

Choir in Context Study Notes and Sample Questions from 2027

QUESTION STYLES

Ministry Section

In the exam, when the 'Choir in Context' section is reached, candidates will be asked first to look through the unfamiliar reading whilst the examiner writes up the aural test comment.

Candidates will have a short time to read through an unfamiliar passage from the New Testament. They may do so silently or aloud, but will not be marked on their reading if they choose to do so aloud.

They will be asked two questions about the reading.

1. A question about what they understand the reading is telling us.
2. A question about how this passage and its meaning might apply to them and their Ministry as a chorister.

Bible Section

Candidates will prepare **one** text and be asked **three** short answer questions about it. The choice is either Sanctus **and** Agnus Dei, **or** Magnificat, **or** Nunc Dimittis. Questions will follow this format:

1. A 'what' type question soliciting factual knowledge
2. A 'how' or 'why' question asking for understanding
3. A question about how or why the text is used liturgically.

Liturgy Section

Candidates will study **two** holy days. The examiner will choose one of them and ask **two** questions about it. The questions will be:

1. Briefly explain how the biblical story of [holy day] is reflected in the liturgical celebration of the day.
2. What significance does [holy day] have for Christians today

Ministry Section – Sample Reading and Questions

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Question 1

What does this passage tell us about the nature and scope of Jesus's Mission

Sample answer

It shows that Jesus' mission is to establish God's authority through his resurrection and to extend his message to all people. He sends his disciples to make followers of all nations, teaching and baptising them, showing that his mission is universal and continues through the Church today with his ongoing presence.

Question 2

How might this passage apply to you and your ministry as a Chorister

Sample answer

It applies to my ministry as a chorister because I help share the message of the Gospel through music in worship. By singing in services, I take part in the Church's mission to "make disciples of all nations" by helping others hear and understand Christian teaching. My singing supports worship, teaches the faith, and can inspire people in the congregation and visitors, continuing the work Jesus gave to his disciples in the passage.

Bible Section – Study Notes –

Candidates should study ONE of the following texts.

Study notes on the Magnificat

What the Magnificat Is

The Magnificat is the song of praise spoken (or sung) by Mary after she visits her relative Elizabeth. It is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, verses 46–55.

The title *Magnificat* comes from the opening word in the Latin translation:

“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” The word ‘Magnificat’ means “magnifies” or “glorifies.”

The Magnificat is a *canticle*, meaning a biblical song or hymn used in Christian worship.

Key Themes

1. Praise and Joy

The Magnificat is first and foremost a song of praise.

Mary rejoices in God and thanks Him for:

- choosing her,
- blessing her,
- and including her in His plan.

The song combines:

- personal gratitude,
- worship,
- and celebration of God’s saving work.

Candidates should understand that Mary’s joy is not only personal. She also praises God for what He is doing for all people.

Important idea

The Magnificat teaches Christians to respond to God with praise, humility, and trust.

2. God’s Mercy

A major theme in the Magnificat is mercy.

Mary says that God’s mercy extends “throughout all generations”, or “from generation to generation” to those who fear Him.

This shows that:

- God continually cares for His people,
- God remembers His promises,
- and God’s love is not limited to one time or one person.

Important idea

God’s mercy is shown as constant, faithful, and available across all generations.

3. Reversal of Fortunes

The Magnificat contains strong images of reversal:

- the humble are exalted, or lifted up,
- the hungry are filled,
- the proud are scattered,
- and the rich are sent away empty.

This means that God's values are different from human ideas of success and power.

Important idea

The Magnificat teaches that God values humility, faithfulness, and justice more than wealth or status.

Candidates should be prepared to explain why this message might have sounded surprising or challenging in Mary's time.

4. God's Power and Justice

Mary describes God as powerful:

"He hath shewed strength with His arm."

However, God's power is not presented as cruel or oppressive. Instead, God uses His strength to:

- help the weak,
- defend the humble,
- and bring justice.

Important idea

In the Magnificat, God is shown as both powerful and merciful.

5. Old Testament Connections

The Magnificat contains many ideas and themes from the Old Testament.

It echoes passages about:

- God helping His people,
- care for the poor,
- justice,
- mercy,
- and faithfulness.

The song ends by referring to God's promise to Abraham and his descendants.

Important idea

The Magnificat links the coming of Jesus with God's earlier promises in the Old Testament. Candidates should understand that this connection shows continuity between the Old and New Testaments.

6. Mary's Character

The Magnificat reveals important things about Mary.

She is shown as:

- humble,
- faithful,
- obedient,
- trusting in God.

Although Mary recognises her low status, she accepts God's plan with confidence and faith.

She also says:

"All generations shall call me blessed."

This means future generations will honour her because of what God has done through her.

Important idea

Mary's confidence comes from trust in God rather than pride in herself.

7. The Magnificat in Worship and Music

The Magnificat is one of the best-known canticles in Christian worship.

It has inspired many musical settings by composers throughout history.

Singing the Magnificat can help worshippers experience:

- joy,
- praise,
- hope,
- and reverence.

Sample questions with indicative answers

1 What does the Magnificat say about God's promises to his people?

- God remembers his mercy and keeps his promises to Israel.

2 How does the Magnificat show the importance of God's faithfulness through history?

- Mary links God's work in her life with his promises to Abraham and his descendants.

3 Why is the Magnificat an appropriate canticle for Christian worship?

- It helps worshippers remember God's saving acts and praise him for his continuing faithfulness.

Study Notes on the Nunc Dimittis

Overview

The Nunc Dimittis is the song of Simeon found in Luke 2:29–32. It is spoken when Simeon sees the infant Jesus brought to the Temple by Mary and Joseph. Simeon recognises Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promise.

The title comes from the Latin opening words, with whole phrase meaning:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

It is a **canticle**, meaning a biblical hymn or song used in worship.

Key Theme 1: Fulfilment and Promise

Simeon has been waiting for the Messiah and now believes God's promise has been fulfilled. Seeing Jesus confirms that God is faithful.

Key idea:

- God keeps His promises.
 - The coming of Jesus completes Simeon's hope.
-

Key Theme 2: Peace and Readiness

Simeon expresses deep peace. He is ready to "depart" (die) because he has seen salvation.

Key idea:

- True peace comes from trusting God.
 - Faith brings acceptance of life and death.
-

Key Theme 3: Salvation for All People

Simeon describes Jesus as:

- a light to lighten the Gentiles,
- and glory for Israel.

Key idea:

- Jesus' mission is universal.
 - Salvation is not limited to one group.
-

Key Theme 4: Faith and Recognition

Simeon recognises Jesus as the promised Saviour at a moment when others may not yet understand His significance.

Key idea:

- Faith involves recognising God at work in unexpected ways.
 - Spiritual understanding is more important than outward appearance.
-

Nunc Dimittis in Worship

The Nunc Dimittis is widely used in Christian liturgy, especially in evening services.

It is valued because it expresses:

- peace at the end of the day,
- reflection on God's faithfulness,
- trust in salvation.

It is often set to music by composers, helping worshippers experience its calm and reflective mood.

Sample questions with indicative answers

What does the Nunc Dimittis say about Jesus?

- Jesus is God's salvation, a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel.

How does the Nunc Dimittis show that God's salvation is for all people?

- It says that Jesus brings light to the Gentiles as well as glory to Israel.

How does the Nunc Dimittis contribute to the message of the evening liturgy?

- It reminds worshippers of God's salvation and helps them end the day in peace and trust.

Study Notes on the Sanctus and Agnus Dei

REMINDER – Candidates must study both of these texts, if chosen.

Overview

The Sanctus and Agnus Dei are two texts used in the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Their names come from Latin:

Sanctus means:

"Holy".

Agnus Dei means:

"Lamb of God".

The Sanctus is a hymn of praise to God, while the Agnus Dei is a prayer addressed to Jesus Christ.

The Sanctus draws on Isaiah's vision of heaven (Isaiah 6:3) and the acclamations of the crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9).

The Agnus Dei takes its title from the words of John the Baptist:

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Key Theme 1: God's Holiness and Glory

In the Sanctus, Christians join with the worship of heaven in praising God:

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of your glory."

Key ideas:

- God is holy and worthy of praise.
- Heaven and earth proclaim God's glory.
- Christians share in the worship of heaven.

Key Theme 2: Christ the Lamb of God

The Agnus Dei addresses Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Key ideas:

- Jesus offers himself for the salvation of the world.
- Christ shows mercy to his people.
- Christians pray for peace through Christ.

Key Theme 3: Praise and Prayer

The two texts have different purposes within worship.

The Sanctus is a song of praise and thanksgiving.

The Agnus Dei is a prayer asking for mercy and peace.

Key ideas:

- Christian worship includes both praise and prayer.
 - God is worshipped with thanksgiving and adoration.
 - Christians approach Christ with humility and trust.
-

Key Theme 4: Preparation for Holy Communion

The Sanctus and Agnus Dei help prepare the congregation for the celebration and reception of the Eucharist.

Key ideas:

- The Sanctus leads into the Prayer of Consecration.
 - The Agnus Dei accompanies the breaking of the bread and prepares worshippers for Communion.
 - Both texts encourage reverence and faith.
-

Sanctus and Agnus Dei in Worship

The Sanctus and Agnus Dei are used in many Christian traditions during Holy Communion.

The Sanctus is sung or said during the Eucharistic Prayer, before the consecration of the bread and wine.

The Agnus Dei is sung or said before Communion, often during the breaking of the bread.

They are valued because they express:

- praise for God's holiness,
- faith in Christ's saving work,
- prayer for mercy and peace,
- preparation to receive Holy Communion.

They are frequently set to music by composers, helping worshippers enter more deeply into the mystery and joy of the Eucharist.

Sample questions with indicative answers

1. What do the Sanctus and Agnus Dei tell us about God and Christ?
 - The Sanctus praises God's holiness, and the Agnus Dei proclaims Christ's saving work.
2. How do these texts show both praise and prayer in Christian worship?
 - The Sanctus is a hymn of adoration, while the Agnus Dei is a prayer for mercy and peace.
3. How do the Sanctus and Agnus Dei contribute to the meaning of the Eucharist?
 - They help Christians give thanks to God and receive Christ with faith, humility, and joy.

Liturgy Section – Study Notes

Candidates should study TWO of the following Holy Days.

They will be asked questions on one of them in the exam, at the examiner's choice.

Candlemas (Presentation of Christ in the Temple)

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

Candlemas is based on **Luke 2:22–40**, where Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. Simeon recognises Jesus as the promised Messiah and calls Him a "light for revelation to the Gentiles." The elderly prophetess Anna also praises God.

In worship, this is reflected through:

- the blessing and lighting of candles
- processions with light
- readings focusing on Christ as the "light of the world"
- the emphasis on revelation and recognition of Jesus

The use of candles symbolises Jesus bringing light into darkness and God's presence coming into the world.

Significance for Christians today

Candlemas reminds Christians that:

- Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise
- Christ is the light for all people, not just Israel
- believers are called to reflect Christ's light in the world

It also marks a moment of recognition and revelation, encouraging Christians to see God at work in ordinary life.

The Annunciation

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

The Annunciation is found in **Luke 1:26–38**, when the angel Gabriel tells Mary she will conceive Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Mary responds in faith and obedience: "Let it be to me according to your word."

In worship this is reflected through:

- readings of the angel's message to Mary
- focus on Mary's response of acceptance and trust
- emphasis on the Incarnation beginning at this moment
- prayers reflecting obedience to God's will

The liturgy highlights the moment God enters human history in a new way.

Significance for Christians today

The Annunciation teaches Christians that:

- God calls ordinary people to participate in His plan
- faith involves trust and obedience
- the Incarnation begins with Mary's "yes"

It encourages Christians to respond faithfully to God's call in their own lives.

Ash Wednesday

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

Ash Wednesday reflects biblical themes of **repentance, fasting, humility, and turning back to God** (e.g. Matthew 6:1–18). In worship, it is marked by:

- the imposition of ashes in the shape of a cross
- words such as "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return"
- prayers of penitence and confession
- fasting and reflection

The ashes symbolise mortality and the need for repentance.

Significance for Christians today

Ash Wednesday:

- marks the beginning of Lent
- calls Christians to self-examination and repentance
- reminds believers of human mortality and dependence on God

It sets a spiritual focus for preparation for Easter.

Maundy Thursday

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

Maundy Thursday is based on:

- the Last Supper (Luke 22 / Matthew 26)
- Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13)
- the commandment to love one another ("mandatum")

In worship this is reflected through:

- celebration of Holy Communion (Eucharist)
- foot-washing rituals in some traditions
- readings of the Last Supper narrative
- emphasis on humility and service

It marks the beginning of the Passion sequence.

Significance for Christians today

Maundy Thursday teaches that:

- Christian leadership is expressed through service
- Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a central act of worship
- love for others is a defining Christian command

It calls Christians to imitate Christ's humility and self-giving love.

Good Friday

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

Good Friday reflects the Passion narratives (e.g. John 18–19), describing Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death.

In worship this is reflected through:

- reading or singing the Passion narrative
- veneration of the cross
- silence, darkness, and solemn prayer
- absence or minimal celebration of Communion in many traditions

The tone is deeply reflective and sorrowful.

Significance for Christians today

Good Friday is central to Christian belief because:

- Jesus' death is understood as a sacrifice for sin
- it expresses God's love and willingness to suffer for humanity
- it is necessary for the meaning of Easter and resurrection

It invites reflection on sacrifice, forgiveness, and redemption.

Ascension Day

Biblical account and liturgical celebration

Ascension Day is based on **Acts 1:6–11**, where Jesus is taken up into heaven after His resurrection.

In worship this is reflected through:

- readings of the Ascension account
- hymns of praise and kingship
- focus on Jesus' exaltation and heavenly reign
- prayers anticipating the coming of the Holy Spirit

It marks the end of Jesus' physical appearances after the resurrection.

Significance for Christians today

Ascension Day teaches that:

- Jesus reigns with God in heaven
- He continues to intercede for believers
- His departure leads to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

It encourages Christians to live with hope and confidence in Christ's continuing presence and authority.