

Lesson 2. The Pronunciation of Latin.

The text to which the Gregorian melodies are set is in the Latin tongue, called the language of the Church because it is used in all the official and liturgical services of the Catholic Church.

Hence in order to sing the chant well we must know how to pronounce and enunciate Latin correctly.

170. Pronunciation. This should be based upon the Italian method, which differs from English in the following respects:

- a) **Vowels:** *a* always open as in *father*;
e before *a, e, i, u* as *e* in *where*,
before consonants usually as *e* in *met, get*;
i — *y* as *ee* in *seen*
o with the even sound as in German, approximate to *o* in *no*
u as *u* in *full*.

Each vowel should have the same character of sound when short as when long, but do not dwell on the vowel when short.

- b) **Diphthongs:** *æ œ* like *ay* in *say*,
au as *ou* in *mouse*,
ei is a diphthong only in *ei* = *eight*,
ui in *cui* and *huic* is dissyllabic, and not to be pronounced as *Kye* and *hike*.

In all other cases where two vowels occur together they are sounded separately, and sometimes to distinguish between words spelled alike but pronounced differently, two dots (*diæresis* or *trema*) are placed over the second vowel: thus *á-ë-ra*, *De-i*, *cu-i*, *De-us*, *he-u*, *No-ë*, *e-i*, *dî-ë* (not *di*), *dî-é-i*, *ó-le-um*, *plá-cu-i*, *stá-tu-it*.

c) **Consonants:** Those which differ from English pronunciation are:

- c*, before *e, i, y, æ, œ* = *ch* in *church, cedo, cibus* etc.;
before other vowels and consonants *c* = *k*, *cado*,
credo, sæculi;
cc before *e, i, æ, eu, œ* = *tc*, *ecce* = *etsche*;
g always "hard" except before *e, i, æ, œ*, when
it = *j* as in *gentle*.
gn = *ny* e. g. *magnam* = *mah-nyahm*, *agnus* =
ah-nyoos; *h* as in English except in *mihi, nihil*,
when it is like *k*; *j* always = *y*;
sc = *sh* before *e, i, æ, œ*, in all other cases as
in English, *suscepit* = *soo-shay-peet*;

ti = *tsi* when preceded and followed by a vowel, *gratias, etiam*; note also such words as *factio*;

th = *t*; *x* = *ks*; *xc* = *ksh* before *e, i, y*, thus *excelsis ek-shell-sis*;

Qu, gu, su = *Kw, gw, sw* when forming one syllable with the following vowel, *quando, lingua*, but *su-us, argu-as*;

z only occurs in foreign words and is like *ds*.

Double consonants are both sounded.

171. Accentuation. Words of two syllables are always accentuated on the first syllable. In polysyllables a sign is placed over the vowel to indicate where the accent falls, but not over capital letters, thus *Ephrata* = *éphrata*; *Omnia* = *ómnia*, *Aaron* = *á-a-ron*.

Care must be taken not to slur unaccented middle syllables nor to sing jerkily: *réqui-em*, not *reky'm*, *su-á-vis* not *swavis*; *ten-ta-ti-ó-nem*, not *tenta-tyonem*; *sé-cu-lum*, not *sæclum*; *fi-li-us*, not *filyus*; *ó-cu-li*, not *ocli*; *rèconcili-á-tio*, not *reconcilyatyo*.

Accentuation means strengthening of the tone¹ (originally elevation of the tone), but not necessarily prolonging or sustaining it (cf. *Dóminūs dēstítūō*).

172. Correct and distinct division of syllables and words. For without this the recitation would be unintelligible or misunderstood.

a) **Syllables.** A consonant between two vowels belongs to the syllable which follows. Thus *bo-næ*, not *bon-æ*; *ti-bi*, not *tib-i*; *gló-ri-a*, not *glor-i-a*.

Two consonants at the beginning of Latin and Greek words belong to the following syllable: *pa-tris, a-gnus*.

The division must be especially clear when two similar vowels stand together; *fi-li-i, mánu-um*; also when *m* or *n* occur between two vowels; this will prevent the unpleasant nasal colouring of the first vowel: *no-men, A-men, ve-ni, ho-nó-re, se-nes*.

b) **Words.** Beware of running two words together, therefore read and sing: *sub Póntio*, not *su-pontio*; *quia apud*, not *quiapud*; *Patri et*, not *Patret*; *dona eis*, not *doneis*; *Deo omnis*, not *Deomnis* (cf. p. 29 sqq.).

¹ Gregoriusblatt 1899, 46 sq.

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E x e r c i s e.

(The teacher should ask in each case why *c* = *ch* or *k*; and *ti* = *tsi* or simply *ti*.)

c: *spécies, lucis, Lucas, scutum, bédedic, benedícat, benedícite, ecce, cæcus, cœna, mácula, Chérubim, diléctus, coróna, accípiens, conculcábis, crucifíxus, ecclésia, circum.*

gu, qu: *sanguis, loquúntur, elóquium, quærite, quóniam, quando, réquiem, gustáte.*

ti: *lætítia, quóties, pétite, hóstias, patiúntur, ultiónis, pétii, negotiatóri, cœléstium, divítia, cunctis, áctio, scintíllæ, tértia.*

M i d d l e s y l l a b l e s: *pássio, glorióse, quóniam, mansuetúdinis, státuit, posuísti, pretióso, síleas, noxiális, tríbuit, gáudium, sepeliébas, filióque, deprecationem, custódia, abiéctio, árguas, fácie.*