

We are an Easter people, and...



The word "**Alleluia**" or "[Hallelujah](#)" (from [Hebrew](#) ,הללו יה which literally means "Praise ye [Yah](#)" or "Praise [Jah](#), you people",^{[1][2]} is used in different ways in Christian [liturgies](#). "Praise Jah" is a short form of "Praise [Yahweh](#)".^{[3][4][5]} In Christianity, "Alleluia" translates as "praise the Lord".^[6]

In the spelling "Alleluia", the term is also used to refer to a [liturgical chant](#) in which that word is combined with verses of Scripture, usually from the [Psalms](#). This chant is commonly used before the proclamation of the [Gospel](#).

History

The [Hebrew](#) word [Halleluya](#) as an expression of praise to God was preserved, untranslated, by the [Early Christians](#) as a superlative expression of thanksgiving, joy, and triumph. Thus it appears in the ancient Greek [Liturgy of St. James](#), which is still used to this day by the [Patriarch of Jerusalem](#) and, in its Syriac recension is the prototype of that used by the [Maronites](#). In the [Liturgy of St. Mark](#), apparently the most ancient of all, we find this rubric: "Then follow *Let us attend*, the Apostle, and the Prologue of the Alleluia."—the "Apostle" is the usual ancient Eastern title for the [Epistle reading](#), and the "Prologue of the Alleluia" would seem to be a prayer or verse before Alleluia was sung by the choir.

The Roman Rite

In the [Roman Rite](#), the word "Alleluia" is associated with joy and is especially favoured in [Paschal time](#), the time between [Easter](#) and [Pentecost](#), perhaps because of the association of the [Hallel](#) (Alleluia psalms) chanted at [Passover](#). During this time, the word is added widely to verses and responses

associated with prayers, to antiphons of psalms, and, during the [Octave](#) of Easter and on Pentecost Sunday, to the dismissal at the end of [Mass](#) ("[Ite missa est](#)").

On the other hand, the word "Alleluia" is excluded from the Roman liturgy during Lent and, in earlier forms of the Roman Rite, during [Septuagesima](#). In those earlier forms, the word was also excluded in Masses for the Dead. In those periods, the word was replaced, in particular after the Gloria Patri at the beginning of each Hour of [Divine Office](#), by the phrase "*Laus tibi, Domine, rex aeternae gloriae*" (Praise to thee, O Lord, king of eternal glory). In the Ordinary Form 1969 Missale Romanum) of the Roman Rite, the word is simply omitted.

The term "Alleluia" is used also to designate a chant beginning and ending with this word and including a verse of Scripture, in particular for such a combination sung before the proclamation of the Gospel as an expression of greeting and welcome to the Lord who is about to speak in the Gospel to those taking part.^[7]

In traditional [Gregorian chant](#), this [responsorial](#) chant opens with the cantor singing "Alleluia", after which the choir repeats it, and adds a long [melisma](#) on the final vowel (called a "[jubilus](#)"). (The [Liber Usualis](#) notates the [repeat](#) with the Roman numeral "ij" and continues with the [jubilus](#).) The cantor then sings the main part of the verse, and the choir joins in on the final line. At the end of the chant, the opening Alleluia is repeated, but instead of the choir repeating the word, they repeat only the [jubilus](#). When a [Sequence](#) follows the Alleluia, this final repeat is omitted, as it was in other cases in the [Middle Ages](#). The musical style of a plainchant Alleluia is generally ornate, but often within a narrow range. The Alleluia for

Christmas Eve, for instance, has an [ambitus](#) of only a [perfect fifth](#), but this example is rather extreme. Alleluias were frequently [troped](#), both with added music and text. It is believed that some early Sequences derived from syllabic text being added to the jubilus, and may be named after the opening words of the Alleluia verse. Alleluias were also among the more frequently used chants to create early [organa](#), such as in the [Winchester Troper](#).

The Roman Rite [Mass](#), as revised in 1969, introduces a new manner of singing the alleluia that allows for the participation by all the people present, with the choir or the cantor introducing the Alleluia and singing the accompanying verse or verses — even a whole psalm^[8] - but with the general body of the faithful repeating the Alleluia itself to music with a less elaborate melodic line than in the [plainchant](#) setting. The verse or verses can be those given in the [Lectionary for Mass](#), or can be taken from [Roman Gradual](#).^[9] The traditional, melismatic, Gregorian alleluia is retained as an option, and is included with the other proper chants of the Mass in the *Graduale Romanum* issued following the publication of the 1969 missal (Ordinary Form of the Mass). In that form of the Roman Rite, if singing is not used, the Alleluia and its verse may be omitted rather than being merely recited.

In the time or times when the word "Alleluia" is excluded from use in the liturgy (Lent and, in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, Septuagesima), the chant before the Gospel either replaces the word "Alleluia" with another

acclamation (in the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite), or (in the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms) is itself replaced by a [Tract](#). The [Gradual](#), when sung, is replaced with an Alleluia chant during Eastertide, thus putting not one but two such chants before the Gospel reading.

References

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4. *"Michael L. Brown, What Do Jewish People Think about Jesus?: And Other Questions Christians Ask about Jewish Beliefs, Practices, and History (Chosen Books 2007 ISBN 9780800794262), p. 63"*.
5. *"Donald S. Armentrout, Robert Boak Slocum, An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church (Church Publishing 2005 ISBN 9780898692112), p. 234"*.
6. *St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology (ed.), "notes to Psalms 104-106", Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson, p. 751*
7. [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#), 62]
8. [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#), 63
9. [General Instruction of the Roman Missal](#), 62
- Hoppin, Richard. *Medieval Music*. New York: Norton, 1978.

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Ascha nòstrum : * immo-látus est Chrístus,
 allelú-ia : í-taque epu-lé-mur in
 á-zy-mis since-ri-tátis et veri-tá-tis, alle-lú-ia,
 alle-lú-ia, al-le-lú-ia.