

■ Table of contents

9	Introduction
15	Foreword
17	I. Pre-history
23	II. Need for the restitution of Gregorian melody
45	III. The methodology of melodic restitution
57	IV. Special problems and challenges
58	IV.1 The problem of <i>Ṡ</i> natural or <i>Ṡ</i> flat
68	IV.2 The problem of chromaticism
83	V. Contents of the Graduale Novum
89	VI. Editorial questions
89	VI.1 Reproduction of square notation in original position or in transposition?
101	VI.2 On the question of division markers in the Editio Vaticana and in the Graduale Novum
113	VI.3 Editorial differences between <i>GT</i> and <i>GrN</i>
115	VI.4 Why no neography in <i>GrN</i> ?
127	VII. Unity in diversity.
	Fundamental of the interpretation of Gregorian Chant
128	VII.1 Preliminary reflections on the theme "unity in diversity"
130	VII.2. The text as primary source of composition and interpretation
135	VII.3 Rhythm as "soul" of the chant and "order in movement"
136	VII.3.1 Rhythm in oligotonic Composition Style
140	VII.3.2 Rhythm in melismatic Composition Style
144	VII.4 The characteristics chant style for Gregorian Chant

■ Introduction

When the Council Fathers set out to define the well-known principles contained in Article 117 of the Constitution *Sacrosantum Concilium*, we know precisely what they had in mind. They were hoping for, and indeed explicitly requesting, an *editio magis critica*, of the Gregorian Chant repertoire found within the liturgical books. «The typical edition of the books of Gregorian chant is to be completed; and a more critical edition is to be prepared of those books already published since the restoration by St. Pius X»¹. Those were a time when the reference point was still the edition of the *Graduale Romanum*, which had first appeared in its *Editio tipica Vaticana* in 1908, still served as the primary reference. Editorial initiatives from the Monastery of Solesmes, which had – *diligenter* – annotated the melodies with rhythmic signs, were widely disseminated. These signs, however, gradually revealed their limitations to the extent that they were never used even by the monks of the abbey from which *la Méthode* originated and took its names.

But beyond the long-standing issue of rhythm – definitively resolved in the light of the Semiology that saw Eugène Cardine and Luigi Agustoni as protagonists *in primis* – the urgency for an *editio magis critica* stemmed from the desire to provide the universal Church with a functional and univocal version of a repertoire that, while fundamentally uniform, also exhibited numerous melodic and performative nuances. These nuances arose from diverse cultural sensitivities and varying relationships with the Latin language in chant across different

¹ «Compleatur editio typica librorum cantus gregoriani; immo paretur editio magis critica librorum iam editorum post instaurationem sancti Pii X», CONSTITUTIO DE SACRA LITURGIA SACROSANTUM CONCILIIUM, Romae MCMLXIII, (SC) VI, 117.

countries. This awareness was certainly present at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries among both practitioners and Church leaders. Nevertheless, the need for uniform melodies throughout the Church outweighed the reality of melodic variations and local traditions, a sentiment that had already prevailed since the Council of Trent. The precise request of the Conciliar Fathers was rooted in a clear, precise, undeniable and irrefutable tradition, evidenced by the fact that: «Holy Mother the Church has received from God the charge of training the souls of the faithful in all holiness, and for this noble end has ever made a happy use of the help of the sacred Liturgy. Wherein – in order that men’s minds may not be sundered by differences, but that, on the contrary, the unity which gives vigour and beauty to the mystical body of Christ might flourish unimpaired – she has been zealous to keep the traditions of our forefathers, ever trying diligently to discover and boldly to restore any which might have been forgotten in the course of the ages»².

The explicit intention to achieve new results is made evident by the expression in the conciliar Constitution and gives substance to what, in other terms, the Council Fathers themselves reiterated, namely that: «The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services»³.

A position that, considering the fructuous scientific studies conducted in the preceding years and those ongoing at that time, called for the realization that a new and more effective path had to be taken. The input came with the publication of the *Graduale Romanum* desired by Paul VI in 1973, in which the

² «Sancta Mater Ecclesia, cui divinitus commissum est animos fidelium ad sanctitatem omnem instituire, sacrae Liturgiae adiumentis in eiusmodi praeclarissimum finem semper ac feliciter est usa. In quo (ne varietas dissociaret animos, utque e contra unitas vigeret incolumis, quae mystico Christi corpori vigorem simul et decorem confert) traditiones maiorum assiduis curis servare studuit; easque, si quando saeculorum lapsu oblitteratae fuissent, perquirere diligenter fortiterque instaurare perpetuo conata est». Cfr. De Ratione Editionis Vaticanae Cantus Romani, in *GRADUALE SACROSANTAE ROMANAE ECCLESIAE DE TEMPORE ET DE SANCTIS*, Romae – Typis Vaticanis, MDCCCXVIII, p. VII.

³ «Ecclesia cantum gregorianum agnoscit ut liturgiae romanae proprium: qui ideo in actionibus liturgicis, ceteris paribus, principem locum obtineat». (SC) VI, 116.

known repertoire, already established in the 1908 publication, was adapted to the liturgical order that followed the implementation of the Reform desired by the Second Vatican Council. Thus, there was nothing new except the same melodies (and not all of them) reshuffled throughout the liturgical year, except for those of the Solemnities and liturgical periods such as Advent, Lent, etc., which, due to their unique peculiarities, remained in their originally intended positions.

Even in these challenging changes, the Church's coherence proved to be a "house built on rock," steadfast in the conviction that «among those things which most nearly touch the sacred Liturgy, being as it were interwoven therein and giving it splendour and impressiveness, the first place must be assigned to the Sacred Chant. We have, indeed, all learnt from experience that it gives a certain to divine worship and uplifts the mind in wondrous wise to heavenly things. Wherefore the Church has never ceased to recommend the use of the Chant, and has striven with the greatest assiduity and diligence to prevent its decline from its pristine dignity»⁴.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that the first effective response came from the AISCGre, the International Society for Studies of Gregorian Chant, whose first members – the nucleus of a nascent scientific community – followed the insights of Eugène Cardine who, together with Luigi Agustoni, had understood the profound meaning of the paleographic musical signs found in medieval liturgical books, completely transforming the analytical and interpretative approach. A new era had been born, marked by the publication, in 1979, of the *Graduale Triplex*, which, while building on the book approved by the Holy See in 1973, included the signs of two important neumatic families. These signs became first familiar and then "daily bread" for generations of scholars approaching Gregorian Chant through the lens the new science: *Gregorian Semiology*. Nothing happens by

⁴ «Inter ea, quae Liturgiam sacram maxime spectant ac veluti pervadunt splendoremque illi addunt atque efficacitatem, cantus sacer in primis adnumerandus est. Communi quippe experimento novimus, illum et divino cultui amplitudinem quamdam tribuere, animosque miris modis ad coelestia pertrahere. Quamobrem Ecclesia eiusdem cantus usum nullo tempore commendare destitit, assiduaque diligentia prosequuta est, ne a primaeva dignitate deficeret». Cfr. *De Ratione*, cit, p. VIII.

chance, least of all in the life of the Church. Thus, it is evident that semiology was the path to be followed to find the lost way, a way urgently needed: «Certainly in the course of time the Gregorian Chant incurred no small loss of purity. This was chiefly because the special rules of the Chant, as traditionally received from the Fathers, were either negligently overlooked or allowed to be altogether forgotten. Hence arose an evident decline in the spirit which is spoken of as “liturgical”, and the “spirit of prayer”, while at the same time the beauty and grace of the sacred melodies, if they did not wholly disappear, were certainly affected for the worse»⁵.

On closer examination, everything was already indicated, and only a certain progressive and incomprehensible disaffection prevented the Council from giving its *placet* to Gregorian Chant books resulting from more in-depth studies already encouraged by Pius X. In his *Motu proprio* of April 25, 1904, Pius X called for books containing authentic melodies: «The Gregorian melodies were to be restored in their integrity and identity, after the authority of the earliest manuscripts, taking account of the legitimate tradition of past ages, as well as of the actual use of the Liturgy of today»⁶.

No one better than those who have served or serve as directors or cantors of a Gregorian Schola, or in a teaching role, knows how the systematic study of neumes applied to chant has been fundamentally helpful. First and foremost, it has been essential in identifying discordances, inaccuracies, if not errors in the melodic version of the Vaticana. This has suggested the need for reflection to achieve coherent corrections. It thus became apparent that many corrections were indispensable, if only because the evolutions of the post-classical era and the decadence of Gregorian chant led to cases of impoverishment and deformation

⁵ «Utique, saeculorum lapsu, puritas gregoriani cantus detrimenti haud parum cepit. Idque exinde praesertim accidit, quoa quaeiusdem cantus propriae sunt normae, patrurn traditione acceptae, vel negligenter praeteritae vel oblivioni penitus mandatae sunt. Ex eo autem spiritus, quem vocamus, liturgicus itemque precandi spiritus retro ferri nimium visi sunt; simul vero concentuum sacrorum species ac veluti sapor, si non extineta penitus, at certe sunt depravata». *De Ratione*, cit., p. VIII.

⁶ «Gregorianas cantilenas in suam integritatem ac germanitatem restituendas, secundum antiquorum codicum fidem; ita quidem ut legitimae traditionis decurrentium saeculorum haberetur ratio neque hodiernae liturgiae recepti usus praeterirentur». Cfr. *De Ratione*, cit., p. X.

of the repertoire. This has posed difficulties, and in some cases, impossibilities, in accessing interpretations that conform to the indications of the manuscripts. Interpretation, as we know, arises from the symbiosis of text and melody, with the mediation of neumatic signs. However, a semiological foundation alone is not sufficient *in toto* and may be non-pertinent if it lacks a correct melodic version. The absence of such a basis distorts and misguides the face of Gregorian chants or at least obscures part of their significance.

Responding earnestly to the precise request of the Second Vatican Council meant embarking on a task with the awareness that it would be neither easy nor brief. The admonition of the “Head of the Apostles”, Peter, seems to echo in the Council Fathers declaration, «Fratres, sobrii estote et vigilate, (...) resistite fortes in fide»⁷, and those who were stooped to the issue – conducting their research on a scientific and dynamic basis far removed from personal interests – facilitated the formation of study groups in the context of *AISCGre*. After the first step, which produced provisional and partial aids, significant scientific results have been achieved today, as published in the I and II volumes of the *Graduale Novum*, providing a great service by reporting the most obvious and necessary melodic corrections. This book documents all these years of serious commitment, highlighting the methodology and scientific reasons behind a work whose high value has been underscored by the poor imitations that have entered the market, thereby certifying the egocentrism and methodological poverty of other researchers.

Holding the *Graduale Novum* in our hands does not solve all our problems concerning chant, it certainly gives us the awareness of finally possessing an instrument that makes it possible to remain faithful to the nature of Gregorian Chant, edifies both those who sing it and those who listen to it, if only because it sublimates through music the text that is prayed.

Realizing what was more than a wish of the Council Fathers, then, is not only an answer that scientific research makes irrefutable, but also fulfills that desire for

⁷ 1 Pt. 5, 8-9.

universality inherent in the Church's Liturgy. Thus, in its unequivocal nature, it becomes a chant that makes us feel that we are not alone, transporting us into a vibrant atmosphere of momentum and feeling, making possible that *cor unum et anima una*⁸ which is the true vocation to which the celebration of the Mystery calls and which makes Gregorian Chant the voice of the Church.

GIOVANNI CONTI

⁸ Act. 4, 32.