

# The Season of Advent

Gregorian chant from the  
monks of **Pluscarden Abbey**

## Introduction

Advent is a relatively short season in the Church's year, lasting at most four weeks. Yet the Gregorian music for Advent is wonderfully rich. Advent is a season of some austerity, like Lent, with a normally silent organ. Especially here in the North of Scotland we associate Advent also with the dark and cold of winter. But like Lent, Advent is a season of expectation, of mounting excitement, as the coming great feast draws ever nearer. All of this is somehow evoked or captured by the Chant, which in its abundant variety makes full use of all the Gregorian modes.

Recording for this CD took place in the Pluscarden Abbey Church in two different sessions, in 2015 and 2019. Happily our work is seeing the light of day at last in 2023. The entire monastic community was recorded for some items. For most of the pieces, though, only the Schola was recorded. This is the group of monks who daily stand in the centre of Choir to lead the singing at Mass. On occasion this group was joined by the welcome addition of one or two guests.

Our selection of Advent Chants is divided here into four uneven sections, evoking the four weeks of Advent. Each section begins with an Antiphon from the sung Divine Office, with a couple of verses of Psalmody to follow. Then follow various Chants: from the different parts of the Mass, from the repertoire of Office Hymns, from the tradition of devotional or occasional chants.

For Chants from the Mass repertoire, we have paid close attention to the rhythmic indications of the earliest extant manuscripts, as set out in

the 1979 Solesmes *Graduale Triplex*: that is, the neumatic signs devised at the monastery of St. Gall (late 9th c.) and at the Cathedral of Laon (10th c.) For Antiphons from the Divine Office, we have consulted especially the manuscript of Hartker (a monk of St. Gall, who wrote the earliest extant complete Antiphonal in around the year 1000). Study of these early signs greatly helps in understanding the meaning or intention of this music, and ultimately therefore how better to praise God through it.

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## Section One

**1. Antiphon: In illa die stillabunt** montes dulcedinem, et colles fluent lac et mel, alleluia (cf. Joel 4:18)

Confiteantur tibi Domine omnia opera tua, et Sancti benedicant tibi.

Gloriam regni tui dicant, et potentiam tuam loquantur (Psalm 144/145:10-11). *Eighth mode*

On “That Day” the mountains will drip down sweetness, and the hills will flow with milk and honey, alleluia (cf. Joel 4:18)

Let all your works praise you O Lord, and let your Saints bless you.

Let them tell out the glory of your Kingdom, and speak of you power (Psalm 144/145:10-11). *Eighth mode*

**2. Antiphon: lucundare**, filia Sion, exsulta satis, filia Ierusalem, alleuia (cf. Zachariah 9:9).

Confitebor Domino in toto corde meo, in consilio iustorum et congregatione.

Magna opera Domini, exquirenda omnibus qui cupiunt ea (Ps 110/111:1-2).

*Eighth mode*

Be glad, O daughter of Zion, rejoice exceedingly, daughter of Jerusalem, alleuia (cf. Zachariah 9:9).

I will praise the Lord with all my heart, in the council of the just and in the assembly.

Great are the works of the Lord, to be sought by all who desire them (Ps 110/111:1-2). *Eighth mode*

**3. Advent Vespers Hymn: Conditor alme** (9th century)

1. Conditor alme síderum, æténa lux credéntium,  
Christe, redémptor ómnium, exáudi preces súpplicum.

2. Qui cóndolens intéritu mortis perire sǽculum,  
salvásti mundum lánguidum, donans reis remédium.

3. Vergénte mundi véspere, uti sponsus de thálamu,  
egréssus honestíssima Virginis matris cláusula.

4. Cuius forti poténtiæ genu curvántur ómnia;

cæléstia, terréstria nutu faténtur súbdita.

5. Te, Sancte, fide quæsumus, ventúre iudex sæculi,  
consérva nos in témpore hostis a telo pérfidi.

6. Sit, Christe, rex píssime, tibi Patríque glória  
cum Spírítu Paráclito in sempitérna sæcula. Amen. *Fourth mode*

1. Kindly Creator of the stars, eternal light of believers,  
Christ, redeemer of all, hear the prayers of your suppliants.

2. You who have compassion on this generation which must perish by the  
destruction of death:

You have saved our languishing world, giving a cure to condemned  
culprits.

3. As the evening of the world came on, like a bridegroom coming from his  
wedding-chamber,

As a most wonderful conclusion you came forth from the Virgin Mother.

4. At your strong power every knee bends low;  
All creatures in heaven and earth confess you with humble adoration.

5. O Holy One, we seek you in faith, Judge of Heaven who will come,  
Keep us safe in our temporal world from the dart of the perfidious enemy.

6. Glory to you, Christ, O King most holy, glory also to the Father  
With the Spirit our advocate for all eternity. Amen. *Fourth mode*

#### **4. Devotional Hymn: Rorate cæli.**

Refrain: Rorate cæli desuper, et nubes pluant iustum (cf. Isaiah 45:8, Vulgate).

1. Ne irascaris Domine, ne ultra memíneris iniquitatis: ecce civitas Sancti facta est deserta: Sion deserta facta est, Ierusalem desolata est: domus sanctificationis tuæ et gloriæ tuæ, ubi laudaverunt te patres nostri (cf. Lamentations 1:1 ff; also e.g. Psalm 26/27:9; 37/38:1; 78/79:8; Jeremiah 14; 32:31; Hosea 11:9 etc.)

2. Peccavimus, et facti sumus tamquam immundus nos, et cecidimus quasi folium universi: et iniquitates nostræ quasi ventus abstulerunt nos: abscondisti faciem tuam a nobis, et allisisti nos in manu iniquitatis nostræ (cf. Isaiah 64:6).

3. Vide Domine afflictionem populi tui, et mitte quem missurus es: emitte Agnum dominatorem terræ, de Petra deserti ad montem filiæ Sion (cf. Isaiah 16:1): ut auferat ipse jugum captivitatis nostræ (cf. Isaiah 9:4; 14:25).

4. Consolamini, consolamini, popule meus (cf. Isaiah 40:1): cito veniet salus tua: quare mærore consumeris, quia innovavit te dolor? Salvabo te, noli timere, ego enim sum Dominus Deus tuus, Sanctus Israël, Redemptor tuus (cf. e.g. Isaiah 41:13-14) *First mode, with flattened Ti.*

Refrain: You heavens, rain down from above; let the clouds pour down upon us the Just One (cf. Isaiah 45:8, Vulgate).

1. Be not angry, O Lord, and remember our iniquity no longer: behold the city of the Holy One has become a desert: Zion has become a desert: Jerusalem is desolate: the house of your holiness and glory, where our fathers praised you (cf. Lamentations 1:1 ff; also e.g. Psalm 26/27:9; 37/38:1; 78/79:8; Jeremiah 14; 32:31; Hosea 11:9 etc.)

2. We have sinned and are become as one unclean; we have all fallen like leaves; like the wind our iniquities have carried us away: you have hidden your face from us, and have crushed us with the hand of our own iniquity (cf. Isaiah 64:6).

3. See O Lord the affliction of your people, and send forth Him Who is to come: send forth the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from the Rock of the desert, to the mount of daughter Zion (cf. Isaiah 16:1): that he may take away the yoke of our captivity (cf. Isaiah 9:4; 14:25).

4. Be comforted, be comforted, my people (cf. Isaiah 40:1): your salvation will come quickly. Why are you consumed with grief? Has weeping renewed you? I shall save you, do not be afraid. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Redeemer (cf. e.g. Isaiah 41:13-14). *First mode, with flattened Ti.*

This popular hymn originated among the Paris Oratorians in the early seventeenth century. At Pluscarden it is sung at Benediction during Advent, or sometimes at our annual ecumenical Carol service.

### **5. First Sunday of Advent Introit: Ad te levavi**

Ad te levavi animam meam: Deus meus, in te confido, non erubescam: neque irrideant me inimici mei: etenim universi qui te expectant, non confundentur (Psalm 24/25:1-3)

To you have I lifted up my soul. O my God, I trust in you; let me not be put to shame; do not allow my enemies to laugh at me; for none of those who wait for you will be disappointed.

The liturgical year, and the corpus of Gregorian Chant for the Mass, opens with this piece. The procession of clergy and ministers enters the sanctuary, representing all God's people entering into His presence. The Chant that accompanies this could be taken as a definition of prayer: the lifting up of the heart and soul to God. The Eighth mode setting evokes perfect confidence: trust and hope in God, all negative things to the contrary notwithstanding. The first musical phrase especially conveys a sense of upsurging energy, culminating in the words "Deus meus" - "my God" - sung with exultant confidence. And so we begin Advent, and the new liturgical Year, and our Mass, as we mean to carry on: looking boldly up to God, and forwards to our salvation in Him.



## **6. First Sunday of Advent Gradual: Universi**

Universi qui te expectant, non confundentur, Domine. Vias tuas, Domine, notas fac mihi: et semitas tuas edoce me (Psalm 24/25:3,4)

All those who are awaiting you, O Lord, will not be disappointed. Make your ways known to me, O Lord, and teach me your paths (Psalm 24/25:3,4)

The Gradual is a Psalm of response to the first reading at Mass. In the Gregorian repertoire it typically comprises two verses only, the second being set higher than the first. This text is also from Psalm 24, picking up the last phrase of what was sung at the Introit, then adding a verse that follows. We continue on here with the Advent theme of waiting expectantly in faith. We can imagine some word painting with the drawn-out neums over *Universi* - "all" - and *expectant* - "they wait". The important monosyllabic words *te* - "you", and *non* - "not" - are highlighted precisely by being sung to a single note only. In the second part, as if in exuberant ecstasy, the singers ask God to show them his ways. This text from the Psalm happily echoes Advent words of St. John the Baptist: *Prepare the way of the Lord*. Much use is made here of stock melodic formulae of the first mode.

## **7. First Sunday of Advent Offertory: Ad te Domine**

Ad te Domine levavi animam meam: Deus meus, in te confido, non erubescam: neque irrideant me inimici mei: etenim universi qui te expectant, non confundentur (Ps 24/25:1-3)

To you O Lord have I lifted up my soul. O my God, I trust in you; let me not be put to shame; do not allow my enemies to laugh at me; for none of those who wait for you will be disappointed (Ps 24/25:1-3)

We hear again the text from Psalm 24 that was sung at the Introit. But the two Chant pieces are very different, reflecting their different places within the Mass liturgy. The Introit is set in the Eighth mode, the Offertory in the Second mode. The formal difference between the two lies in their differing structural notes, known as “tonic” (final or root note) and “dominant” (reciting note). In the Second mode this interval is a minor third, between “Re” and “Fa”. In the Eighth mode it is the very different-sounding perfect fourth, between “Sol” and “Do”. Thus our text, boldly proclaimed in the Introit, is here sung in a more meditative, restrained, interior way. But if this Chant is calmer, and quieter, it is nevertheless also full of expression, and movement. The earliest manuscripts record for us the great care with which it was composed.

## Section Two

### **8. Antiphon for Advent Week Two: Ecce Dominus noster**

Ecce Dominus noster cum virtute veniet, ut illuminet oculos servorum suorum, alleluia.

Cantate Domino canticum novum; laus eius in ecclesia sanctorum.

Lætetur Israel in eo, qui fecit eum, et filii Sion exsultent in rege suo (cf. Zachariah 14:5-6; Psalm 149:1-2). *Third mode*

Behold our God will come with power, to light up the eyes of his servants, alleluia.

Sing to the Lord a new song; his praise in the assembly of the Saints. Let Israel rejoice in Him who made her, and the children of Zion in their King (cf. Zachariah 14:5-6; Psalm 149:1-2). *Third mode*

### **9. Antiphon for Advent Week Two: Urbs fortitudinis**

Urbs fortitudinis nostræ Sion, Salvator ponetur in ea murus et antemurale. Aperite portas, quia nobiscum Deus, alleluia.

Propositum eius est firmum; servabis pacem, quia in te speravit.

Sperate in Dominum in sæculis æternis, Dominus est petra æterna (cf. Is 26:1-4). *Seventh mode*

Zion is a City of our strength; the Saviour will be placed in her as a wall and a rampart. Open the gates, for our God is with us, alleluia.

God's purpose is firm; you will preserve her peace, for she hoped in you.

Trust in the Lord forever; for the Lord is an everlasting Rock (cf. Is 26:1-4).

*Seventh mode*

### **10. Advent Hymn at Lauds: Vox clara** (Text c. 10th century; melody much older)

1. Vox clara ecce íntonat, obscúra quæque íncrepat:  
procul fugéntur sómnia; ab æthre Christus prómicat.

2. Mens iam resúrgat tórpida quæ sorde exstat sáucia:  
sidus refúlget iam novum, ut tollat omne nóxium.

3. E sursum Agnus míttitur laxáre gratis débitum;  
omnes pro indulgéntia vocem demus cum lácrimis.

4. Secúndo ut cum fúlserit mundúmque horror cínxerit,  
non pro reátu púniat, sed nos pius tunc prótegat.

5. Summo Parénti glória natóque sit victória,  
et Flámini laus débita per sæculorum sæcula. Amen. *Archaic mode "D"*

1. Behold a clarion voice thunders out, it blasts away whatever is dark;  
Let all idle dreams be scattered headlong: Christ is springing forth from the  
heaven.

2. Now let the slothful mind revive, let it stand out from its harmful meanness,  
Now there is a new star gleaming, coming to take away every offence.

3. The Lamb is sent from on high to freely revoke all debt;  
Let us all lift up our voices with tears, because of his mercy.

4. When he comes shining again, terror will grip the earth;  
May he not punish us for our offence but may his holiness then be our  
protection.

5. Glory to the Father most high, victory be to his Son,  
And praise be owed to the Spirit for all eternity. *Archaic mode "D"*

### **11. Second Sunday of Advent Alleluia: Lætatus sum**

Alleluia. Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus  
(Psalm 121/122:1)

Alleluia. I rejoiced when it was said to me: 'Let us go to the house of the  
Lord!'

The Alleluia with its verse is sung as an immediate preparation for the  
proclamation of the Gospel. This most joyful Chant for the Second Sunday  
of Advent is set in the first mode. The same Chant is suggested in our  
modern Graduale Romanum for many other occasions, for example for a  
Solemn Profession of monastic vows, or for the Dedication of a Church.

### **12. Second Sunday of Advent Communion: Ierusalem surge**

Ierusalem surge, et sta in excelso: et vide iucunditatem, quæ veniet tibi  
a Deo tuo (Baruch 5:5; 4:36). Verse: Lauda Ierusalem Dominum: collauda  
Deum tuum Sion (Psalm 147:12).

Rise up, Jerusalem, and stand on high; and behold the joy that shall come  
to you from your God (Baruch 5:5; 4:36). Verse: O Jerusalem praise the  
Lord; Zion unite to praise your God (Psalm 147:12).

Words addressed by the Old Testament Prophet to the City of Jerusalem are understood by the Gregorian composer to refer to the Catholic Church, or to the assembly present now at Mass, or to any individual Christian soul. This Antiphon in the Second mode is full of energy and confidence. Hear how the word “surge” - “rise up” is sung! We look ahead towards a joy that is coming soon, but also we sing praise to the One who is already present, especially in Mass and Holy Communion.

## Section Three

### **13. Antiphon for Advent Week Three: Montes et omnes colles**

Montes et omnes colles humiliabuntur, et erunt prava in directa et aspera in vias planas. Veni, Domine, et noli tardare, alleluia (cf. Isaiah 40:4). *Fifth mode*  
Benedicite montes et colles Domino, benedicite universa germinantia in terra Domino.

Benedicite maria et flumina Domino, benedicite fontes Domino (cf. Daniel 3:75-77).

Mountains and all hills shall be laid low, twisting ways made straight and difficult ways made easy. Come then, Lord, and do not delay, alleluia (cf. Isaiah 40:4). *Fifth mode*

O all mountains and hills bless the Lord; all plants springing up from the ground bless the Lord.

O seas and rivers bless the Lord; all fountains bless the Lord (cf. Daniel 3:75-77).

#### **14. Antiphon for Advent Week Three: Ierusalem gaude**

Ierusalem gaude gaudio magno, quia veniet tibi Salvator, alleluia (cf.

Zechariah 9:9). *Seventh mode*

Deus, Deus meus es tu, ad te de luce vigilo.

Sitivit in te anima mea, te desideravit caro mea.

In terra deserta et arida et inaquosa (Psalm 62/63:1-2).

O Jerusalem rejoice with a great joy, for a Saviour will come to you, alleluia

(cf. Zechariah 9:9). *Seventh mode*

O God you are my God, I keep watch for you from dawn.

My soul thirsts for you, my flesh desires you,

In this desert and arid and waterless land (Psalm 62/63:1-2).

#### **15. Vespers Chapter Response: Veni ad liberandum nos**

Veni ad liberandum nos Domine Deus virtutum.

Ostende faciem tuam, et salvi erimus (cf. Psalm 79/80:3,5,4)

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Come to set us free, O Lord God of Hosts.

Show your face, and we shall be saved (cf. Psalm 79/80:3,5,4).

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

#### **16. Hymn at Terce (St. Ambrose, 4th c.)**

1. Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus, unum Patri cum Filio;

dignare promptus ingeri, nostro refusus pectori.

2. Os, lingua, mens, sensus, vigor, confessionem personent;  
flammescat igne caritas, accendat ardor proximos.

3. Per te sciamus da Patrem, noscamus atque Filium;  
te utriusque Spiritum, credamus omni tempore. Amen. *Fourth mode*

1. O Holy Spirit, one with the Father and the Son,  
Poured out into our hearts: deign now without delay to occupy them  
completely.

2. Let our mouth, our tongue, our senses, all our strength sing out your  
praise:  
let the fire of charity burn hotly, enkindling love for our neighbours.

3. Grant that through you we may know the Father, and recognise the Son;  
and may we at all times believe fully in you, who are the Spirit of both.  
Amen. *Fourth mode*

### **17. Third Sunday of Advent Introit: Gaudete in Domino**

Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete: modestia vestra nota  
sit omnibus hominibus: Dominus prope est. Nihil solliciti sitis: sed in omni  
oratione petitiones vestræ innotescant apud Deum (Philippians 4:4-5)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be  
clearly visible to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious over



anything; but in every kind of prayer let your requests be made known before God (Philippians 4:4-5).

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as “Gaudete Sunday”, as announced by this Chant. The text here, unusually, is taken from the New Testament rather than from the Old. The Gregorian composer is typically rather restrained in his treatment of the word “Gaudete” - “Rejoice”. We are to understand this as a deep, lasting, interior joy; so the imperative is set low in the scale. But the Chant gathers energy and momentum as it progresses, until it reaches its high point at the word “Nihil” - “be solicitous about *nothing!*” The final phrases, pointing to the persistence and confidence of our prayer, are again set quite low. The first mode is well adapted for this text: sonorous yet flexible; combining a certain solemnity also with lightness of touch.

### **18. Third Sunday of Advent Gradual: Qui sedes Domine**

Qui sedes, Domine, super Cherubim, excita potentiam tuam, et veni. Qui regis Israel, intende: qui deducis velut ovem Ioseph (Psalm 79/80:2-3; 2)

Stir up your power, Lord, you who sit upon the Cherubim, and come! Hear us, you who rule Israel; who lead Joseph like a sheep (Psalm 79/80:2-3; 2)

The Advent theme is captured here with the Psalmist’s word “veni!” - “come!” But the composer’s attention is drawn in particular to the royal power and majesty of God: this God who will become a man for our

salvation in Christ. So the text is set here in the sweeping seventh mode, soaring upwards then plunging down over an interval of an eleventh.

### **19. Third Sunday of Advent Alleluia: Excita Domine**

Excita, Domine, potentiam tuam, et veni, ut salvos facias nos (Psalm 79/80:3)

Stir up your might, O Lord, and come to save us (Psalm 79/80:3)

What a musical contrast we have between this piece and its immediately preceding Gradual: even though they share the same text! We pass from the seventh to the fourth mode: from magnificent solemnity to an almost floating lightness.

### **20. Third Sunday of Advent Communion: Dicite pusillanimes**

Dicite: pusillanimes confortamini, et nolite timere: ecce Deus noster veniet, et salvabit nos. Verse: Lætentur deserta et invia, et exsultet solitudo, et floreat quasi lilium (cf. Isaiah 35:4;1).

Say: 'Take courage, you who are fainthearted, and do not fear: behold, our God will come and he will save us.' Verse: Let the desert and the trackless land rejoice; let the wasteland exult and flourish like the lily (cf. Isaiah 35:4;1).

Here words of the prophet Isaiah, ringing with affirmation and hope, are set in the seventh mode. Particularly to be noted is the phrase "Pusillanimes

confortamini" - "you fainthearted be strengthened". The phrase starts low on the tonic "sol", then surges up a seventh, past the dominant "re" all the way to high "fa", and then even momentarily to the full octave note on high "sol". It's as if the exultant proclamation were being made with trumpets.

## Section Four

### **21. Antiphon from the last days of Advent: Rorate cæli**

Rorate cæli desuper, et nubes pluant iustum; aperiat terra, et germinet Salvatorem (cf. Isaiah 45:8, Vulgate). *Mode II\**

lubilate Domino, omnis terra, servite Domino in lætitia; introite in conspectu eius in exultatione.

Scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus; ipse fecit nos, et ipsius sumus; populus eius et oves pascuæ eius (Psalm 99/100:1-2).

You heavens, rain down from above; let the clouds pour down upon us the Just One; let the earth open up, and germinate the Saviour (cf. Isaiah 45:8, Vulgate). *Mode II\**

Be joyful before the Lord, all the earth, serve the Lord in gladness; enter into his presence with exultation. Know that the Lord, he is God; he made us, and we are his; his own people, and the flock of his pasturing (Psalm 99/100:1-2).

The formula for this Antiphon is used for many different texts in the fourth week of Advent, so that it even predominates in the sung Office. The

Solesmes 2005 Antiphonale Monasticum designates it as Mode II\*. This is an archaic variant of the second mode, which predated the Eight Mode theory elaborated in the early 9th century. Here, the tonic (or final or source note) is Re (transposed up a fifth to La), but the reciting note, or dominant, is not Fa, but Sol (transposed up a fifth to Re). The transposition makes no difference to the melody, but allows the note Ti to be flattened, as occurs here over “germinet Salvatorem”. This musical formula is very ancient.

## **22. Antiphon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent: Canite tuba**

Canite tuba in Sion, quia prope est dies Domini: ecce veniet ad salvandum nos, alleluia (cf. Joel 2:1). *First mode*

Laudate Dominum in sanctuario eius; laudate eum in firmamento virtutis eius.

Laudate eum in magnalibus eius; laudate eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis eius (Psalm 150:1-2).

Blow the trumpet in Zion, for the Day of the Lord is near: see! He will come to save us, alleluia

(cf. Joel 2:1). *First mode*

Praise the Lord in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him in his great deeds; praise him according to the multitude of his greatness (Psalm 150:1-2).

## **23. Antiphon for Vespers of Christmas Eve: Rex pacificus**

Rex pacificus magnificatus est, cuius vultum desiderat universa terra.

Laudate pueri Domini; laudate nomen Domini. Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc et usque in sæculum (cf. 1 Kings 10:23-24; Psalm 112/113). *Eighth mode*

The King of Peace is magnified, whose countenance the whole world longs to see (cf. 1 Kings 10:23-24; Psalm 112/113). *Eighth mode*

O children of the Lord, give praise; praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be blessed, from this time and forever.

**24. Hymn: Veni redemptor gentium** (*St. Ambrose, 4th century*)

1. Veni, redemptor gentium, ostende partum Virginis;  
miretur omne sæculum: talis decet partus Deum.

2. Non ex virili semine, sed mystico spiramine  
Verbum Dei factum est caro fructusque ventris flóruit.

3. Alvus tumescit Virginis, claustrum pudoris permanet,  
vexilla virtutum micant, versatur in templo Deus.

4. Procédât e thálamo suo, pudoris aula régia,  
geminæ gigas substántiæ álacris ut currat viam.

5. Æquális ætérno Patri, carnis tropæo cingere,  
infirma nostri córporis virtúte firmans pépeti.

6. Præsépe iam fulget tuum luménque nox spirat novum,  
quod nulla nox intépolet fidéque iugi lúceat.

7. Sit, Christe, rex píssime, tibi Patríque glória  
cum Spírítu Paráclito, in sempitérna sæcula. Amen. *Second mode*

1. Come, Redeemer of the nations, show us the fruit of the Virgin;  
Let every generation wonder: Such an offspring is worthy of God.

2. Not from the seed of man but by a mystical breath  
The Word of God is made flesh, and the fruit of the womb blossomed.

3. The womb of the Virgin swells, but the gate of chastity stays locked,  
The banners of virtue are hoisted, God is placed in the temple.

4. Let him come forth from his bridal-chamber, the royal palace of chastity,  
As a giant of two natures runs swiftly on his way.

5. Equal to the Eternal Father, he adorns himself with the badge of flesh,  
Giving strength from his perpetual power to the weakness of our bodies.

6. Your stable now shines with glory, and the darkness emits a new light;  
Which may no night ever disfigure, and may it shine with everlasting  
faithfulness.

7. O Christ, most holy king, may glory be to you and to the Father  
With the Spirit the Advocate, world without end. Amen. *Second mode*

**25. Antiphon for the Magnificat on 17 December: O Sapientia**

O Sapientia quæ ex ore Altissimi prodisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter, suaviter disponensque omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiæ (cf. Sirach 24:5; Wisdom 8:1; Isaiah 40:14). *Second mode*

Magnificat anima mea Dominum, et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo Salvatore meo.

Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ. Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes (Luke 1:46)

O Wisdom, who proceeded from the mouth of the Most High, reaching strongly from one end to the other, and sweetly disposing all things: come to teach us the way of prudence (cf. Sirach 24:5; Wisdom 8:1; Isaiah 40:14). *Second mode*

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. For he has looked on the lowliness of his handmaid. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed (Luke 1:46).

**26. Introit for the Fourth Sunday of Advent: Rorate cæli**

Rorate cæli desuper, et nubes pluant iustum: aperiatur terra, et germinet Salvatorem.

Ps. Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei: et opera manuum eius annuntiat firmamentum (cf. Isaiah 45:8; Psalm 18/19:1)

You heavens, rain down from above; let the clouds pour down upon us the Just One. Let the earth open up, and germinate the Saviour. Ps. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.

The Gregorian tradition adopts St. Jerome's translation of this text from Isaiah, whereby its Messianic significance is made especially clear. Surely we can discern some deliberate word painting in this first mode setting. The soaring high notes evoke the heavens, then as they come tumbling down, the earth, and above all the One who appeared in humility on the earth, the Saviour ("Salvatorem").

### **27. Gradual in the last days of Advent: Tollite portas**

Tollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portæ æternales: et introibit Rex gloriæ. Quis ascendet in montem Domini? Aut quis stabit in loco sancto eius? Innocens manibus et mundo corde (Psalm 23/24:7;3-4).

O princes, lift up your gates, and be lifted up you eternal gates, and the King of glory will enter. Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? One who has innocent hands and a clean heart (Psalm 23/24:7;3-4).

The liturgy implicitly applies these words of the Psalm to the Son of God, triumphantly entering the world in the birth of Christ. He is the righteous one who will lead his people to God's holy place in heaven. The Chant



setting in the transposed second mode is almost entirely formulaic. Some twenty different texts are set to this formula. Yet the early scribes still took great care to mark the exact nuances of expression and performance in each separate instance of its use. The Gregorian repertoire offers a different text for each day in the last week of Advent, but with each one set to this Gradual formula.

### **28. Offertory: Ave Maria**

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui (Luke 1:28)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Luke 1:28)

Our so familiar prayer takes up the Angelic greeting to Mary, as narrated by St. Luke, and adds to it also the words of her cousin Elizabeth, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb". This Offertory Chant for the Fourth Sunday of Advent invites us to dwell lovingly and prayerfully on this text, with its expansive neums set in the eighth mode.

### **29. Advent Preface**

Dominus vobiscum.

Et cum spiritu tuo.

Sursum corda!

Habemus ad Dominum.

Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.

Dignum et iustum est!

Vere dignum et iustum est, æquum et salutare, nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere: Domine, sancte Pater, omnipotens æterne Deus: per Christum Dominum nostrum.

Quem prædixerunt cunctorum præconia prophetarum, Virgo Mater ineffabili dilectione sustinuit, Ioannes cecinit affuturum et adesse monstravit. Qui suæ nativitatis mysterium tribuit nos prævenire gaudentes, ut et in oratione pervigiles et in suis inveniat laudibus exsultantes. Et ideo cum Angelis et Archangelis, cum Thronis et Dominationibus, cumque omni militia cælestis exercitus, hymnum gloriæ tuæ canimus, sine fine dicentes:

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just!

It is truly worthy and just, right and salutary for us always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

The preaching of all the prophets proclaimed him; the Virgin Mother with love beyond all telling bore him; John the Baptist prophesied that he would come, and pointed him out when he was present. Now he has granted

us joyfully to anticipate the mystery of his birth, so that he might find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praises.

And so, with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominations, and with all the hosts of the heavenly army, we sing a hymn to your glory as we endlessly cry out:

The Preface tone belongs to the oldest stratum of Gregorian Chant, never changed, reaching all the way back to the beginnings of Latin liturgy in the fourth century, and even beyond. This is the second Preface of Advent provided in the post Conciliar Missal, specified in particular for the days from 17-24 December.

### **30. Sanctus XVII**

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cæli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Extant mediaeval manuscripts preserve for us an enormous repertoire of Chants for the "Ordinary" of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei. From them all, the nineteenth century Benedictines of Solesmes made a selection, which they arranged in eighteen sets, some of which

they specified for particular occasions. This selection passed into the official Gradual approved for the Roman liturgy, and is thus still followed at Pluscarden. This “Sanctus” in the fifth mode is part of Mass XVII, specified for Sundays in Advent and Lent.

### **31. Agnus Dei XVII**

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi: dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

This fifth mode setting marvellously helps us to pray a familiar text.

### **32. Responary for I Vespers of Christmas**

Iudæa et Ierusalem, nolite timere: cras egrediemini, et Dominus erit vobiscum. Constantes estote, videbitis auxilium Domini super vos. Cras egrediemini. Gloria Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Iudæa et Ierusalem (cf. 2 Chronicles 20:17; 1 Samuel 11:9). *Fourth mode*

Judea and Jerusalem, do not be afraid! Tomorrow you will go out, and the Lord will be with you. Be steadfast, and you will see the help of the Lord coming upon you. Tomorrow you will go out. Glory be to the Father, and

to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Judea and Jerusalem. (cf. 2 Chronicles 20:17; 1 Samuel 11:9). *Fourth mode*

### **33. Fourth Sunday of Advent Communion: Ecce Virgo**

Ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet filium: et vocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Verse: Soli posuit tabernaculum in eis, et ipse, tamquam sponsus procedens, de thalamo suo exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam (Psalm 18/19:6).

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel. Verse:

He has placed a tabernacle for the sun in the heavens, and he comes forth like a Bridegroom out of his wedding chamber; he exults like a giant to run his course.

The liturgy here links Isaiah's prophecy about the Virgin bearing her Son with words from Psalm 18, traditionally understood also to bear a Messianic sense. Christ our light comes forth into our world exulting, having united himself to our human nature, and to his holy Bride the Church. This Chant is set in the first mode.

## Final Section

### 34. **Alma Redemptoris Mater**

Alma Redemptoris Mater, quæ pervia caeli  
porta manes et stella maris, succurre cadenti,  
surgere qui curat, populo. Tu quæ genuisti,  
natura mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem,  
Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore  
sumens illud Ave, peccatorum, miserere.

Most loving Mother of the Redeemer, who abide always as our way to  
Heaven  
and Star of the Sea: come to the help of this people  
which is falling down, though longing to rise up. You who bore  
your own Begetter, to the wonderment of nature,  
a Virgin both before and after; receiving that "Ave"  
from the mouth of Gabriel: have mercy on us, sinners.

The Marian Antiphon sung after Compline during Advent and  
Christmastide is conventionally marked as set in the fifth mode, though in  
reality it simply follows a modern major scale, from "Do" to "Do". Like the  
Salve Regina, this text, and even its music, is usually ascribed to Hermanus  
Contractus - "Herman the cripple" (1013-1054) - a Benedictine monk of  
Reichenau and polymath scholar. It anyway post-dates the classic period  
of composition of Gregorian Chant. Leaps of a sixth and even an octave,

as well as the modality, mark it as post-Gregorian. Written in Hexameters, based on syllable quantity, rather than stress, this poem must be regarded as strictly extra-liturgical. Conveying fervent devotion to Mary, and theologically rich, it makes a most wonderful conclusion to the day.

## Track List:

### Section One:

1. Antiphon: In illa die
2. Antiphon: lucundare
3. Hymn: Conditor alme siderum
4. Devotional Hymn: Rorate caeli
5. Introit: Ad te levavi
6. Gradual: Universi
7. Offertory: Ad te Domine levavi

### Section two:

8. Antiphon: Ecce Dominus noster
9. Antiphon: Urbs fortitudinis
10. Hymn: Vox clara
11. Alleluia: Laetatus sum
12. Communion: Ierusalem surge

### Section three:

13. Antiphon: Montes et omnes colles
14. Antiphona: Ierusalem
15. Responsory: Veni ad liberandum nos
16. Hymn: Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus
17. Introit: Gaudete in Domino
18. Gradual: Qui sedes
19. Alleluia: Excita Domine
20. Communion: Dicite pusillanimes

### Section four:

21. Antiphon: Rorate caeli desuper
22. Antiphon: Canite tuba
23. Antiphon: Rex pacificus
24. Hymn: Veni redemptor gentium
25. Antiphon: O Sapientia
26. Introit: Rorate caeli
27. Gradual: Tollite portas
28. Offertory: Ave Maria
29. Advent Preface
30. Sanctus XVII
31. Agnus Dei XVII
32. Responsory: Iudea et Ierusalem
33. Communion: Ecce Virgo

### Final section:

34. Marian Antiphon: Alma Redemptoris