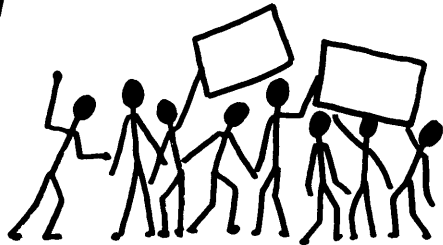
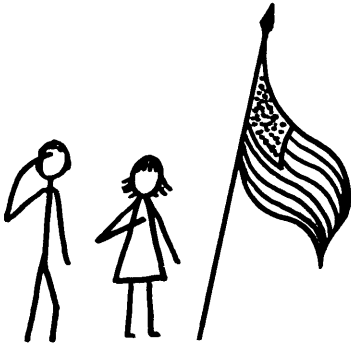


## OF THE FATHER'S LOVE BEGOTTEN



Across all ages -- at different times and places -- men have reached moments in their lives when they felt compelled to show their beliefs and feelings by some kind of ACTION!

In our time and place, we see many examples of people expressing their convictions by taking actions: meetings - marches - strikes - going to vote - flying the flag - moratoriums - worship services - all these are ways that people's beliefs are shown by ACTIONS.

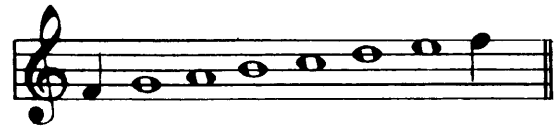
Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, in the 4th century A.D., reached such a moment in his life when he decided to leave his successful background as a lawyer and statesman from a prominent Spanish family and become a simple monk at the age of fifty-seven. He then devoted the rest of his life to the purpose of composing sacred poetry to help the cultured and educated people of his day to better understand the meaning of Christianity.

From his longer poems have come three hymns which continue to express the meaning of the Christian faith in our times: "Earth Has Many a Noble City," "Despair Not, O Heart, In Thy Sorrow," "Of the Father's Love Begotten."

Prudentius based the words from "Of the Father's Love Begotten" on Matthew 28:19, which is a form of the Gloria Patri. He added a concluding phrase not in the Gospel, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

The tune, "Divinum Mysterium," to which we now sing a translation of the Prudentius text, comes from a 13th century Plainsong, transposed to the key of E flat for easier congregational singing. The British Museum houses a priceless volume of medieval sacred and secular songs called *Piae Cantiones* in which "Divinum Mysterium" was found.

The music of the Middle Ages was based upon a Modal system of tonality rather than our modern notation which dates from the 17th century. There were twelve modes or keys based on tones moving diatonically, extending from the keynote to the tone an octave above. If we were to transcribe these patterns with modern notation, the Lydian Mode V Scale would look something like this:



How about dividing the choir into groups to act out the different ways "Of the Father's Love Begotten" might have been expressed since its beginning. Included might be: (1) The reading of the Gloria Patri in Matthew 28:19. (2) The reciting of the text as poetry by Prudentius. (3) The singing of the words as oral tradition, watching and imitating a song leader. (4) The singing of the Plainsong with pitches indicated by *neumes* (signs used before notation was devised to show the direction of the melody). (5) The singing of the hymn as it is found in our hymnals today - using numbered scale steps, syllables, and finally, the words. Notice that most of the time the melody is diatonic with only a few intervals - and these are all 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths. Can you find them?

The choir could also spend some time exploring ways that beliefs are expressed as ACTIONS in our times. Newspaper clippings might be brought and discussed about how MOST group actions have only a handful of leaders whose beliefs are being expressed and how the majority of the people in the crowd join in without really knowing what it's all about.

Perhaps you will decide that "Of the Father's Love Begotten" is a good way to remember that God chose each of us - individually - to be His sons. Choir service is just one of the actions by which we accept the responsibility He has given us and express our beliefs in Him! As we grow older, the important moments in our life will demand matching ACTIONS to our individual beliefs rather than merely following any group as a part of the crowd.

*"He is Alpha and Omega,  
He, the Source, the Ending He  
Of the things that are, that have been,  
And that future years shall see . . ."*