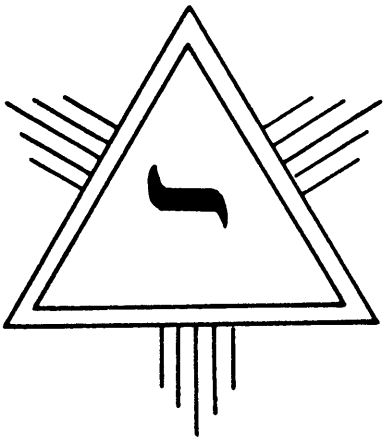
OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN

Gregorian Chant



Can you imagine that we are in the 6th century after Christ lived on earth . . . standing high in the hills at a Roman monastery?

Sh! The monks are so busy with their studying and working and thinking that they don't even notice us. The word "monk" means "alone." That's why monks live in buildings called monasteries, away from people, so they can devote their life to learning more about God.

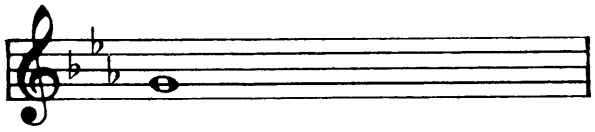
See how simply they dress. And they're taking turns with the gardening and cleaning and cooking, too.

Some of the monks are learning to paint religious pictures called "icons," and others are working with "mosaics." We can still see examples of how monks used art to teach about Christianity.

Another group of monks is busy on a difficult assignment from Pope Gregory, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The Disciples had helped Christianity spread throughout Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor, even though the early Christians were put to death if their meeting places were discovered. So the courageous Christians met in secret places – praying and talking quietly about their faith. Their music had to be quiet, too. They took the scriptures from the Bible and chanted them in the rhythm of speech. Pope Gregory wants all of these chants gathered into one collection.

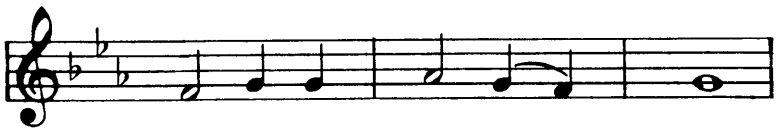
One of the most beautiful is "THE LORD'S PRAYER" – this month's hymn study. First, say the words. Notice how the PITCH of your voice goes higher or lower on some words – and how you pause at the end of phrases.

Now, try chanting the words as you speak them. Notice how each verse begins on the same pitch. This is called the INTONATION:



Our Father, who art in heaven

Listen to the next notes and show with your hands whether they go up or down as you chant the words:



Hal-low - ed be Thy Name

This UNISON CHANT or PLAINSONG will be the main church music for nearly 500 more years. Musical ornaments ("tropes") will be added to chants in the 800's; and in the 900's, and other parts – an octave and a 5th, or an octave and a 4th part in parallel movement will be added. (Your choir director may let your choir sing up the scale in intervals of 4th's and 5th's to see how it sounds!)

We may not like to leave the quiet and beauty of this monastery; but the hardest kind of work for today's Christians is waiting for us back in our busy world . . . so 20th century, here we come!