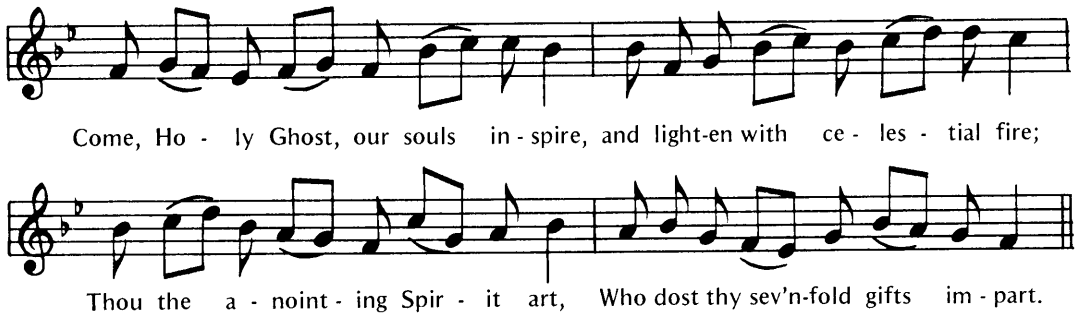
COME, HOLY GHOST, OUR SOULS INSPIRE
(Komm, Gott Schopfer)

As a Latin antiphon know as Veni Creator Spiritus ("Come, Holy Spirit"), this hymn was being sung as early as the 10th century, maybe even the 9th. It has been in use, then, for a thousand years! In Benedictine monasteries, it was especially appointed for morning prayers on Pentecost Sunday. Some churches now use it most often in ordination services.

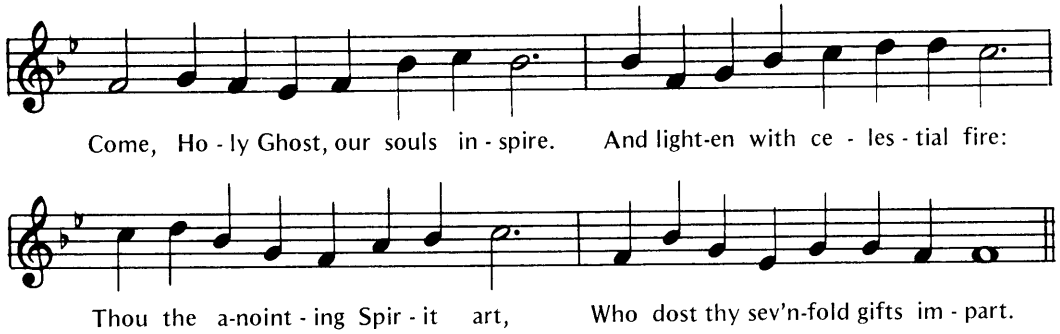
Some of the words in John Cosin's English translation of this Latin hymn may give you trouble. Perhaps these definitions will help:

Ghost = Spirit inspire = breathe into celestial = heavenly
anointing = pouring oil on the head, as in the coronation of a king; it is a sign of setting someone apart for a special purpose.
sev'nfold gifts = wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord are gifts of the Holy Spirit according to Isaiah 11:2 (there are other lists also)
unction = oil perpetual = everlasting
dullness of our blinded sight = only God can help us see things as they really are.

The hymn tune is based on the plainsong melody, Veni Creator Spiritus, that looked like this:



Notice that the melody has many places where two notes are sung to a syllable, producing a flowing effect. Like all plainsongs, it was meant to be sung in unison without accompaniment. A more rhythmic version of the melody, with one note per syllable, was published with a harmonized accompaniment by J. Klug in GEISTLICHE LIEDER ("Spiritual Songs") in 1533. That tune, Komm, Gott Schopfer, looked like this:



The Bach harmonization appears to be in the key of G major, but it has no f sharp. Actually, it is written in neither a major nor minor key, but rather in the Mixolydian mode like the ancient plainsong.

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