

## O, I WOULD SING OF MARY'S CHILD

Music is very powerful. It can make us happy, sad, calm, excited, or give us many other different feelings. Think of some of the songs that you have sung, or music that you have heard recently. How did it make you feel?

Music is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. When we are very happy about something, many times we will sing either a song we already know, or a song we make up ourselves.

"O, I Would Sing of Mary's Child" tells of being so happy about the birth of Jesus that we sing about it. Look at the first stanza — it says "O, I would sing of Mary's child who all God's children reconciled." Reconcile means to make everything right again — to make us love one another. Jesus came to help us love one another and love God.

Read the words of this hymn. List some of the things that are sung about. Can you add some of your own reasons for singing about Christmas?

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The words of this hymn were written by Melva Rorem. Melva has taught elementary school, and now works for a publishing house in Minnesota. "Hearing what a composer has done with the words I've written is exciting and satisfying," Melva said recently.

This music was written by Austin Lovelace, a man who directs choirs in a church like yours. The tune that he has written for "O, I Would Sing of Mary's Child" is not in a *major* key and it's not in a *minor* key. Rather, it is in the *dorian mode*. A *mode* is the scale that the melody and accompaniment use. Writing in different modes is one way that composers create songs to express different feelings — like happy, sad, excited, quiet, and others. *Dorian* sounds much like the familiar *minor* scale, except that the sixth pitch of the scale (in this case C) is made sharp.

If you play the piano, try playing the first line of "O, I Would Sing of Mary's Child" in each of these keys:

E Major 

E Minor (only *f* is sharp) 

E Dorian (*f* and *c* are sharp) 

If you don't play the piano, ask your choir director to play for you. Listen to the difference between the three keys! How do the different keys make you feel? How do the different keys change the mood of the tune?

Major

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Minor

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Dorian

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Now sing "O, I Would Sing of Mary's Child" again. I think that the mode of *dorian* adds a sense of mystery and beauty to the words — just as the birth of Jesus is an event of the most wonderful mystery and beauty. *O, I would sing of Jesus' birth that brought great joy to all the earth.*

Hymn Study by Mark Acker