

Every Tribe And Tongue

A Cantata on Communion

Music by Thomas Parks

Recitative

Speaker: *“Every Tribe And Tongue”* is a Cantata on Communion. That’s a concert with a group of songs, connected with a spoken recitative to introduce and explain them, and all about a common theme. Our theme is the series of prayers and songs from different traditions that are commonly associated with Holy Communion.

Since we’re going to sing and talk about Communion, a definition seems to be in order. Known as Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper by Protestants, and as The Eucharist by Catholics and Orthodox, it is a sacrament and the central act of worship in most Christian churches. It is celebrated as Jesus had instituted it at the Last Supper by the sharing of bread and wine as His body and blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Our hope is to show how much we have in common, and to strengthen the ties that bind us together. Let’s look at how we got to where we are.

Fifty days after Jesus’ Resurrection, God’s Holy Spirit touched the Disciples. They went out and preached to the People, who were of “every tribe and tongue,” and each one heard them speaking in his own language. Their descendants formed the Christian Churches, all seeking God in their own ways and in their own languages...Greek and Old Slavonic often called Church Slavonic for the Orthodox, Latin for the Catholics, and later German and English for the Protestants. Nowadays every language is used, but the prayers, when translated, are very similar. One way or another, we all say “Lord have mercy.”

When we gather to worship we follow a liturgy. That’s a ritual, a procedure, or a way of doing things. Liturgies have long been rich in pageantry with processional entrances, flowing garments, incense, bells, drums, organs, and other instruments of music...and all with singers and choirs chanting and responding in turn.

All of this adds to the *intensity* of our feelings, and thus to the *intensity* of our beliefs. We *feel the presence of God*...and by the way, it helps us to remember the prayers...in ways that are still valid now that most Christians can read.

These are the ancient prayers, sung in the ancient liturgical order so you can see how they fit, but they are set to new music by Thomas Parks.

We begin the Introduction with a prelude and then Psalm 96. “Shiru L’Adonai” in Hebrew, or “Cantate Domino!” in Latin, the words mean, “O sing to the LORD a new song,” and that’s exactly what we’re doing. Then we have a Fanfare and the processional entrance, Psalm 100: “Come Sing Unto the Lord.”