

Chapter 5

The Eight Modes

This chant, because of the close adaptation of the melody to the sacred text, is not only most intimately conformed to the words, but also in a way interprets their force and efficacy and brings delight to the minds of the hearers. It does this by the use of musical modes that are simple and plain, but which are still composed with such sublime and holy art that they move everyone to sincere admiration and constitute an almost inexhaustible source from which musicians and composers draw new melodies.

—Pope Pius XII, *Musicae Sacrae* ¶43, 25 December 1955

5.1 Modality in Gregorian Chant

The mode of a chant corresponds to the scale in which it is written. Although there exists a plethora of modes for music around the world, Gregorian chant has eight modes. These are based on the four ancient Greek modes: *Dorian*, *Phrygian*, *Lydian* and *Mixolydian*. Each of these modes corresponds to a unique *Final* (or *Tonic*): RE, MI, FA and SOL, respectively. Though not commonly used, their names in Latin are *Protus*, *Deuterus*, *Tritus* and *Tetrardus*, respectively.

Gregorian chant has two forms for each of these: *Authentic* (odd-numbered modes) and *Plagal* (even-numbered modes). The Authentic modes have a *Scale* (or *Range*) that starts on the Final, while the Plagal modes have a Scale that starts a fourth below the Final. Plagal modes have the prefix *Hypo-* appended to their Greek names.

Each of these eight modes has a unique *Dominant* (or *Tenor*). Authentic modes have a Dominant a fifth above the Final, and the corresponding Plagal mode has a Dominant a third below the Authentic Dominant. Modes III and VIII are exceptions to these rules because of the instability of TI, so the Dominant for both is DO.

Mode	Latin Name	Greek Name	Final (Tonic)	Dominant (Tenor)	Scale (Range)	Ison	Flectus
I	Authentic Protus	Dorian	RE	LA	RE-RE	RE	DO
II	Plegal Protus	Hypodorian	RE	FA	LA-LA	RE	DO
III	Authentic Deuterus	Phrygian	MI	DO*	MI-MI	DO or MI	RE
IV	Plegal Deuterus	Hypophrygian	MI	LA	TI-TI	DO or MI	RE
V	Authentic Tritus	Lydian	FA	DO	FA-FA	FA	
VI	Plegal Tritus	Hypolydian	FA	LA	DO-DO	FA or DO	
VII	Authentic Tetrardus	Mixolydian	SOL	RE	SOL-SOL	SOL	FA
VIII	Plegal Tetrardus	Hypomixolydian	SOL	DO	RE-RE	DO	

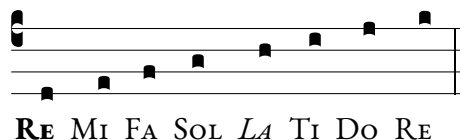
*For Mode III, the Modern Dominant is DO while the Ancient Dominant is TI.

While it's true that each mode has a characteristic or "feel" which differentiates it from the others, most commentators are hesitant to stick their neck out there and classify them with emotional descriptors. In this light, appreciation is due to Jacques Perrière of "[Gregorian Books](#)" for providing the labels used in the examples below. And gratitude is also owed to Jonathan M. Kadar-Kallen of "[The Ictus](#)" who created [a handy booklet on the modes](#) of which the above is an abridgement.

At the end of the table has been appended recommendations for the *ison* and *flectus* for use in adding a drone to chant, taken from Mr. Joseph Ahmad's article '[Droning at Mass](#)'. This topic of chant harmonization will be revisited in the next lesson.

5.2 Mode I: Dorian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
I	Authentic Protus	Dorian	RE	LA	RE-RE	RE	DO



This mode is described as **serious** and examples include *Credo IV*, *Victimæ paschali laudes*, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, *Dies iræ*, *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* and *Tota Pulchra Es Maria*.

1.  **P** Arce Dómi-ne, parce pópu-lo tu- o: ne in ae-térnum i-rascá-ris no-bis. *R.* Parce.

 1. Flectámus i-ram víndi-cem, Plo-rémus ante Jú-di-cem; Clamémus o-re súppli-ci, Di-cámus omnes cérnu-i: *R.* Parce. 2. Nostris ma-lis offéndimus Tu-am De-us cleménti-am Effúnde no-bis dé-super Remíssor indulgénti-am. *R.* Parce. 3. Dans tempus acceptá-bi-le, Da lacrimá-rum rí-vu-lis La-vá-re cordis víctimam, Quam laeta adú-rat cá-ri-tas. *R.* Parce. 4. Audi, be-nígne Cón-di-tor, Nostras pre-ces cum flé-ti-bus In hoc sacro je-jú-ni-o Fu-sas quadra-ge-ná-ri-o. *R.* Parce. 5. Scru-tá-tor alme córdi-um, Infírma tu scis ví-ri-um; Ad te re-vérsis éxhi-be Remis-si-ónis grá-ti-am. *R.* Parce.

5.3 Mode II: Hypodorian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
II	Plegal Protus	Hypodorian	RE	FA	LA-LA	RE	DO



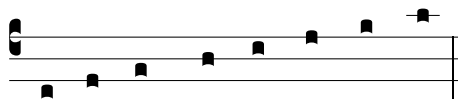
This mode is described as **sad** or **content** and examples include *Gloria XI*, *Sanctus XI*, *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (Solemn Tone), the O Antiphons, *Ut queant laxis* and *O filii et filie*.

2.

O quam glo-ri-fi-ca * lu-ce co-rúscas, Stirpis Da-ví-di-cae ré-gi-a pro-les! Sublímis ré-si-dens, Virgo Ma-rí-a, Supra cae-lí-ge-nas aéthe-ris omnes. 2. Tu cum vir-gí-ne o ma-ter ho-nó-re, Angeló-rum Dómi-no pé-cto-ris au-lam Sacris viscé-ri-bus casta pa-rá-sti; Na-tus hinc De-us est córpo-re Chri-stus. 3. Quem cunctus vé-ne-rans orbis adó-rat, Cui nunc ri-te genu flé-cti-tur omne; A quo te, pé-timus, subve-ni-én-te, Abjé-ctis té-nebris, gáudi-a lu-cis. 4. Hoc largí-re Pa-ter lúmi-nis omnis, Na-tum per próp-ri-um, Flá-mi-ne sacro, Qui te-cum ní-ti-da vi-vit in ae-thra Regnans, ac mó-de-rans saé-cu-la cuncta. A-men.


5.4 Mode III: Phrygian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
III	Authentic Deuterus	Phrygian	M _I	Do*	M _I -M _I	Do or M _I	RE

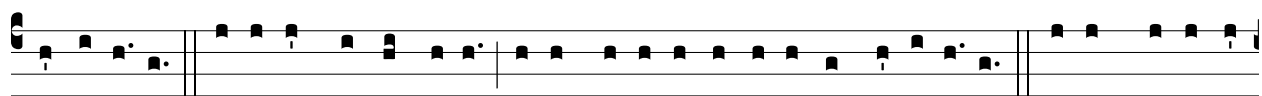


M_I FA SOL LA T_I Do RE M_I

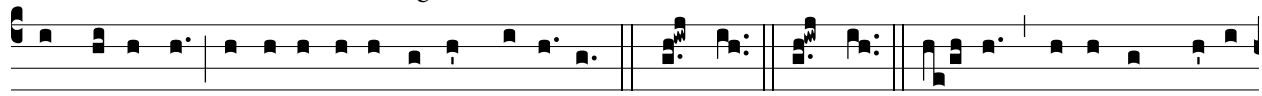
This mode is described as **mystic** and examples include *Pange Lingua* and both tones of the *Te Deum*.

3. 

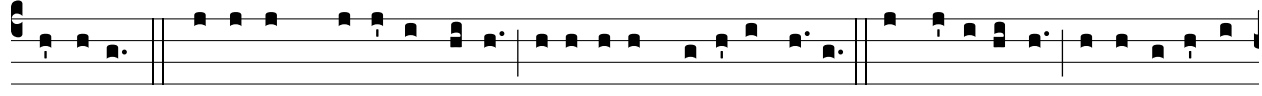
TE De-um laudá-mus: * te Dómi-num confi-témur. Te ae-térnum Patrem omnis terra



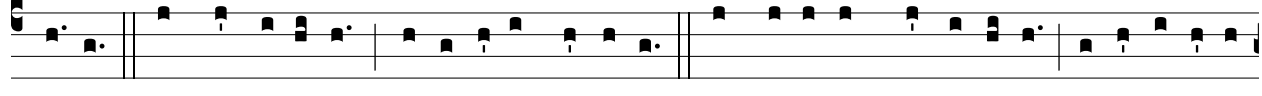
ve-ne-rá-tur. Ti-bi omnes Ange-li, ti-bi Cae-li et u-ni-vérsae Pot-está-tes: Ti-bi Ché-ru-bim



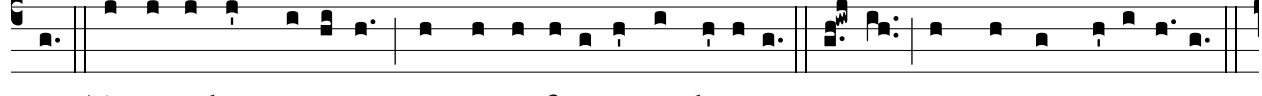
et Sé-raphim incessá-bi-li vo-ce proclámant: Sanctus: Sanctus: Sanctus Dómi-nus De-us



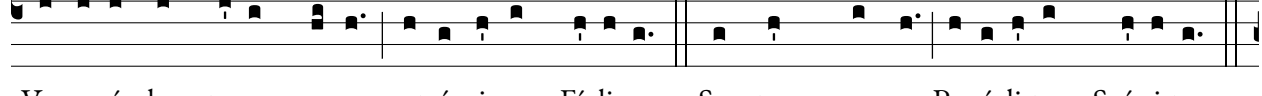
Sá-ba-oth. Ple-ni sunt cae-li et terra ma-jestá-tis gló-ri-ae tu-ae. Te glo-ri-ó-sus Aposto-ló-rum



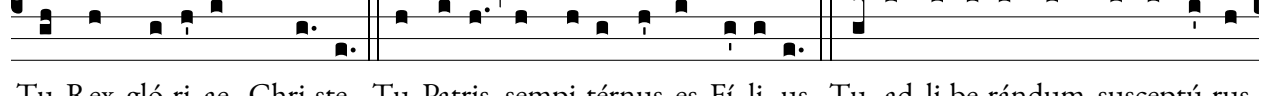
cho-rus: Te Prophe-tá-rum laudá-bi-lis nú-me-rus: Te Márty-rum candi-dá-tus laudat ex-érci-




tus. Te per orbem terrá-rum sancta confi-té-tur Ecclé-si-a: Pa-trem imménsae ma-jestá-tis:



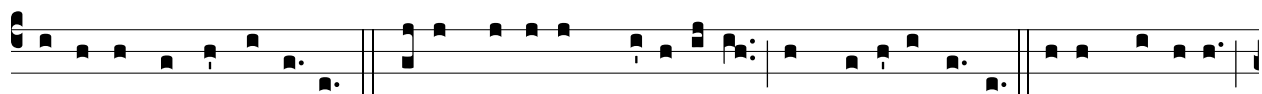
Ve-ne-rándum tu-um ve-rum, et ú-ni-cum Fí-li-um: Sanctum quoque Pa-rácli-tum Spí-ri-tum.



Tu Rex gló-ri-ae, Chri-ste. Tu Patris sempi-térnus es Fí-li-us. Tu ad li-be-rándum susceptú-rus



hó-mi-nem, non horru-í-sti Ví-rgi-nis ú-te-rum. Tu de-vícto mortis a-cú-le-o, a-pe-ru-í-sti cre-

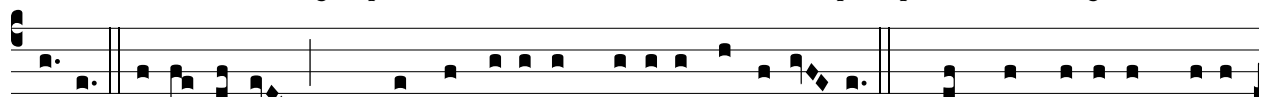


dénti-bus regna cae-ló-rum. Tu ad dexte-ram De-i se-des, in gló-ri-a Pa-tris. Judex cré-de-ris

All kneel while this verse is sung.



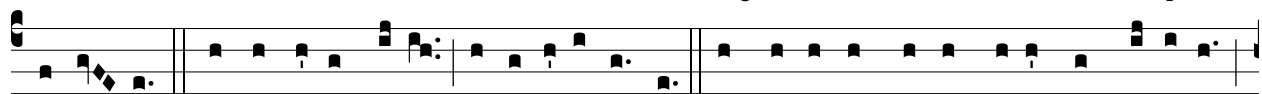
esse ventú-rus. Te ergo quaésumus, tu-is fámu-lis súbve-ni, quos pre-ti-ó-so sán-gui-ne red-e-



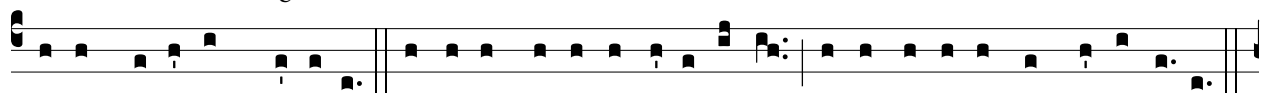
mí-sti. Æ-térna fac cum Sanctis tu-is in gló-ri-a nume-rá-ri. Salvum fac pópu-lum tu-um



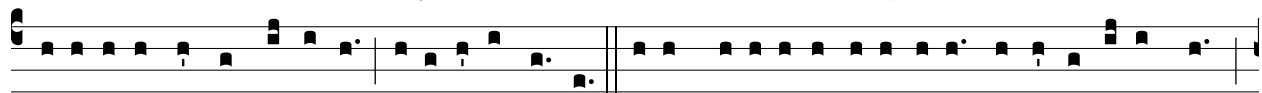
Dómi-ne, et bé-ne-dic he-re-di-tá-ti tu-ae. Et re-ge e-os, et extól-le il-los usque in



ae-tér-num. Per síngu-los di-es, be-ne-dí-cimus te. Et laudá-mus nomen tu-um in saécu-lum,



et in saécu-lum saécu-li. Digná-re Dómi-ne di-e i-sto si-ne peccá-to nos custo-dí-re.



Mi-se-ré-re nostri Dómi-ne, mi-se-ré-re nostri. Fi-at mi-se-ri-córdi-a tu-a Dómi-ne super nos,



quemádmódum spe-rá-vimus in te. In te Dómi-ne spe-rá-vi: non confúndar in ae-tér-num.

5.5 Mode IV: Hypophrygian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
IV	Plegal Deuterus	Hypophrygian	MI	LA	T̄I–T̄I	DO or MI	RE



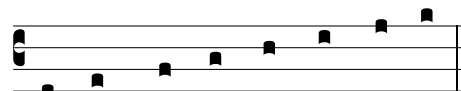
This mode is described as **harmonious** and an example is *Credo I*.

Hymn.
4.
C

Re-á-tor alme sí-de-rum, Ætérna lux cre-dénti-um, Je-su, Red-émptor ómni-um, In-
tén-de vo-tis súppli-cum. 2. Qui daémo-nis ne fráudi-bus Per-í-ret orbis, ímpe-tu Amó-ris actus,
lángui-di Mundi me-dé-la factus es. 3. Commúne qui mundi ne-fas Ut expi-á-res, ad cru-cem
E Vírgi-nis sacrá-ri-o Intácta pro-dis víctima. 4. Cu-jus pot-éstas gló-ri-ae, Noménque cum
primum sonat, Et caé-li-tes et ínfé-ri Tremén-te curvántur genu. 5. Te depre-cámur, últimae Ma-
gnum di-é-i Jú-di-cem, Armis supérnae grá-ti-ae De-fén-de nos ab hósti-bus. 6. Virtus, honor, laus,
gló-ri-a De-o Patri cum Fí-li-o, Sancto simul Pa-rácli-to, In saecu-ló-rum saécu-la. A-men.

5.6 Mode V: Lydian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
V	Authentic Tritus	Lydian	FA	DO	FA-FA	FA	



FA SOL LA TI DO RE MI FA

This mode is described as **glad** and examples include *Benedicamus* II, *Kyrie* VIII, *Credo* III and *Corde Natus Ex Parentis*.

5.

A *l*-ma * Red-emptó-ris Ma-ter, quae pérvia cae-li porta ma-nes, Et stel-la ma-ris,
succurre ca-dénti súrge-re qui cu-rat pópu-lo : Tu quae genu-í-sti, na-tú-ra mi-ránte, tu-um
sanctum Ge-ni-tó-rem : Virgo pri-us ac posté-ri-us, Gabri-é-lis ab o-re sumens il-lud Ave,
pecca-tó-rum mi-se-ré-re.

5.7 Mode VI: Hypolydian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
VI	Plegal Tritus	Hypolydian	FA	LA	DO-DO	FA or DO	



This mode is described as **devout** and examples include *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (Simple Tone), both tones of the *Ave Regina Caelorum* and both tones of the *Regina Caeli Lætare*.

6. **A** - ve ve-rum * Corpus na-tum de Ma-rí- a Vírgi-ne: Ve- re passum, immo-lá-tum

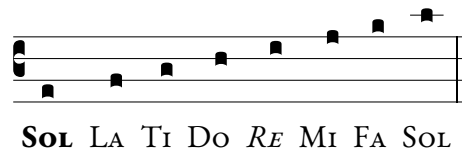
in Cru-ce pro hómi-ne. Cu-jus la-tus perfo-rá- tum flu-xit aqua et sán-gui-ne: E-

sto no-bis praegustá- tum mortis in ex-ámi-ne. O Je-su dul- cis! O Je-su pi- e!

O Je- su fi-li Ma-rí- ae.

5.8 Mode VII: Mixolydian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
VII	Authentic Tetrardus	Mixolydian	SOL	RE	SOL-SOL	SOL	FA



This mode is described as **angelic** and examples include *Asperges me*, *Gloria IX* and *Lauda, Sion Salvatore*.

Ant.
7.

H O-sánna * ff-li- o Da-vid: be-ne-dí- ctus qui ve-nit in nómi-ne Dómi-ni. Rex Is-
ra- òl: Ho-sánna in excél-sis.

5.9 Mode VIII: Hypomixolydian

Mode	Latin	Greek	Final	Dominant	Scale	Ison	Flectus
VIII	Plegal Tetrardus	Hypomixolydian	SOL	DO	RE-RE	DO	



RE MI FA **SOL** LA TI DO RE

This mode is described as **perfect** and examples include *Vidi aquam*, *Kyrie I* and *Veni Creator Spiritus*.

Hymn. 8.

Erbum su-pérnum pró-di-ens, Nec Patris linquens déxte-ram, Ad opus su-um éx-i-ens, Ve-nit ad vi-tae véspe-ram. 2. In mor-tem a di-scí-pu-lo Su-is tra-déndus aému-lis, Pri-us in vi-tae fércu-lo Se trá-di-dit di-scí-pu-lis. 3. Qui-bus sub bi-na spé-ci-e Carnem de-dit et sánqui-nem: Ut dúpli-cis substánti-ae To-tum ci-bá-ret hómi-nem. 4. Se na-scens de-dit só-ci-um, Convéscens in e-dú-li-um, Se mó-ri-ens in pré-ti-um, Se regnans dat in praémi-um. † 5. O SA-LU-TÁ-RIS HÓSTI-A, Quae cae-li pandis ó-sti-um, Bel-la premunt ho-stí-li-a, Da ro-bur, fer au-xí-li-um. 6. Uni tri-nóque Dómi-no Sit sempi-térna gló-ri-a, Qui vi-tam si-ne térmi-no No-bis do-net in pátri-a. A-men.

5.10 Homework

Flip through a red hymnal from the chapel or a good chant source (*Chant Tools*, *Square Note*, *Parish Book of Chant*) and find a piece written in chant notation that you're familiar with. Sing through the piece and see if points made above about its mode ring true (Mode V feels glad, Mode VI ends on MI, etc.).