

Anthem Notes for November 27, 2016

Of the Father's Love Begotten 13th C Plainsong
Divinum Mysterium, Arr. John Carter

*Of the Father's love begotten,
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore!*

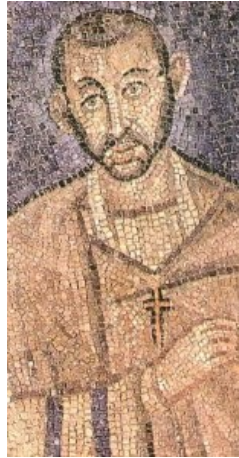
*O that birth for ever blessed,
when the Virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bare the Savior of our race;
and the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore!*

*O ye heights of heaven, adore him;
angel-hosts, his praises sing;
powers, dominions, bow before him,
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice in concert ring,
evermore and evermore!*

*Christ, to thee with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving,
and unwearied praises be;
honor, glory and dominion,
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore!*

This beautiful, ancient Advent hymn, found in both our green and blue hymnals, is based on Revelation 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Alpha and *Omega* are the first and the last letters, respectively, of the Greek alphabet. They have been employed from the fourth century onwards as a symbol expressing the confidence in the scriptural proofs of our Lord's divinity. Taken from the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of St. John, the verse conveys the message that Christ, as well as the Father, is "the First and the



Aurelius Clemens
Prudentius (348-413)

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Last, "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." The oldest inscription in which the letters "A" and "Ω" occur in their traditional form dates from 364.

The Latin text for *Of the Father's Love Begotten*, "Corde natus ex Parentis," was written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-c.413). Born in Spain only 35 years after Constantine was converted and declared Christianity to become the faith of the Roman Empire, he rose to high office in the Empire and served as a court official for the Christian Emperor Theodosius. He also became the most prolific and prominent author of early sacred Latin poetry. At age 57, he renounced the world and retreated to a life of poverty, seclusion, and writing. His poetry was treasured throughout the Middle Ages. But without a doubt, his best known hymn today is *Of the Father's Love Begotten*.

Translated into English by John Mason Neale (1818-1866) and later revised by Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877), it was included in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and given the plainsong melody *Divinum Mysterium* (Divine Mystery), which is believed to date back as far as the twelfth century.

The tune, *Divinum Mysterium*, is plainsong, that is melody in free, rather than measured rhythm. The kind that you might imagine monks singing in the Middle Ages. Our setting by John Carter (b. 1930) arranges the plainsong into meter by using a variety of metered measures: 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. If you listen carefully, you might hear the rhythmic irregularity along with syncopation at the ends of phrases. Carter has taken this ancient melody and created a rather contemporary, lush setting, but which includes some brief 'organum' (singing in parallel fourths) in the mid-section. Singing in parallel fourths began in about the 12th Century and is the earliest form of polyphonic music. Carter's arrangement begins quietly with the women, adding the men in unison, then breaking into four parts. The quiet beginning gradually crescendos (gets louder) throughout the piece, climaxing at the end on a forte (loud) "Amen."



John Carter

Welcome the Women's Choir to the service today.

Today's Advent and Christmas Courtyard Music is presented by the Glunt Family.