



# Signs of Hope in Selected Gregorian Chant Texts in the Context of Pope Francis's Message of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025

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**Abstract:** This article presents the signs of hope, listed by Pope Francis in his bull *Spes non confundit*, in sixteen selected Gregorian chants of the liturgical year based on the Bible in the context of the message of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025. The subject of the research is divided into two groups: the Liturgy of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. For each, one piece was selected for Advent, Nativity of the Lord, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, and the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe. The author employs several methods, including theological-biblical analysis, a comparison of the message of hope by Pope Francis and the texts of the chorales, and a synthesis of the results to assess the value and pastoral usefulness of the studied chants. The text is divided into three parts: (1) Pope Francis's message on the signs of hope; (2) signs of hope in selected Gregorian chant texts; and (3) hope-carrying potential of Gregorian chant. The author shows how selected pieces serve to revive hope and give thanks to God in the contemplation of a work of art (SNC 5). As a result, signs of hope, mentioned by Pope Francis, have been discovered in the presented pieces. Their presence testifies to the richness of the message that the Church directs to man throughout the liturgical year, also through Gregorian chant. Given the threat of experiencing the present in melancholy and boredom (SNC 12), this repertoire, through its theological-biblical and artistic values, can be one of the impulses of hope that Francis writes about.

**Keywords:** hope, Gregorian chant, Pope Francis, Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025

In the bull *Spes non confundit* announcing the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 (May 9, 2024), Pope Francis wrote about the contemplation of works of art, which is to accompany the “pilgrims of hope.” Inspired by the pope’s thought and in the context of the jubilee, we intend to present the message of hope contained in Gregorian chant as one of those works of art whose beauty, harmonized with prayer, leads to thanksgiving to God (SNC 5).

First, however, it is worth mentioning Francis’s statement on Gregorian chant, which he addressed publicly and directly twice. In a speech to the members of the “Scholae Cantorum” of the Italian Association of Saint Cecilia (September 28, 2019), he called it the first model of Church song, which is inspirational. He also listed Gregorian chant as the first among the types of sacred music, whose task, as the pope indicated, is to connect Christian history (Francis 2019; cf. Kaproń 2023, 27). For the second time, in a speech addressed to the participants of the 4th International Music Conference organized by the Pontifical Council for Culture (February 4, 2021),

Francis again mentioned this type of singing as one of the fundamental pages of the history of music, ahead of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Johann Sebastian Bach, which were inspired by the Bible (Francis 2021).

In addition, the pope addressed a letter to the superior of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Peter, Solesmes, France (January 2, 2025), and the president of the Congregation of Solesmes on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of Dom Prosper Guéranger (born 1805), the founder of this abbey and congregation after its reactivation after the French Revolution, a restorer of the Benedictine Order in France, an initiator of the liturgical renewal movement, and a lover and zealous propagator of Gregorian chant (Koperek 1993, 378–79). In his letter, Francis called this Servant of God, who died with the words of Psalm 102 on his lips, one of the first architects of the liturgical movement that resulted in the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). The pope saw at the heart of his activity a historical, theological, and ecclesiological discovery of the liturgy as the language of the Church and an expression of her faith (Francis 2025h).

Following this papal lead on the meaning of Gregorian chant,<sup>1</sup> we will undertake a theological and biblical analysis of its selected examples to demonstrate the presence and ambiguity of the message of hope contained in this repertoire in the context of Francis's thoughts on the Jubilee Year. The issue of ambiguity is not accidental because in the aforementioned bull, the pope wrote about various signs of hope. We will also cite other statements by Francis, primarily those made on the occasion of the Jubilee Year, referring to the particular signs of hope. One of those occasions was the Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture (February 15–18, 2025)—significant from the perspective of sacred music.

Then, we will seek the same signs in the biblical texts of selected Gregorian chants,<sup>2</sup> discovering their theological message and the pastoral value and usefulness of this kind of music.<sup>3</sup> Our goal is neither biblical exegesis nor a neumatic-melodic

<sup>1</sup> The fundamental and indisputable role of Gregorian chant in the liturgy and sacred music has been repeatedly confirmed and recalled in various documents of the Church. At this point, let us cite the aforementioned Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council: "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." (SC 116)

<sup>2</sup> The biblical origin of the texts is one of the two characteristic features of classical Gregorian compositions, which (1) are closely linked to the annual liturgical cycle, i.e., their content corresponds to a greater or lesser extent with the content of the liturgy; they are not an accidental but an essential element of the liturgy of the Church; (2) constitute the prayer of the Church, which from the very beginning was said mainly in the words of the Book of Psalms, and to a much lesser extent also in other books of the Old and New Testaments, other texts of the Church, lives of the saints, Apocrypha, or extra-Church sources (Bernagiewicz 2007, 55).

<sup>3</sup> The theology of Gregorian chant and its message are discussed, among others, by Kelly 1921, 344–50; Stevens 1944, 205–25; Schneider 1982, 3–22; Niegowski 2001, 169–81; Pawlak 2005, 357–74; 2008, 83–105; 2011, 65–80; 2012, 187–97; 2014, 49–62; Drewniak 2010, 139–53; Tyrała 2013, 313–27; Wiśniewski 2013, 103–18; Sawicki 2014; Klöckner 2021, 113–21; Bisztyga 2024, 167–84.

analysis, nor an investigation of the melodies' origin. We will not refer to Gregorian modality and the so-called ethos (character) of the eight church modes,<sup>4</sup> octoechos (Claire 1975), or archaic modes and pre-otcoechos psalm tones (Turco 2023).

The subject of the research includes a total of sixteen selected pieces of the Liturgy of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours for each liturgical period included in contemporary Gregorian editions; however, where available, we will also indicate medieval manuscript sources of the originals. The criterion for selecting the repertoire is the multiplicity and diversity of the signs of hope contained therein and the constancy and cyclicity of this message throughout the whole liturgical year from Advent to the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. We will present the signs of hope in the Gregorian repertoire in the order adopted by Pope Francis in his bull, linking them with subsequent liturgical periods and titles (incipits) of the Liturgy of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. As a result of the analyses, we will refer to the hope-carrying potential of Gregorian chant. Thus, we will divide the text into three parts: (1) Pope Francis's message on the signs of hope; (2) signs of hope in selected Gregorian chant texts; and (3) hope-carrying potential of Gregorian chant.

## 1. Pope Francis's Message on the Signs of Hope

Pope Francis mentioned eight signs of hope in the following order: peace, transmission of life, prisoners, the sick, the young, migrants, the elderly, and the poor (SNC 8–15). They are related to the signs of time which the Church should recognize and interpret in the light of the Gospels, as the pope recalled the Second Vatican Council (GS 4).

When teaching on peace, Francis referred to the brutality and violence of wars, posing rhetorical questions to draw attention to peoples' suffering and to prompt world leaders to make an effort for peace. What is noticeable is that the pope stressed

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<sup>4</sup> The study of ethos in music theory dates back to antiquity. We find it in the writings of Aristoxenus, Cleonides, Ptolemy, Aristides Quintilian, and in the philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle. In the Middle Ages, the eight church modes and their ethos were described by Guy of Arezzo (10th–11th century), Hermanus Contractus (11th century), and Johannes Affligemensis (11th–12th century), the author of the anonymous treatise *De modorum formulis et tonarius* (11th century). Also important in this respect are the bas-reliefs and inscriptions placed on the capitals from Cluny (11th century), depicting the eight Gregorian modes. In Poland, this topic was taken up by Jerzy Liban of Legnica (1464–1546). The closest connection between the text and the ethos of the melody in the Western Church chant is found in classical Gregorian chants, which were created mainly by the 8th century and transmit the original melody. However, without being certain about the originality of the melodies and not addressing the issue of their origin, drawing conclusions about the ethos would be, as Robert Bernagiewicz (2004, 361–64, 377) writes, very risky.

the global nature of these problems and their consequences, even if they begin at the local level, as well as the universality of the need for peace. Therefore, he encouraged diplomats to seek every opportunity aimed at a lasting peace (SNC 8). In the 58th World Day of Peace message (January 1, 2025), he called this effort of “disarming hearts” a job for everyone (Francis 2025e).<sup>5</sup> However, not only is peace a matter of humans’ working, but primarily of God’s dream, using the pope’s turn of phrase (Francis 2024g), to be read as God’s will.

Considering the transmission of life as a sign of hope, Francis first addressed the common loss of the desire for parenthood, including its reasons and context. He referred to the human-nature-backed openness to life, urging states and civil and religious—especially Christian—communities to support this mission entrusted to spouses by the Creator. The pope clearly associated hope with the transmission of life, designating it as a matter of hope that ensures a future for every society (SNC 9). These thoughts correspond with Francis’s message to participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life (March 3, 2025), in which the pope traced a connection between Teilhard de Chardin’s category of relationship and interdependence of creature—with *homo sapiens* among them—and the signs of hope from *Spes non confundit* (Francis 2025i). Thus, the natural ability to transmit life and the relatedness of parenthood bear hope for the world.

When it comes to prisoners, the pope reminded us of the conditions they live in and called for tangible actions, proposing forms of amnesty and programs of reintegration into society to be undertaken by governments, with respect for the law. Francis referred to the biblical texts on jubilee and liberation of captives (Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1–2), as well as the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18–19). He opposed the death penalty and called for its abolition (SNC 10). As a concrete sign of closeness, he expressed his will to open a Holy Door in a prison, which happened on December 26, 2024, in the prison of Rebibbia, Rome. Then he preached on gripping the rope of hope and opening hearts wide (Francis 2024h).

Speaking of the sick, Francis considered works of mercy done for them as works of hope. With increased attention, he mentioned those whose suffering restricts their personal independence and freedom. These words are all the more important for our discussion as the pope used musical terminology to describe care given to the sick: “a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole.” (SNC 11) Moreover, he quoted this fragment of the bull in his message for the 33rd World Day of the Sick (February 11, 2025), when relating again the sign of the suffering and healthcare to music and harmony (Francis 2025j).

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<sup>5</sup> In terms of disarmament and peace, Pope Leo XIV expressed a similar idea in his first message as St. Peter’s successor on the election day at the Central Loggia of the Vatican Basilica (May 8, 2025), when he called Christ’s peace “unarmed and disarming” (Leo XIV 2025).

This fact provides us with another argument for seeking connections between the pope's thought on the signs of hope and Gregorian chant.

The young, as the next sign of hope, were appreciated by Francis for their enthusiasm and volunteer work. He noticed the dangers and risks that they encountered or turned to. Therefore, he desired greater and concerted efforts to be done, since the young "are the joy and hope of the Church and of the world." (SNC 12) When addressing the young before the 39th World Youth Day (November 24, 2024), the pope repeated his intention and the central jubilee idea that people personally encounter the Lord Jesus as the "door" of our salvation (SNC 1). He proposed three fundamental attitudes for the young during this encounter: thanksgiving, seeking, and penance (Francis 2025d).

In reference to migrants as a sign of the time we live in, Francis's intention was to bring them hope of a better life and welcome them with a sense of responsibility. He appealed for their social guarantees of security, employment, and education. In addition, he implored the Christian community to defend and receive migrants, recalling passages from the parable of the Last Judgement (Matt 25:35, 40), as a special motivation for acting with love and truth (SNC 13). In the context of the Jubilee Year, the pope announced "Migrants, missionaries of hope" as the theme of the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (October 4–5, 2025), emphasizing their courage and tenacity, as well as total trust in God. He also wanted to appreciate their contribution to the religious life of the communities they join (cf. DPIHD).

The elderly were appreciated by Francis for their life experience, accumulated wisdom, and further contribution to the Christian community and civil society. Among them, grandparents are highly esteemed, especially in terms of transmitting the faith and wisdom to the young (SNC 14). As the theme of the 5th World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly (July 27, 2025), the pope chose a passage from Sir 14:2: "Blessed are those who have not lost hope." What Francis intended to draw attention to is the presence of the elderly as a sign of hope in the family and Church (cf. DLFL).

Finally, when speaking of the poor, the pope wanted to grant them hope amid their lack of the bare essentials. He emphasized the realism and closeness of poverty, as well as scandalous disproportions of possessions between the rich and the poor. He warned about becoming injured and resigned to poverty and treating this question only out of duty, as minor and the least of all (SNC 15). On the 8th World Day of the Poor (November 17, 2024), in accordance with the upcoming jubilee, Francis had confronted two realities in the context of the poor: anguish and hope. The first one is caused by the suffering of the impoverished; the second one, as realized in Jesus, enables an appropriate response to poverty (Francis 2024c).

## 2. Signs of Hope in Selected Gregorian Chant Texts

### 2.1. Advent—Peace

The message of the eight signs of hope can also be found in different Gregorian chant genres intended for all liturgical periods. A piece of Advent Mass repertoire, which bears the sign of peace, is the medieval offertory *Exsulta satis* with the verse *Loquetur pacem gentibus*. The piece is to be performed on Saturday of the third week of Advent, i.e., one of the Ember Days or *Quatuor Tempora* (*Offertoriale* 11–12).<sup>6</sup> The Latin text was borrowed from Zach. 9:9–10b:

Off. Exsulta satis filia Sion,  
praedica filia Jerusalem:  
Ecce Rex tuus venit tibi,  
sanctus et salvator.

Ÿ. Loquetur pacem gentibus,  
et potestas eius a mari usque ad mare,  
et a flumine usque ad terminus orbis terrae.

In the quoted fragment, the author predicts the advent of an earthly king of peace, whose imminent coming is the cause of joy and exaltation. In the chant, he is called “saint” and “savior,” which yet does not resemble the original text. The Hebrew Bible conveys instead the words “just” (*šaddiq*) and “saved” (*nôšā*) (cf. *BHS*).<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, he will announce peace to the nations. Not only will his reign embrace Judah, but also the whole inhabited world (*NJBC* 357). The advent of the new king’s rule is practically equivalent to global peace. The Francis’s jubilee aspects of peace, which correspond with this Gregorian chant message, include globality, universality, every opportunity, and everyone’s task.

The second selected piece is the Matins responsory *Bethlehem civitas Dei* for the third Sunday of Advent (*NR* 133–34).<sup>8</sup> The text comes from Mich. 5:1, 3–4, partially quoted and paraphrased, and that of the verse from Zach. 9:10b as above:

Resp. Bethlehem civitas Dei summi,  
ex te exiet Dominator Israël,  
et egressus ejus sicut

<sup>6</sup> The verse *Loquetur pacem gentibus* and the offertory *Exsulta satis* can be found, for instance, in a 12th-century gradual from the Premonstratensian abbey in Bellelay, Switzerland (*Bell* 25).

<sup>7</sup> *Salvator* follows the Vulgate’s text, *sanctus* diverges even from this pattern (*Vg: justus*). The chant’s author also omits the passage on riding a donkey as a sign of peacefulness and the destruction of chariots, horses, and war bows.

<sup>8</sup> A medieval source of *Bethlehem civitas Dei* is the Winter volume of the famous late 10th-century *Hartker Antiphonary* (*Hartker* 27–28)—*Antiphonarium officii* named after its author—Hartker, a St. Gall Benedictine monk.

a principio dierum aeternitatis,  
 et magnificabitur in medio  
 universae terae:  
 et pax erit in terra nostra,  
 dum venerit.

Ÿ. Loquetur pacem . . .

In the text, a new David is about to appear as the Messiah coming from Bethlehem. He is portrayed as an idealized king whose origin extends over eternity (*NJBC* 253). Characteristic features of his peaceful presence and rule are—as previously—universality and totality, which we link with Francis’s message. The Gregorian source changes the text into “there will be peace in our land,” though the original states that he is peace.

## 2.2. Christmas—Transmission of Life

A prime example of a Gregorian piece to carry the sign of the transmission of life is the Christmas Mass introit *Puer natus est nobis*, performed on the Lord’s Nativity Day (*GR* 1974, 47–48).<sup>9</sup> The text was borrowed from Isa 9:5:

Intr. Puer natus est nobis,  
 et filius datus est nobis:  
 cuius imperium super humerum eius:  
 et vocabitur nomen eius,  
 magni consilii angelus.

In the historical context, the nativity of the mentioned boy and son, an ideal ruler from the House of David, by God’s working, will bring liberation of Israel from the Assyrian oppression. However, the child’s titles surpass historical reality and testify to his messianic identity (Stachowiak 1991, 49). The Gregorian source mentions only one of these names: “wonder counselor.” This wonderness is revealed in the Infant Jesus.

When opening the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica (December 24, 2024), Pope Francis encouraged people to see Jesus Christ, enabling them to transfer the hope he brings into daily situations, such as marriage and family life, and to transmit life (Francis 2024d). Because not only is the child born, but he is himself the source and giver of life.

<sup>9</sup> One of the medieval sources of *Puer natus est nobis* is a 10th-century Gradual from Einsiedeln (*Ein* 30). The codex’s name refers to another St. Gall Benedictine monk—Notker Balbulus (Notker the Stammerer), whose sequences are included there.



The next Christmas example is the antiphon *Jacob autem genuit Joseph* for the first Vespers of the Feast of the Holy Family (AR II, 58). The Gregorian composer used the text from Matt 1:16:

Ant. Jacob autem genuit Joseph virum Mariae,  
de qua natus est Jesus,  
qui vocatur Christus.

The end of the descending genealogy of Jesus informs us that Mary and her son, through the legal fatherhood of Joseph, were included in the royal line of David and the nation whose father was Abraham. Christ is presented as the climax of his lineage (Homerski 1995, 27).

The whole genealogy of Jesus in Matt 1:1–17 was the first theme of the jubilee catechesis cycle, which Francis began on December 18, 2024. Its first part is devoted to the childhood of Jesus. Speaking of Christ's earthly origin, the pope preached on the transmission of life: "no one gives life to himself, but receives it as a gift from others," and urged people to awaken a grateful memory of ancestors (Francis 2024b).

### 2.3. Lent—Prisoners

The theme of imprisonment or enslavement, a just judgment, and deliverance at once appears in the Introit *Judica me Deus* for the fifth Sunday of Lent (GR 1974, 120; Ein 164). The text comes from Ps 43:1–2:

Intr. Judica me Deus,  
et discerne causam meam  
de gente non sancta:  
ab homine iniquo  
et doloso eripe me:  
quia tu es Deus meus,  
et fortitudo mea.

This fragment expresses a profound sadness of the author, since he suffers and feels abandoned by God. At the same time, he begs God for judgment on himself and his position. It includes a petition for deliverance from hostile people. Paradoxically, this sorrowful state allows him to long for God and hope for salvation and joy (Tronina and Mielnik 2021, 125). Similarly, the pope encouraged prisoners not to lose hope; despite the toughness of life, there is always something good, which helps to move forward (Francis 2024h).

The hope for forgiveness and renewal of prisoners, mentioned by the pope in the bull, is emphasized in the Vespers antiphon *Dedit pater paenitenti filio* for the fourth



Sunday of Lent (AR II, 158–59).<sup>10</sup> The Gregorian piece paraphrases the text of Luke's parable of the good father and two sons (Luke 15:22–23):

Ant. Dedit pater paenitenti filio  
 stolam primam pariter et anulum  
 nam et calceamenta illi tribuens  
 celebravit magnum convivium.  
 Habemus stolam primam in lavacro,  
 et anulum fidei signaculum.

Not only does the composer recall the merciful father's order to clothe his son and prepare the feast, but he also refers to Christian life and receiving, through baptism, a fine garment and ring as a sign of fidelity. In this case, the art of Gregorian chant spurs us on to self-reflection to treat other sinners as God does (Langkammer 2005, 388). This idea accompanies the pope's announcement of the Jubilee for Prisoners to be held on December 14, 2025.

#### 2.4. Holy Week—The Sick

The theme of suffering is raised in the communion *Pater, si non potest* for Palm Sunday (GR 1974, 149; *Ein* 186), and the nocturnal responsory (*responsorium prolixum*) *In monte Oliveti* for Holy Thursday (NR 374–75; *Hartker* 178). Both compositions include quotations from the Gospel of Matthew on Christ's prayer in Gethsemane: the communion—Matt 26:42, the responsory—Matt 26:39, 41:

Comm. Pater, si non potest  
 hic calix transire,  
 nisi bibam illum:  
 fiat voluntas tua.

Resp. In monte Oliveti  
 oravit ad Patrem:  
 Pater, si fieri potest  
 transeat a me calix iste.  
 Spiritus quidem promptus est,  
 caro autem infirma,  
 fiat voluntas tua.

Ÿ. Vigilate et orate  
 ut non intretis in tentationem.

<sup>10</sup> A medieval source of *Dedit pater paenitenti filio* is a 13th-century antiphonary from Cambrai Cathedral (*Cam*, fol. 85v).

The sadness and fear that Jesus experienced before his crucifixion testify to his real human nature. They can fully be part of a prayer of a man under a sorrowful internal trial (Homerski 1995, 152). Pope Francis referred to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane in the context of the jubilee in his message for World Mission Day (October 19, 2025). He invited all to become missionaries of hope, especially toward the sick, following Christ, the "divine Missionary of hope," who experienced all our human frailties (Francis 2025g).

## 2.5. Easter—The Young

Youth is the theme that appears in two compositions devoted to the encounter between the women and the angel or young man at Jesus's tomb on the Resurrection. The Mass chant is the offertory *Angelus Domini descendit* for Easter Monday (GR 1974, 202), while the Liturgy of the Hours delivers a nocturnal responsory with a verse under the same title for Resurrection Sunday (NR 429–30). Their texts are combinations of several biblical verses, since the offertory paraphrases Matt 28:2, 5–6, and the responsory—Matt 28:2, 5 and Mark 16:4–6:<sup>11</sup>

Off. Angelus Domini descendit de caelo,  
et dixit mulieribus: Quem quaeritis,  
surrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia

Resp. Angelus Domini descendit de caelo,  
et accedens revolvit lapidem,  
et super eum sedit,  
et dixit mulieribus:  
Nolite timere: scio enim  
quia crucifixum quaeritis:  
jam surrexit: venite, et videte locum,  
ubi positus erat Dominus, alleluia.

Ÿ. Et introeuntes in monumentum,  
videntes juvenem sedentem in dextris,  
coopertum stola candida,  
et obstupuerunt: quia dixit illis.

The young man at the tomb, named so by Mark only, is an angel, whose white garment signifies his belonging to the heavenly world (Langkammer 2004, 150). The association between youth and risen Jesus is a motive of Pope Francis's address to the young. In his message for the 62nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations (May 11,

<sup>11</sup> A late medieval source of this chant is an antiphonary from Florence, dating from the first half of the 15th century (*Flor*, fols.103v–105r).

2025), he made a reference to the road to Emmaus appearance and the burning of hearts caused by listening to Jesus' words at any time (cf. Luke 24:32). This results in the desire for consecration to God (Francis 2025f).

On another occasion, Francis made a similar remark on a parallel text (Luke 24:5) to the one from the above Gregorian chant. He encouraged young people to see Jesus as proposed by two men at the empty tomb: "alive and overflowing with joy, the victor over death, a friend who loves you and wants to live in you." (Francis 2024f)

## 2.6. Migrants—Pentecost

The work of the Holy Spirit as an event of a global meaning, which finally prompted the apostles to reach out to people of different nations, cultures, and languages, is referred to in the Introit *Spiritus Domini replevit* for Pentecost (GR 1974, 252; Ein 255), which borrows its text from Wis 1:7:

Intr. Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum, alleluia:  
et hoc quod continet omnia,  
scientiam habet vocis,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Wisdom is presented as similar to God's Spirit (Zieliński 2023, 17), the One who replenishes the prophets and apostles, as well as the entire world. In comparison, the Liturgy of the Hours of Pentecost brings us the Vespers antiphon *Hodie completi sunt* (AR II, 286–87),<sup>12</sup> whose text is a loose and selective reference to Acts 2:1–11. Yet, it contains a quote from Mark 16:16:

Ant. Hodie completi sunt dies Pentecostes, alleluia:  
hodie Spiritus Sanctus in igne discipulis apparuit,  
et tribuit eis charismatum dona:  
misit eos in universum mundum praedicare et testificari:  
qui crediderit, et baptizatus fuerit,  
salvatus erit, alleluia.

The external signs of tongues of fire, resting on the apostles, show their internal experience, which was shared by the present people (Langkammer 2008, 40–41). The passage from Mark on being saved, if one believes and is baptized, is an invitation to partake in Christ's Passover.

Pope Francis combined the topics of the Holy Spirit and migrants in his message for Lent 2025, which might be condensed into a "journey together in hope." It is the

<sup>12</sup> A late medieval source of this chant is the Cistercian antiphonary from Lubiąż, ca. 1295 (*Lub*, fol. 97v).

Holy Spirit who heals of self-absorption and impels to mobilization toward God and people. As a Lenten exercise and examination of conscience, Francis proposed to walk at the side of others by comparing our daily life with that of a migrant or foreigner, to learn sympathy, love, and patience (Francis 2025c).

## 2.7. Ordinary Time—The Elderly

Two Gregorian compositions to mention advanced age are the communion *Domine, memorabor* for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (GR 1974, 332; *Ein* 159), and the nocturnal responsory *Repleatur os meum* for the first week after Epiphany (NR 262).<sup>13</sup> Each one contains fragments of Ps 71—the communion: Ps 16–18, and the responsory: Ps 8, 9, 23:

- Comm. Domine, memorabor justitiae tuae solius:  
Deus, docuisti me a juventute mea,  
et usque in senectam et senium, Deus, ne derelinquas me.
- Resp. Repleatur os meum laude,  
ut hymnum dicam gloriae tuae,  
tota die magnificentiae tuae:  
noli me projicere in tempore senectutis:  
cum defecerit virtus mea  
ne derelinquas me.
- ℣. Gaudebunt labia mea cum cantavero tibi,  
et anima mea quam redemisti.

The content allows us to treat the psalm as a prayer of an old man and a “prayer of heart.” It helps to reflect upon the passing of time and accept the natural process of aging. This piece conveys a reasonable program for old age by recalling God’s works in one’s lifetime with deep gratitude, admiration, glorification, and full trust in Him, as well as pleading for the final assistance (Tronina and Mielnik 2021, 196–99).

In other words, old age is the time to be reborn—from above, as Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (John 3:7b), who wondered how it is possible for an old man. Pope Francis considers this verse in one of his jubilee catecheses to show that it is always possible, with one’s history of life, to emerge from the darkness of doubt to the light of following Christ (Francis 2025a).

<sup>13</sup> A medieval manuscript containing this responsory is the 12th-century antiphonary from Utrecht (*Utr*, fol. 49r).

## 2.8. Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe—The Poor

The question of the poor arises in the communion *Amen, dico vobis quod uni* (GR 1974, 391; *Ein* 265) for Christ the King Sunday, which carries Matt 25:34, 40:

Comm. Amen dico vobis: quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis,  
mihi fecistis: venite benedicti Patris mei,  
possidete praeparatum vobis regnum ab initio saeculi.

Love of Christ is identified with the attitude toward the poor and needy. Those who care for them are called the blessed, whom the Son of Man graciously invites to enter his kingdom while executing his Father's will (*NJBC* 669). The Gregorian composer chose only this text on being allowed into heaven, not rejected because of one's negligence toward neighbors.

For the same solemnity, the Liturgy of the Hours offers us the Vespers responsory (*responsorium breve*) *Sedes tua Deus* (AR II, 444; *Hartker* 86) with the text from Ps 44:7:

Resp. Sedes tua, Deus, in saeculum saeculi.  
V. Sceptrum aequitatis, sceptrum regni tui.

This psalm was written on the occasion of a royal wedding. The king, anointed by God, is almost identified with God. The Church gives a Christological interpretation referring to the relation between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:24). In this perspective, the psalm reveals Christ's universal rule and the virtues which he endows his Church with (Tronina and Mielnik 2021, 130–132). One of these virtues is being “an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of the society,” (*EG* 187) as the pope recalled his document in anticipation of the Jubilee Year (Francis 2024c).

## 3. Hope-Carrying Potential of Gregorian Chant

Our examination of the selected Gregorian chant texts demonstrates that they convey the signs of hope presented by Pope Francis throughout the liturgical year. The potential of Gregorian chant to carry hope results from the biblical text on which it is primarily based. What is special about this way of transmitting the Bible is the artistic component provided by sacred music. Among many historical styles, forms,

and composition techniques of this kind of music, it is the Gregorian chant that most effectively conveys the hopeful biblical text.<sup>14</sup>

The hope-carrying potential of the combination of the Bible and Gregorian melodies<sup>15</sup> can be better understood when referring to Francis's homily to artists and the world of culture for their jubilee (February 16, 2025).<sup>16</sup> The pope's view is that artists and people of culture are called to be witnesses to the revolutionary vision of the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20–21). Not only should they create beauty but also reveal the truth, goodness, and beauty hidden throughout history, to give voice to the voiceless, to transform pain into hope (Francis 2025b).

Provided we place the author of Gregorian melodies, mostly anonymous, among the addressees of Francis's message. Then, this kind of music, often unknown and underestimated, seems to be hidden in the history of the Church, liturgy, and music; however, it still awaits discovery and wider performance. We can reasonably associate the pope's reflection on the arts with Gregorian chant, and, using his words, assign it the ambitious and exigent task of addressing the global crisis of soul and sense, to help humankind maintain hope.

This loss of hope stems from the obsession with consumption, which distracts the heart and precludes appreciation of anything and everything. Thus, Gregorian chant, with all its biblical, spiritual, and artistic values, would serve as a means of rejecting the logic of domination and hedonism in favor of humility, joy, and hope. That is to say, music, art, and prayer, which merge in Gregorian repertoire, are among the pope's proposals to derive satisfaction from (*LS* 222–23). This kind of music is undoubtedly the authentic art of which Francis says it is always an encounter with the beauty that surpasses us, with the pain that challenges us, with the truth that calls to us (Francis 2025b).

The hope carried by Gregorian chant refers to a specific ability that the pope, in the same message, assigns to an artist, namely discernment and differentiation between falsity and truth, compared respectively by Francis to seductive songs of sirens and authentic appeals to humanity. The first ones would result in despair, the second in hope. This noble requirement imposed on art seems to be satisfied by Gregorian chant for its liturgical function based on biblical content and musical values.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This comes about due to the monodic construction and predominance of the melody over other musical elements with no harmonic ingredient, as well as a close relation between sound and word, which makes the chants imitative of natural human speech.

<sup>15</sup> Since a chant basically includes a text and melody, we should specify that, when speaking of Gregorian chant, the hope-carrying potential refers precisely to the combination of the biblical text and Gregorian melodies.

<sup>16</sup> Linking art (i.e., music) and hope in a papal teaching is not only a feature of Francis's reflection on art; to mention John Paul II and Benedict XVI, whose such thought has already been examined (Zarębianka 2014, 131; Warzeszak 2020, 83–84).

<sup>17</sup> The question of proper discernment in terms of the renewal of sacred music was raised by Pope Paul VI. He warned about those new forms of musical expression that do not always harmonize with the

If beauty, with art as its means, has the hopeful potential to attend to the broken, poor, suffering, wounded, imprisoned, persecuted, and refugees, as Francis believed, then Gregorian chant is in the lead of this mission in music, and its performer is a guardian of this beauty, who builds bridges, creates spaces for encounter and dialogue, enlightens minds, and warms hearts (cf. Francis 2025b). The pope made a courageous comparison between art and the content it conveys, like all the afflictions mentioned above. He inquired into the need for art in the wounded world, faced with the urgency and practicality of other things. We can broach this subject and ask what brings more hope: a chant on caring for the poor or caring for the poor itself? Francis did not answer what weighs more and called for primary satisfaction. With his renowned evangelical attendance on the poor, he cautioned against underestimating art, which he named the spirit's need, not luxury. Therefore, it can be worded, after Francis in the same message, that Gregorian chant is not a flight from reality and utopia but a charge, a biblical call to action, an appeal, and a cry.

In Francis's opinion, art is called to partake in the revolution of the Jesus' Beatitudes, which hopefully proclaim the suffering to be blessed. A question to be posed is whether we are even capable of thinking that Gregorian chant may represent revolutionary ideas, prophecy, courage, and creativity (Francis 2025b). It may surely be considered the "music of the Gospel," (FT 277) first literally for the biblical text, second metaphorically to increase the resonance of the Gospels in the very human being, and at the places of daily activity, as the pope taught, to foster joy, compassion, tender love, trust, reconciliation, and the defense of human dignity.

If art has meaning and the potential for hope, it is because a piece of art carries meaning and the potential for hope, and so does Gregorian chant. Therefore, this music is capable of being a humble liturgical and artistic means of engaging with the world to transform it, and of supporting, by its biblical content, the "hope argument" for credibility of Christianity (Rusecki 2010, 287).<sup>18</sup> This credibility lies in the Gospel of Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12; Luke 6:20–23), which Francis called an inverted logic and a revolution of perspective. Gregorian chant, which literally conveys the text of the Beatitudes,<sup>19</sup> seems to proclaim the new world to come, which Francis spoke about in the context of art (Francis 2025b).

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ecclesiastical tradition and cause perplexity and doubts (Paul VI 1968). Francis's thought on the artist's mission in general emphasizes the moral component of discernment. However, when it specifically comes to sacred music, he bore in mind Pius X, Paul VI, and Benedict XVI's approach, persuading that holy music, because rituals are holy, conveys the nobility of art and universality, which everyone might understand and celebrate (Francis 2019).

<sup>18</sup> An example of such engaging with the world through Gregorian chant on the highest artistic and liturgical level is the activity of *Flores Rosarum*, a Polish female singing group founded in 2007, who primarily perform music by St. Hildegard of Bingen, as well as the repertoire from Polish musical and liturgical manuscripts (*Flores Rosarum*, n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> For example, see the communion *Beati pauperes spiritu* (GR 1961, 27\*\*).



The pope indirectly confirmed the hope-carrying potential of Gregorian chant when he named, in the address to the participants in the 4th International Meeting of Choirs (June 8, 2024), three essential aspects of liturgical music ministry: harmony, communion, and joy (Francis 2024e). Hope is their common denominator and result.

Harmony reaches out to the afflicted and rekindles enthusiasm, since music is a universal and immediate language, which, according to Francis, requires no translation or elaborate explanation. Here we can raise the question, not rarely posed, whether it is necessary to understand Latin to profit from Gregorian chant. Indeed, the spiritual, psychic, and aesthetic benefits of this music are not limited to language knowledge, and a listener can turn to God without full understanding (cf. Pawlak 2008, 87). Despite this fact, it would surely work to a pastoral advantage to provide liturgy attendees with a translation and/or at least a brief commentary on the Gregorian repertoire to be sung, to better realize the potential under discussion.

The communion of performing sacred music refers to the Church and world communities, in and between which cooperation is indispensable. It is possible when people humbly listen to each other without seeking personal prominence. This comparison by Francis evokes the well-known in the Church chanting care and discipline, which was observed, even on penalty, by respecting rests and starting moments while listening to others (Jędrzejski 2024a, 245, 250). This musical observance still contributes to the common good and is an appropriate song of praise to God.

The joy of sacred music is rooted in the centuries-old treasure of art, beauty, and spirituality, which is represented in Gregorian chant. Francis warned against losing it by self-interest, ambition, jealousy, or division under the world mentality. What he reasoned further corresponds with the nature of Gregorian works. He encouraged maintaining a lofty level of spiritual and moral condition through prayer, biblical meditation, and daily life inspired by the content of performed music. Since liturgical music with Gregorian chant is a part of the liturgy, for fruitful participation, and not only a perfect performance, it requires the performer and listener to be spiritually and morally prepared. Even though the hope-carrying potential of Gregorian chant is intrinsic and realizable, according to Ireneusz Pawlak, it has its enemies: ignorance, individualism, subjectivism, and democracy.<sup>20</sup> However, it is hopefully supported by objectivism, professionalism, placement in the liturgy, and continuation of the tradition (Pawlak 2005, 364–74).

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<sup>20</sup> Pawlak clarifies that there is no democracy in art, since the value of works of art is not dependent on selling rates or voting. What is better or more beautiful is such because it (objectively) deserves it due to its inner properties.

## Conclusions

To quote the title of Bernard Sawicki's (2014) book, there is everything in (Gregorian) chant. There are topics of the biblical text, supported by beautiful [*sic*] melodies, to be noticed, reflected, exposed, and preached. There is also the message of hope to be referred to, as Pope Francis repeatedly returned to sacred music during his pontificate and formed the jubilee signs of hope. From the perspective of an ended pontificate, the very fact that Francis referred to Gregorian chant cherished hopes. He was another pope to demonstrate the relevance of the broad problem of spirituality in music to be endlessly discussed (cf. Urbański 2011, 34). An indispensable element of this discussion is discovering the Bible in Gregorian chant. This prevents losing the theological sense of music, while facing its contemporary threats (Bramorski 2012, 398), and provides a renewable source of sacred music—prayer and deep theological reflection (Bramorski 2020, 11).

Therefore, it could be a pastoral and catechetical task to extract with deeper awareness the intention of a Gregorian composer or idea that might have accompanied the creation process, as it happened throughout the history of music (Przybysz 2024, 21). This reference to Gregorian chant would serve to educate about true beauty, which, according to Francis, is educating about hope (Francis 2025b). It finds practical application, e.g., in catechesis for the young by embracing sacred music and Gregorian chant, and playing selected pieces.<sup>21</sup> This may become an inspiration to think of the relation with God, or even an impulse to live by the faith in Christ more fully.

This enthusiastic approach to Gregorian chant does not mean to overestimate it, nor does it mean to overestimate the whole of sacred music, as if it redeemed humans. If beauty saves, it is only the Supreme Beauty, whose presence and working we can find in sacred music as based on God's Revelation. Thus, Gregorian chant, as a subtle means, reminds us of and leads to this Beauty which can be heard, not only seen, thanks to the melody and biblical text. In this way, words supported by music reach the interior of a human soul as deeply as possible (Suñol 1957, 199).

Depending on personal experience, we can confirm the over one hundred-year-old words of F. Joseph Kelly (1921, 344) that the more often we hear and witness Gregorian chant, the more beauty and sublimity we discover in it. And as for its pastoral and catechetical value, in the face of the despairing character of some musical styles and pieces, Gregorian chant is still a vehicle by which the sublime Christian message of hope is conveyed to all.

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<sup>21</sup> In terms of catechetical handbooks, Gregorian chant was demonstrated to have been referred to in the collection *Z Bogiem przez życie* [With God Through Life], edited by Marian Zając and published in Lublin by Gaudium between 2020 and 2023 (Jędrzejski 2024b, 257, 262).

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