



Gregorian chant in the context of the Divine Office

What is the Divine Office?

It is a set of Catholic daily prayers, mostly comprised of psalms and readings from the Old and New Testament. The Divine Office splits the day into set times where monks and nuns sing the different hours to sanctify the day.

Heading 1 - what is Gregorian chant?

It is the primary form of music used for the liturgy in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. It sounds chordal, open, exposed and uses a different tonal center

to classical and modern music. If you see a Roman Rite Catholic church in media, that's the primary form of music used.

How does Gregorian chant fit into the context of the Divine Office?

The main texts that are used in the Divine Office are the Psalms of David and are sung to melodies known as psalm tones. In Gregorian Chant there are 8 Gregorian Modes which the psalm tones are based off. These psalm tones have many different endings. Some of the psalms that are

sung are fixed (unchanging) everyday, these include psalm 3 and 94 at Matins (Midnight Office) and psalm 66 at Lauds (Morning Praises).

What is a Catholic cantor? A cantor in the Catholic Church is a single person or persons within a parish who act(s) as a music leader, Psalm verse singer, and a general facilitator of the congregation's worship experience.

What is the role of the cantor during the Office? The role

of the cantor in the Divine Office is to intone the various antiphons which are short sentences that are sung before and after the psalms and the Gospel Canticles found in the Gospel of St Luke. They also intone the various hymns in the Hours and the versicles and responses which are short sentences sung near the end of each Office.

What are the variable texts used in the Divine Office? There are a few texts that are variable in the Divine Office, the antiphons as explained

above are variable depending on day of the week, season of the liturgical year or feast day. The hymn is also variable depending on the above factors. There is also a Collect (prayer) sung at the end of the Office which varies. At Matins, there are variable Scripture and Patristic readings. Each of these texts have their own melodies to which they are sung and can vary in complexity depending on the text. All of these variable portions work together to bring out the theme of the day.

