty of our Catholic faith through sacred music.

Fr. C. Frank Phillips, C.R.
President of A.M.D.G. Foundation
Patrons of Sacred Music