Learning Byzantine Chant Using Western Notation

Musicologists have demonstrated the originality and **high level of craft** that is embodied in the hundreds of medieval manuscripts that preserve the tradition of Byzantine chant. They have noted its sophisticated organization, **its perfect alliance with the texts of liturgical poetry** and it has been characterized as the musical embodiment of the *action* of the rite that it serves. It could, therefore, be forcefully argued that the real concern of those responsible for musical performance in the Orthodox Church today should be to draw upon the richness of the Church's centuries-old, accumulated practices and traditions in order to discover the cardinal contribution that this music has made to its liturgical life.

-- Dimitri Conomos

What is Byzantine chant and where did it come from?

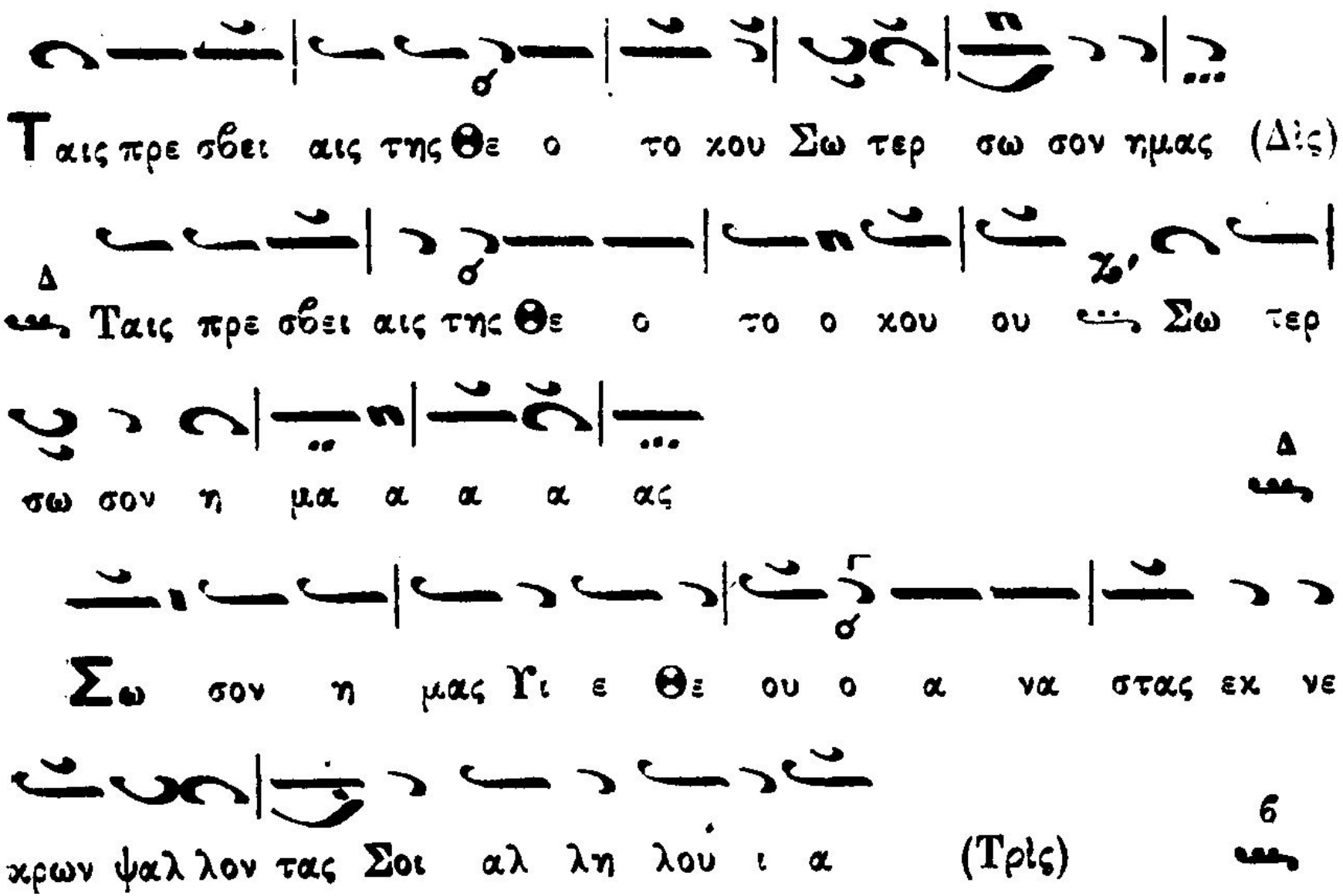
- Music in the synagogue.
- Ancient Greece and Syria.
- St. John of Damascus and the Octoechos.
- Formulas (Improvisation within rules).
- From rote to notation

A Little History of Church Music

- Originally Congregations Sang
- Office of chanter (psalti) originated to sing hymns congregations didn't know. As hymnody increased, it became an ordained position.
- Choirs were organized to help psalti, they mostly held the ison.
- In 20th C. America, psaltis and choirs separated with choirs doing Sunday liturgy responses and hymns.

ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ

Ταῖς πρεσβείαις.



Byzantine Musical Notation

- Long development over centuries.
- All hymns available are printed in this form of notation.
- Almost all in Greek.
- Takes time to learn. Few English textbooks.

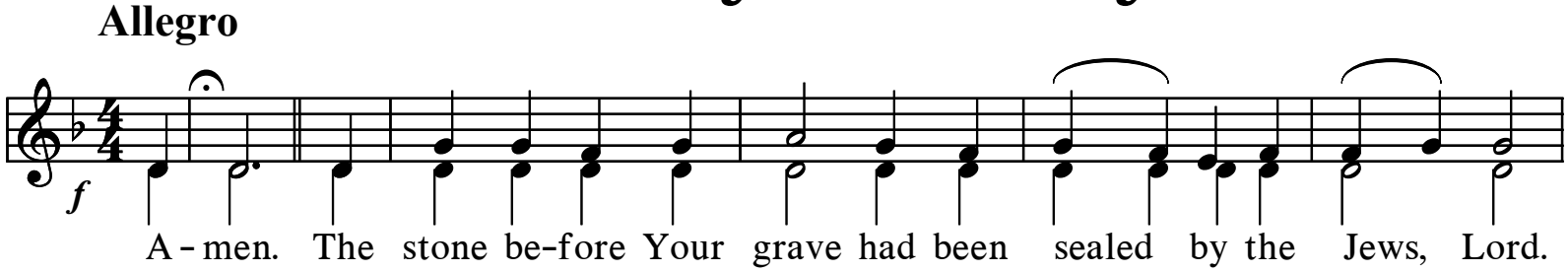
Using Western Musical Notation

- More accessible to American musicians. Saves learning time. Easier to sightread.
- Concerns
  - Lack of materials, esp. in English.
  - Versatility leads to errors and innovations in English translations.

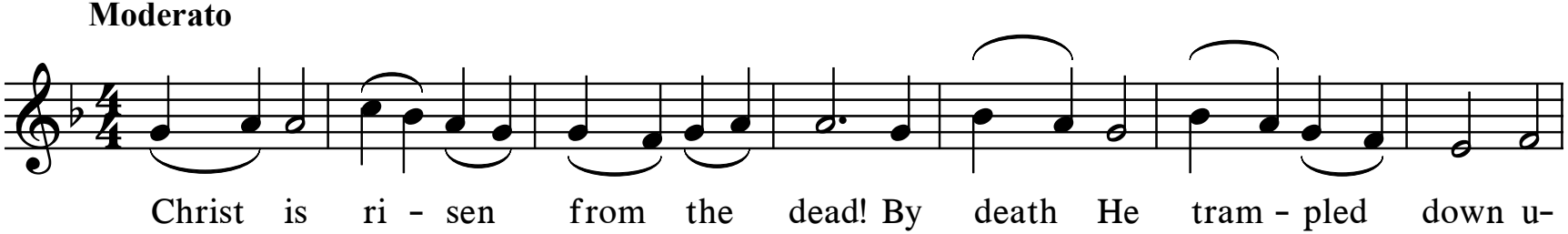
Byzantine Rhythmic Styles

- Heirmological (Short)
  - usually one note per syllable
  - usually fast tempos
- Sticheraric (Long)
  - frequent use of two or more notes per syllable
  - more moderate and sometimes stately tempos
- Papadic (Melismatic and Ornate)
  - long melismas and ornamentations
  - slow tempos
  - designed to give time to the priest (papa)

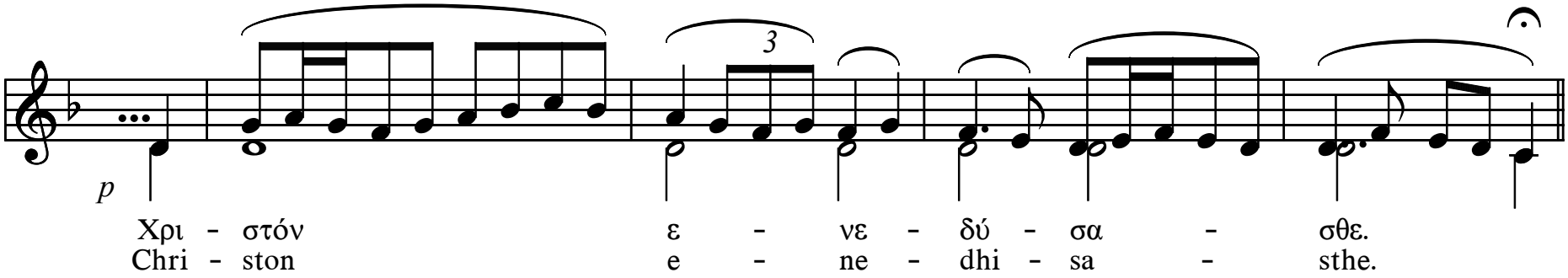
Short Rhythmic Style



Long Rhythmic Style



Melismatic Rhythmic Style



Other Rhythmic Elements

- Meter follows accented syllables (frequent changes of meter)
- Dotted notes and triplets
- Ornamentation (trills, mordents, ripples, flutters, etc.)
- Accents

Scale Systems (Fixed-Note)

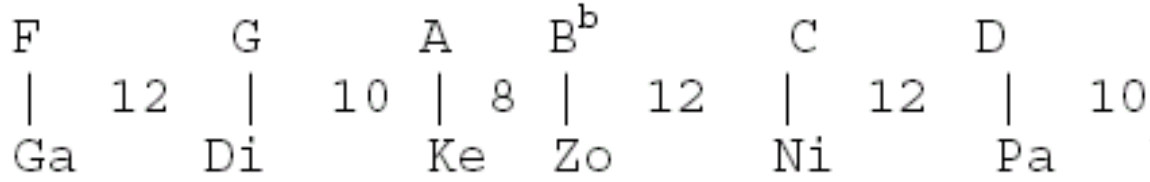
- Octave (Diapason)
  ni-pa-vu-ga-di-ke-zo-ni
  C D E F G A B C
  do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do

- Trichordal
  do-re-mi-fa=do′-re′-mi′-fa′-etc.

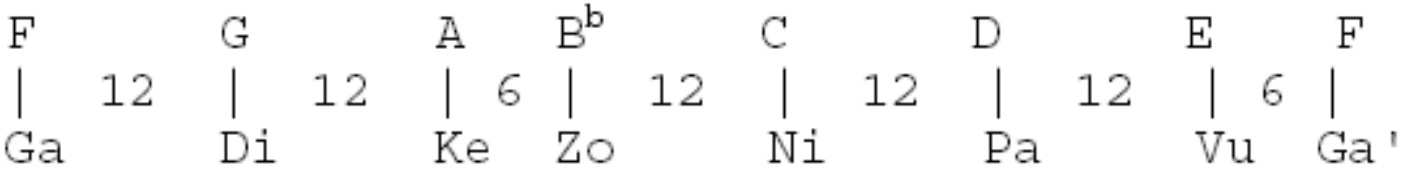
- Tetrachordal
  do-re-mi-fa-so=do′-re′-mi′-fa′-so′-etc.

Byzantine Scales

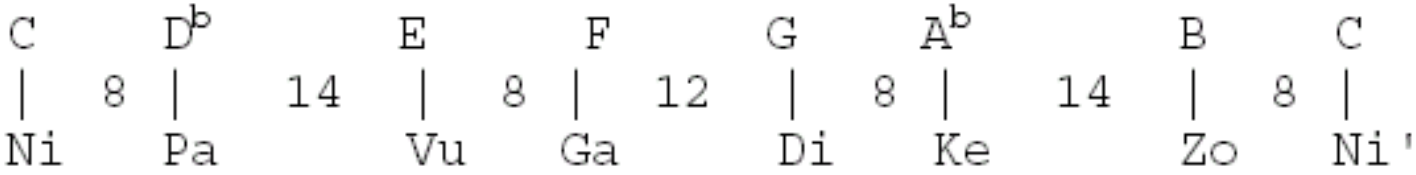
- Diatonic



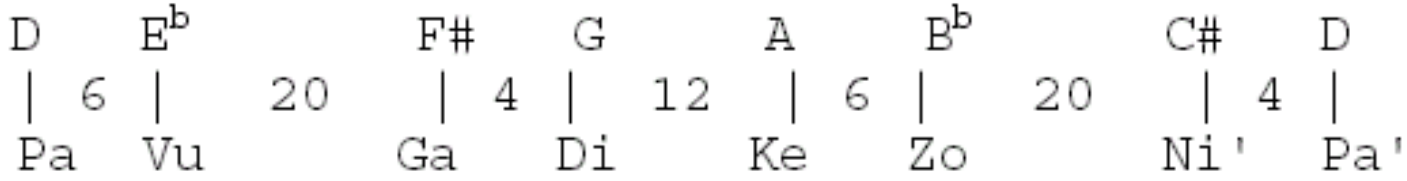
- Enharmonic



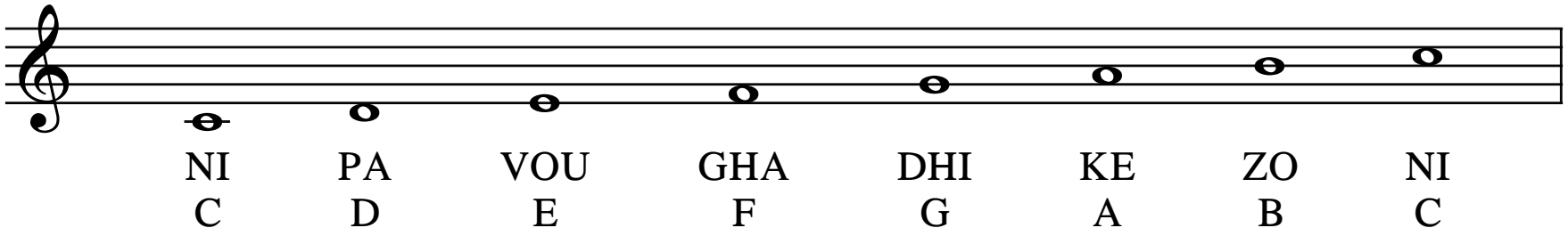
- Soft Chromatic



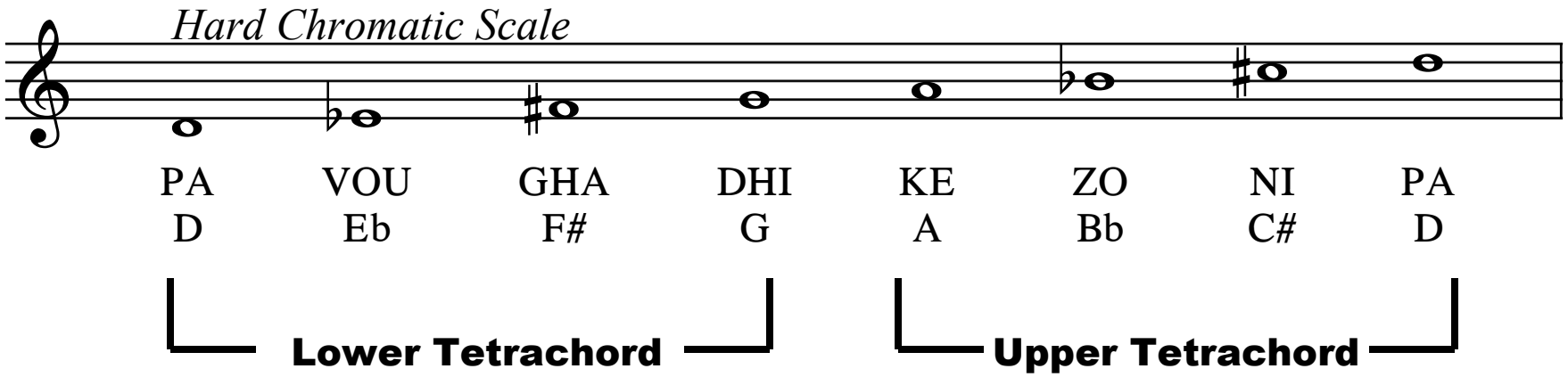
- Hard Chromatic



Diatonic, Enharmonic, and Soft Chromatic Scales

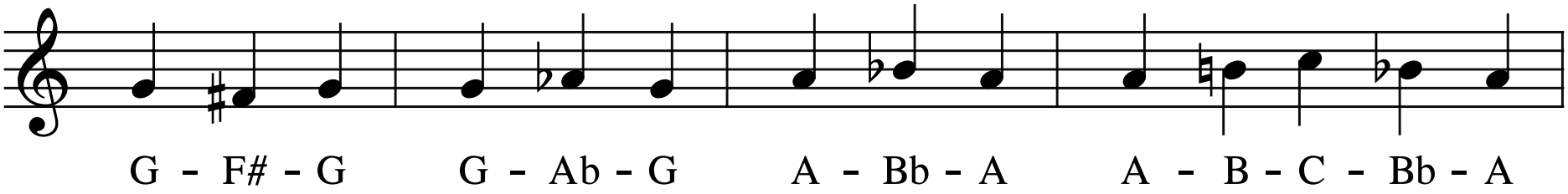


Hard Chromatic Scale



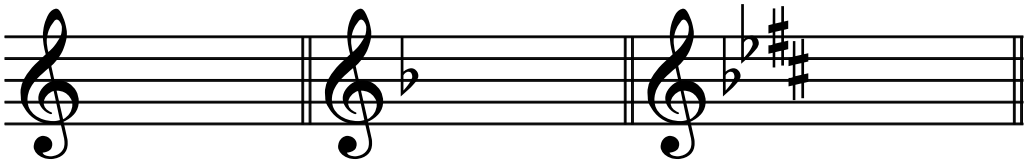
Accidentals

1. Modal Modulations
2. Law of the Attraction of Tones



3. Byzantine tokens for micro-tonal accidentals may be used.

Key Signatures



Expressive Markings

Western expressive marks may be used such as accents, trills, mordents, breath marks, fermatas, etc.

Unique Byzantine marks could be used as well.

The Eight Tones of Byzantine Chant

A Primer in Western Notation and Including the Use of English Texts

Tones and Modes

- Greek word *ἦχος* (echos) literally means “tone.”
- A “mode” in music is defined by its scale and its keynotes.
- Each echos, or tone, contains several modes, depending on rhythmic style or tradition.

Names of the Tones

1. Ἦχος Α.	1. First Tone
2. Ἦχος Β.	2. Second Tone
3. Ἦχος Γ.	3. Third Tone
4. Ἦχος Δ.	4. Fourth Tone
5. Ἦχος Πλάγιος Α.	5. Plagal First Tone
6. Ἦχος Πλάγιος Β.	6. Plagal Second Tone
7. Ἦχος Βαρύς	7. Grave Tone
8. Ἦχος Πλάγιος Δ.	8. Plagal Fourth Tone

Identifying Characteristics of a Tone

- Its emotional qualities
- Common characteristics of the modes within the tone

Identifying Characteristics of a Mode

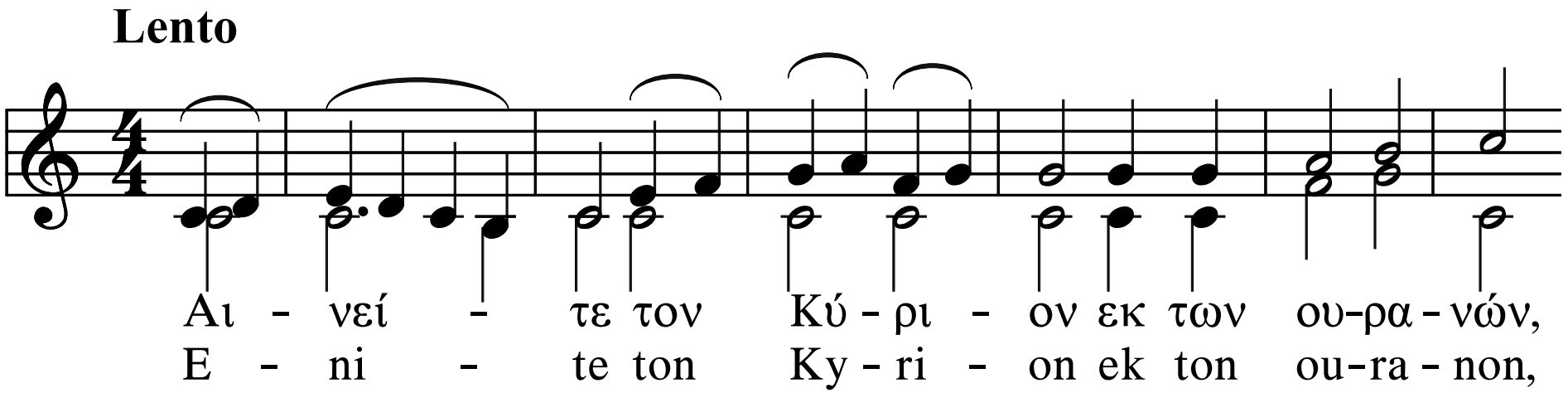
- Scale Used
- Rhythm Used
- Tonic (Ending) Note / Ison
- Dominant Notes
- Note of 1st Accented Syllable
- Melodic Formulas (Based on Syllabic Patterns)
- Melodic Cadences (Based on Syllabic Patterns)

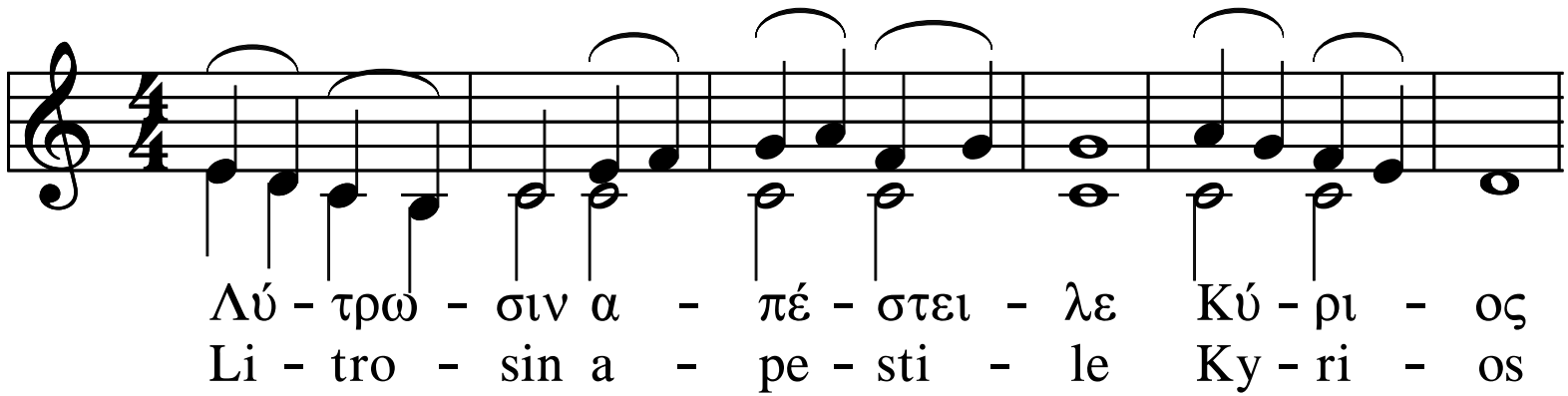
  Partial Complete

  Final Emphatic

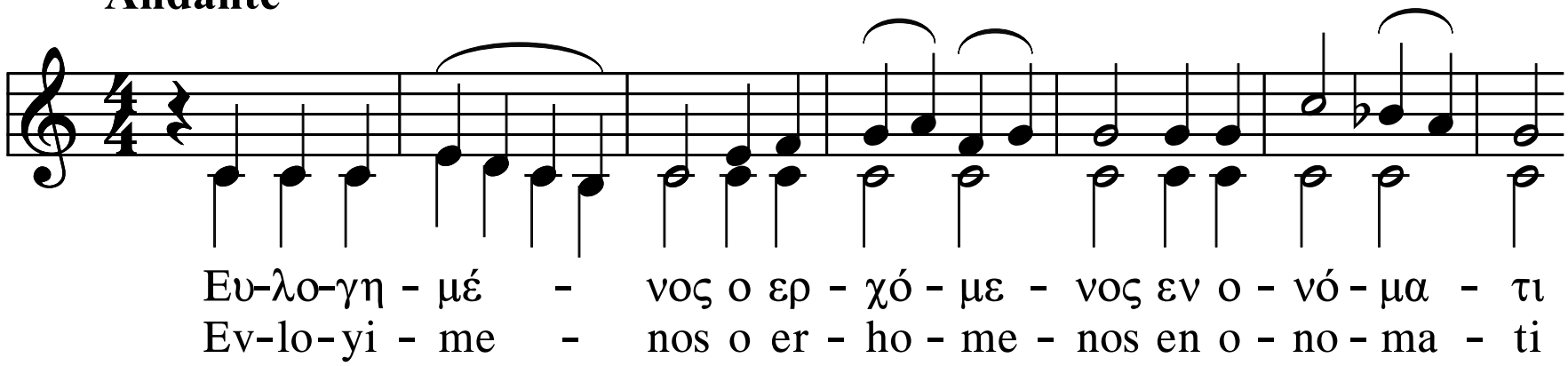
  Chanting Style

Example of Melodic Formula

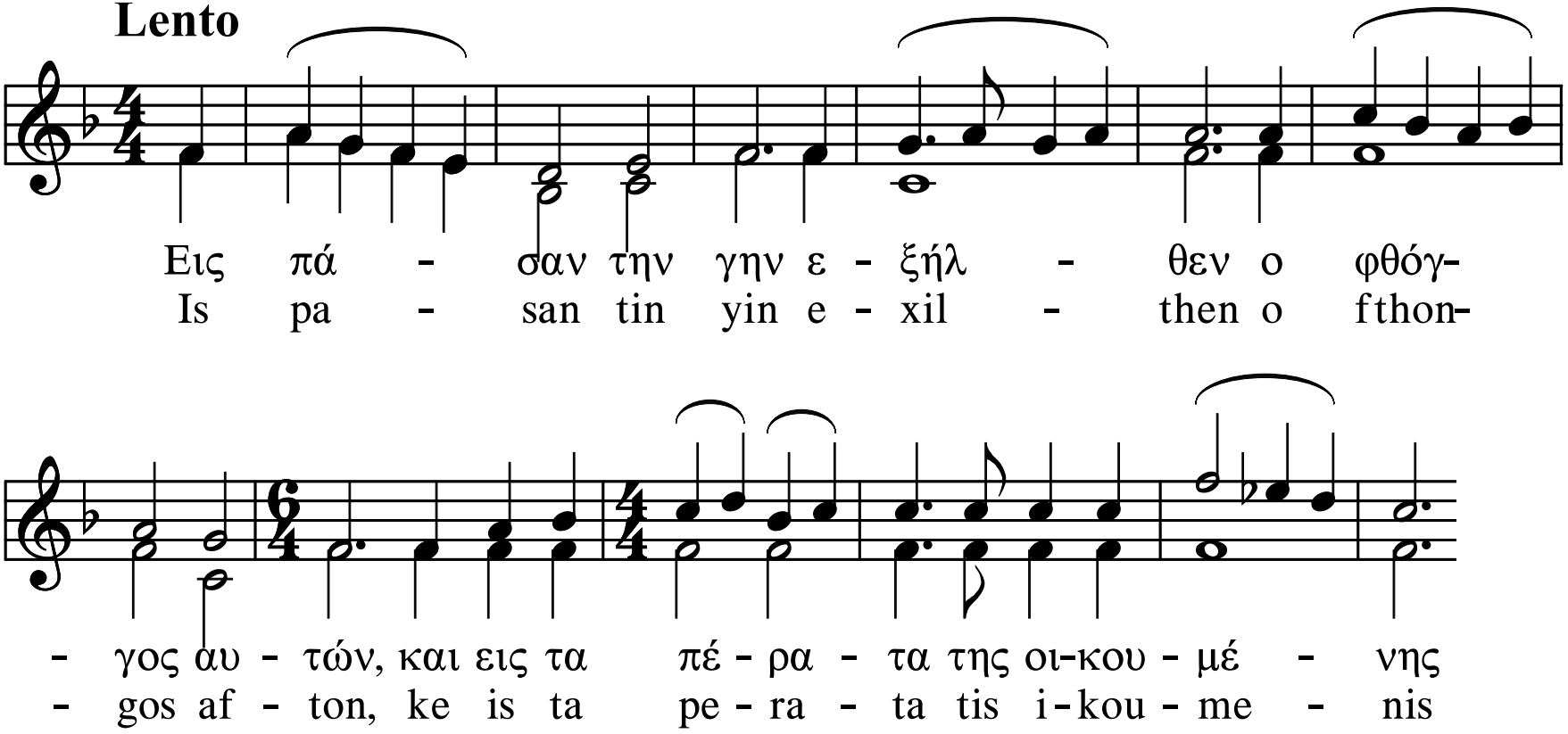


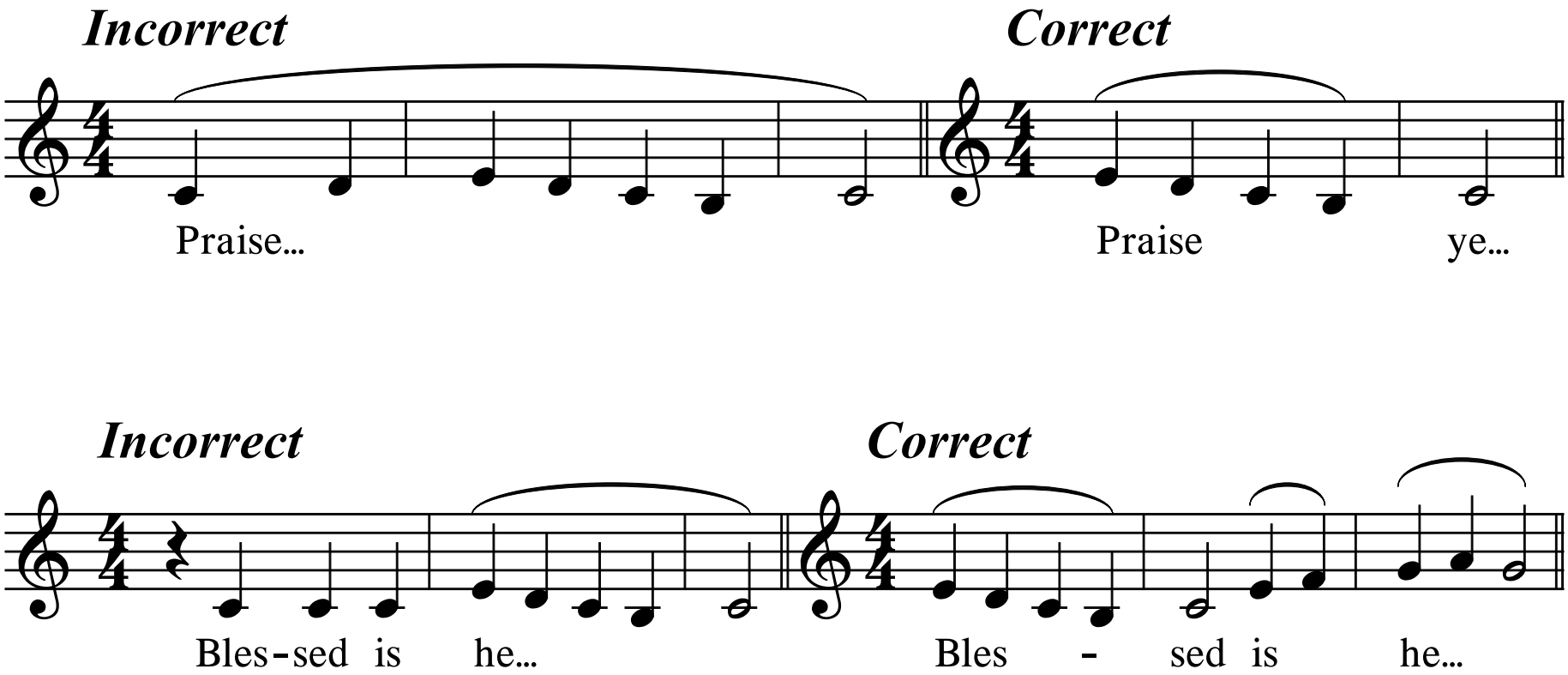


Andante

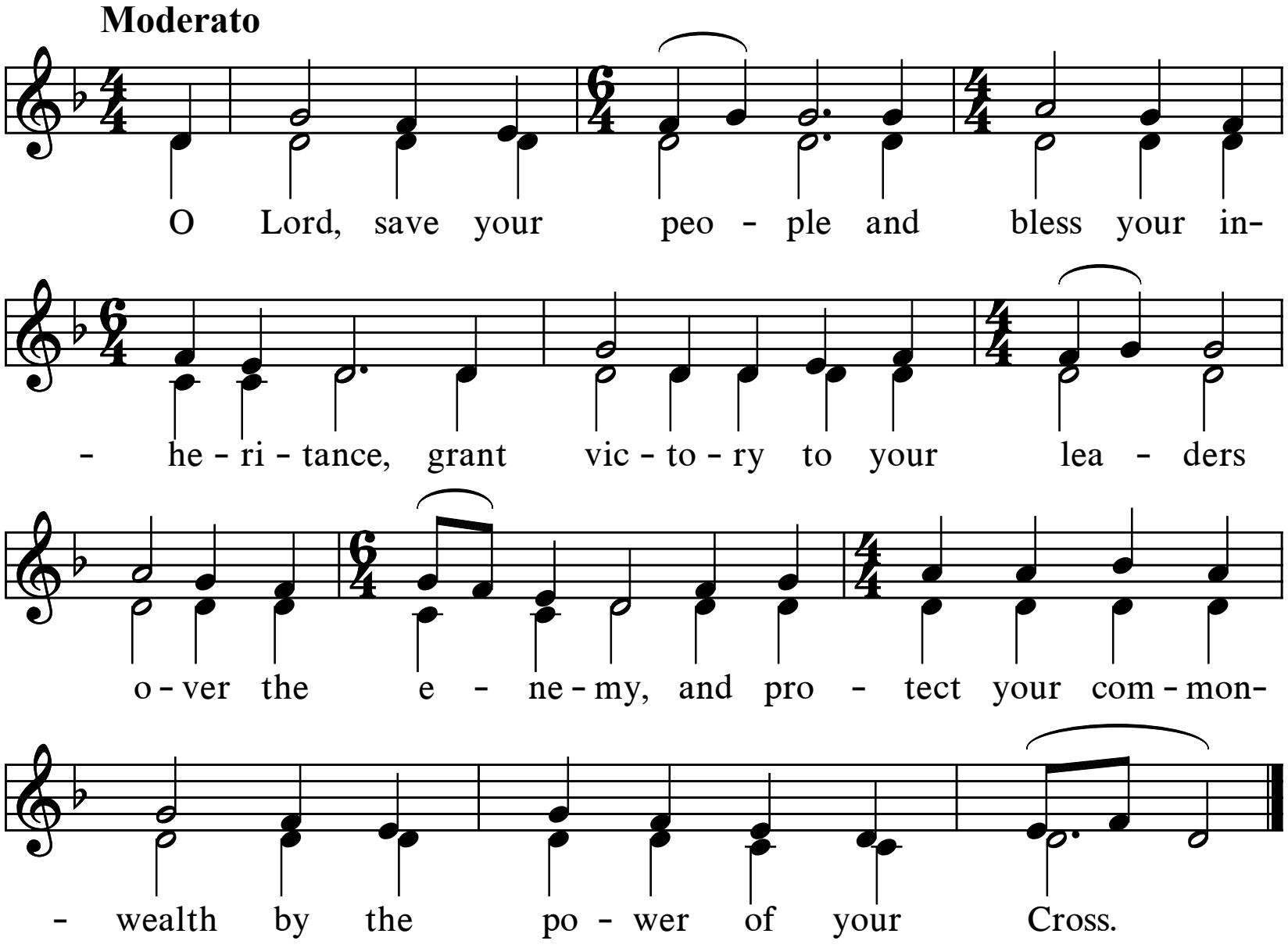


Lento

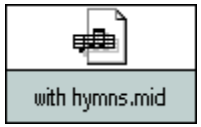



Incorrect
Praise...
Correct
Praise
ye...
Incorrect
Bles-sed is he...
Correct
Bles - sed is he...

First Tone - Short Mode, Diatonic



First Tone - Long Mode, Diatonic



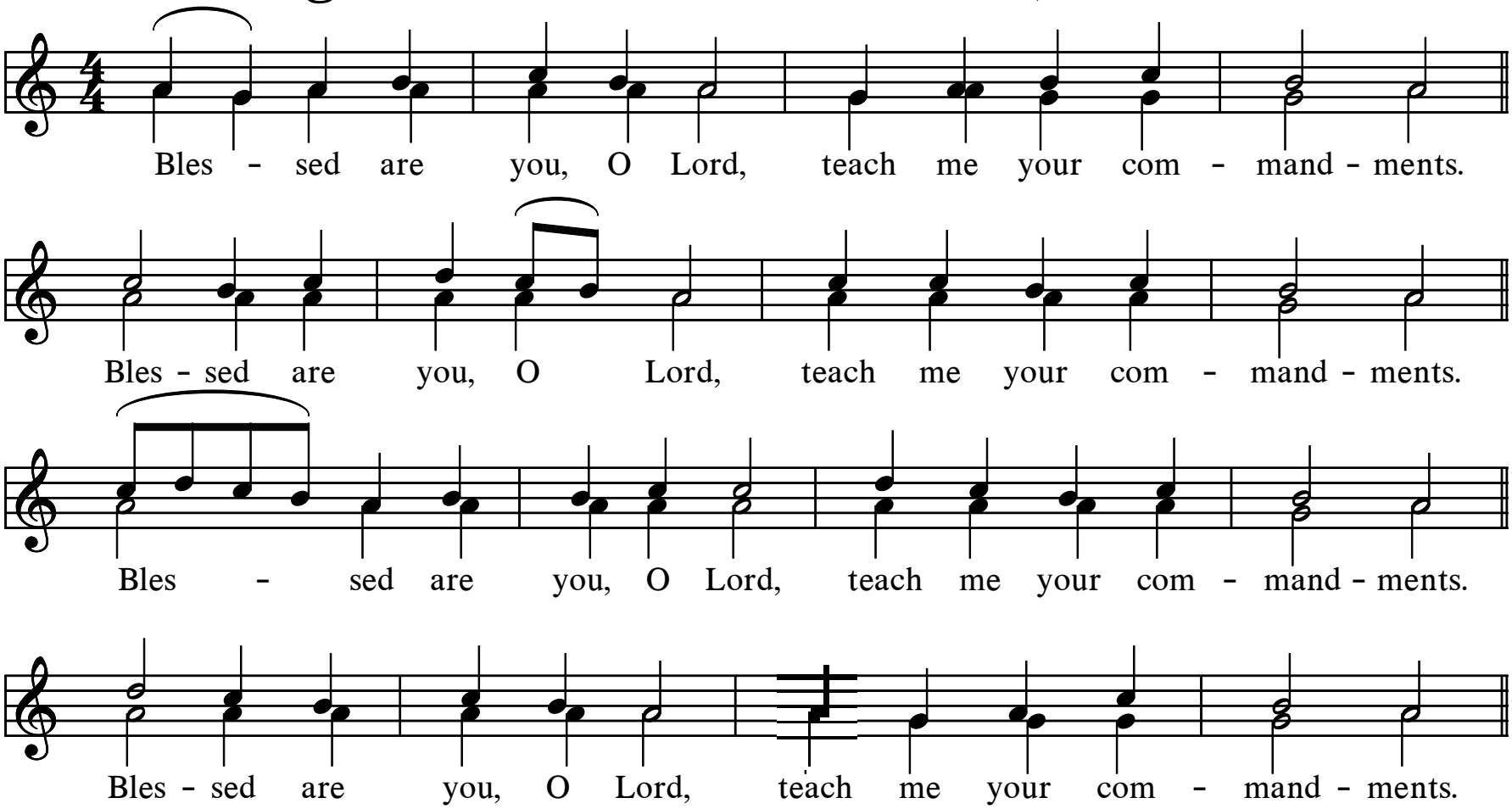
Andante

With hymns we praise thee, we bless thee,

un-to thee we give our thanks, O Lord, and we

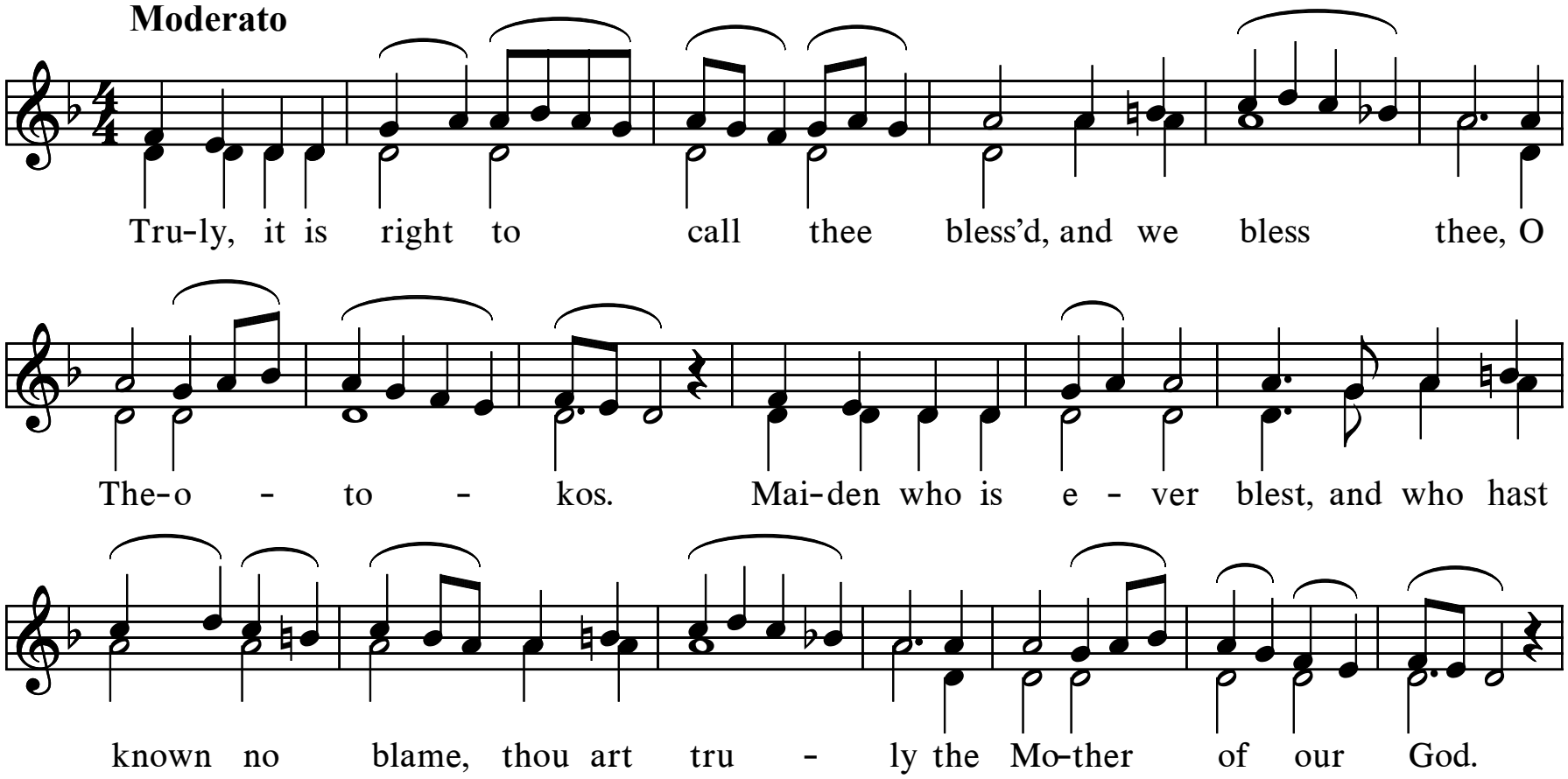
pray to thee, our God, to thee!

Plagal First Tone - Short Mode, Diatonic

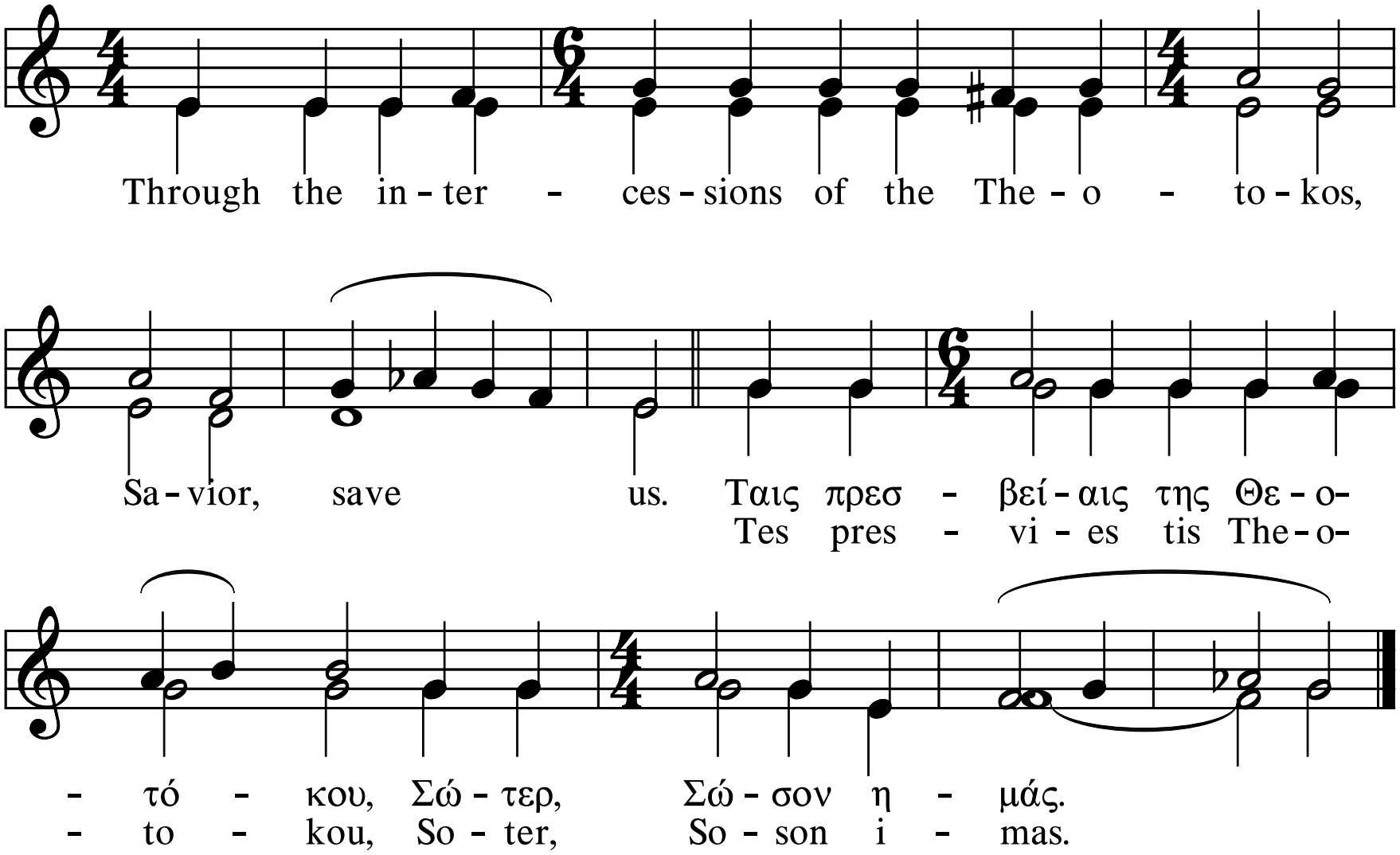


The choir of the Saints has found the Fountain of Life and the Gate of Paradise; may I also find the way through repentance. I am the lost sheep; recall me, O Savior, and save me.

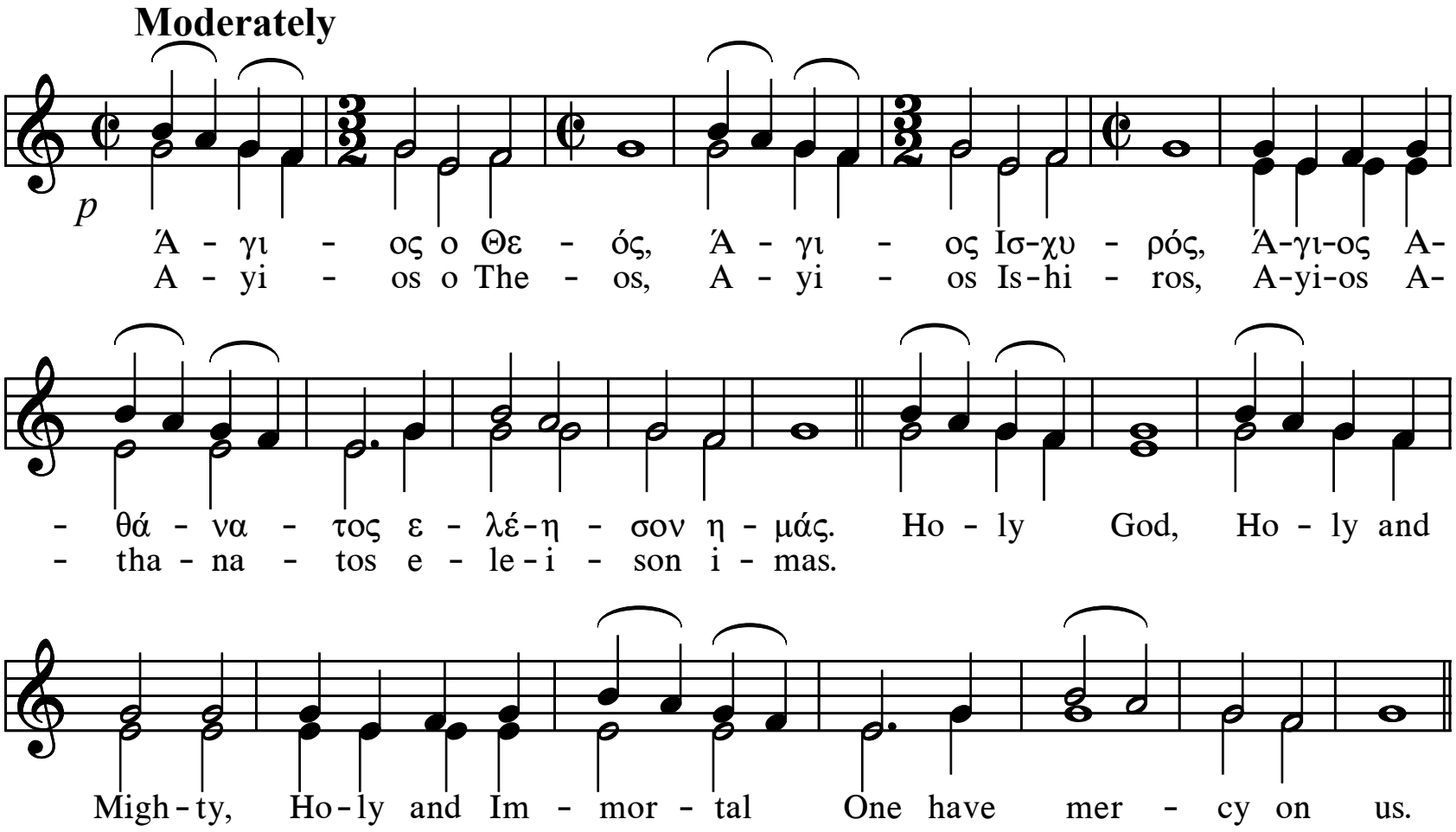
Plagal First Tone - Long Mode, Diatonic, Tetrachordal



Second Tone - Short Mode, Soft Chromatic

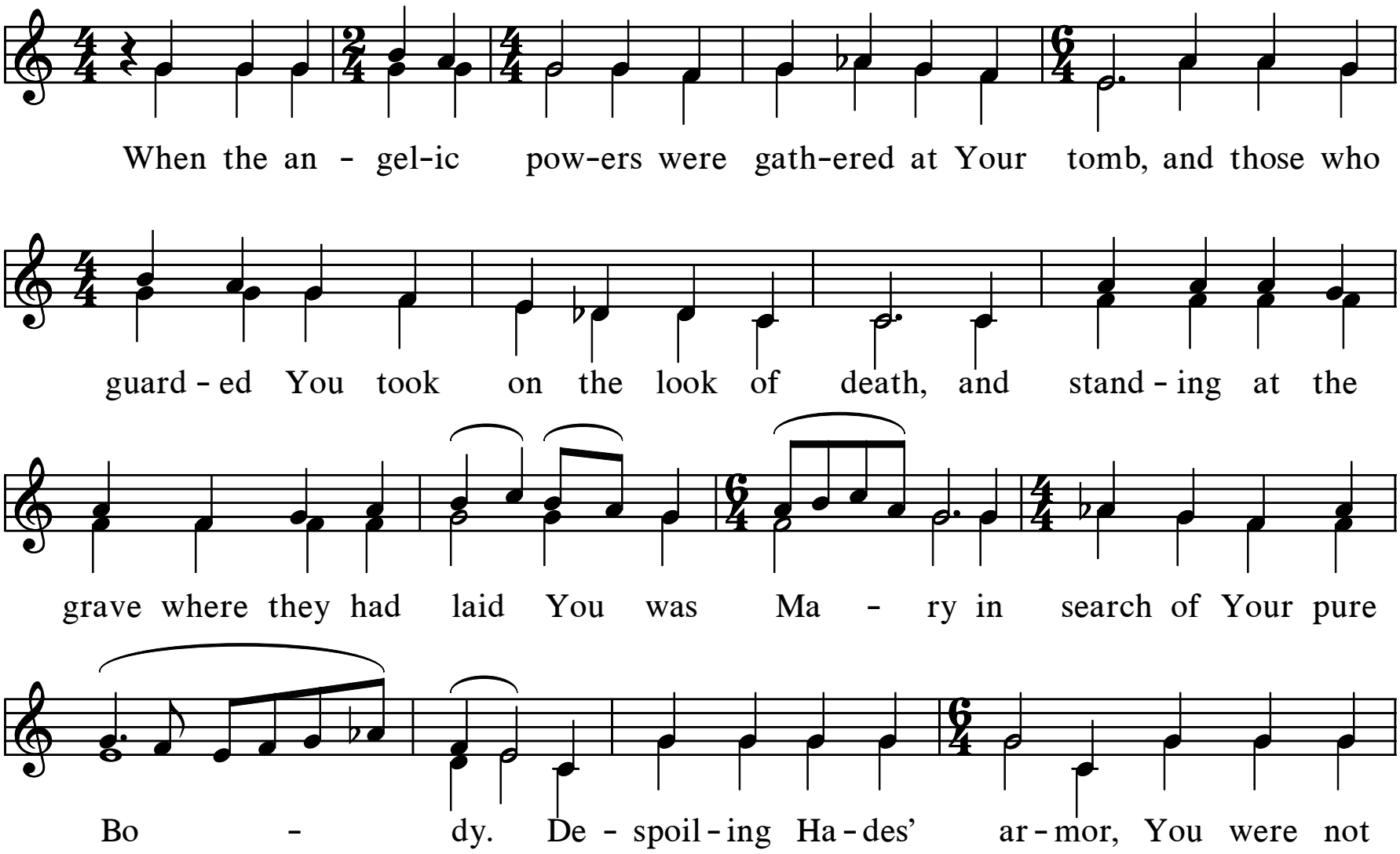


Second Tone - Long Mode, Soft Chromatic



Plagal Second Tone - Short Mode, Soft Chromatic

Allegro



Plagal Second Tone - Melismatic Mode, Hard Chromatic, Trichordal

Lento A

A - men. We, who my - sti - c'ly re-pre - sent the

Che - ru - bim, sing

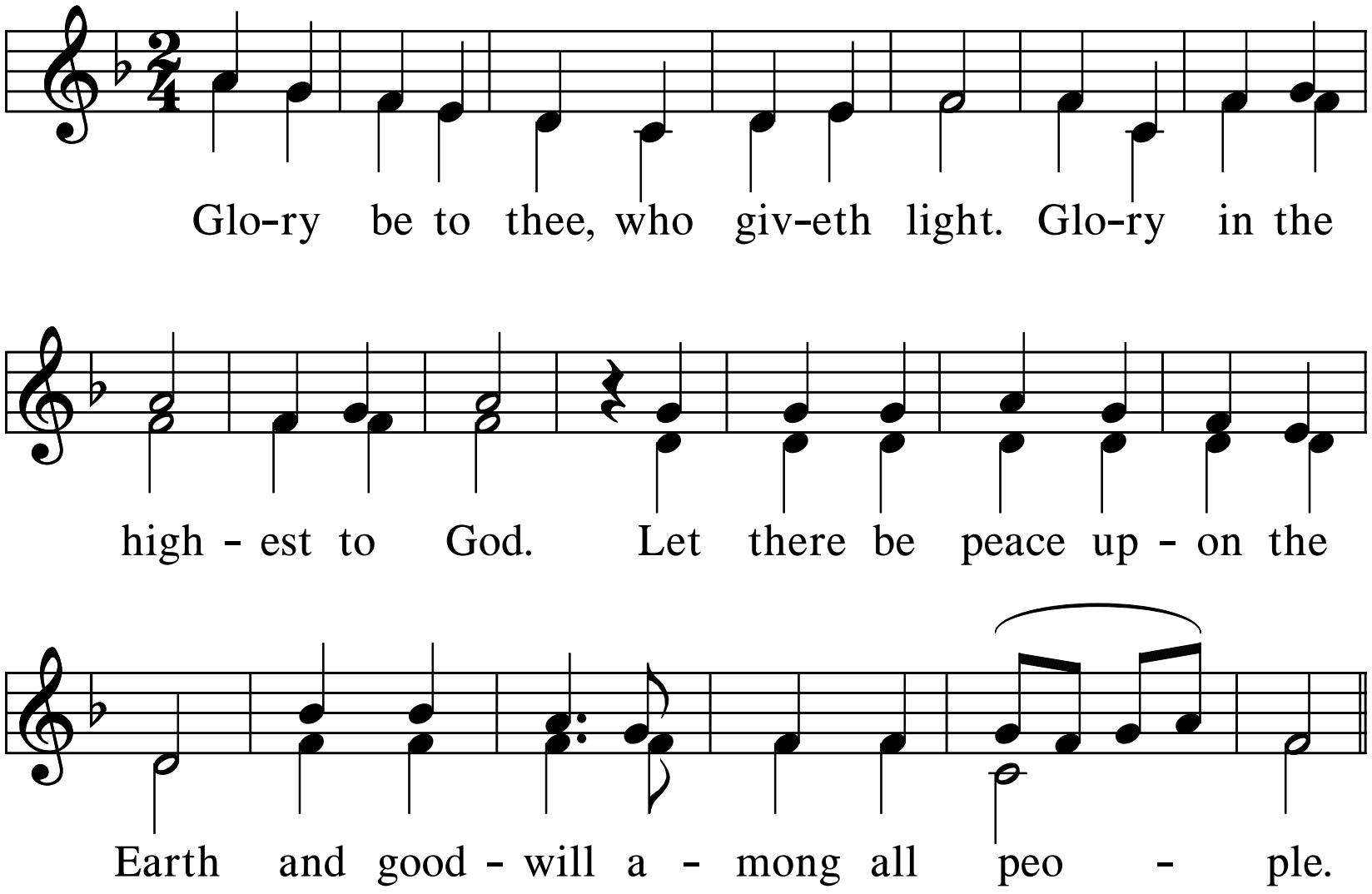
the thrice ho - ly hymn, thrice ho-

- ly, thrice ho - ly hymn,

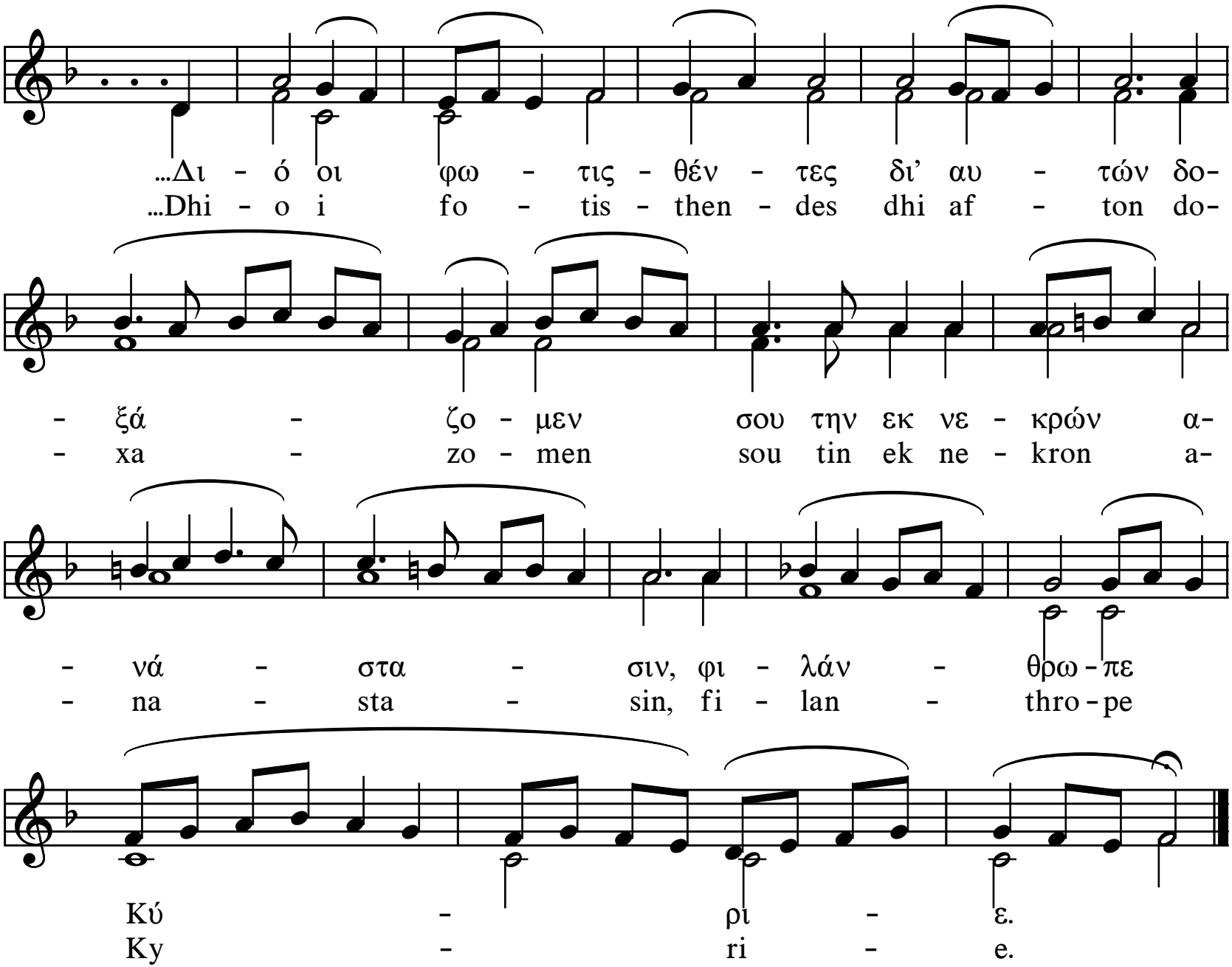
cherubic.mid

Third Tone - Short Mode, Enharmonic

Allegro

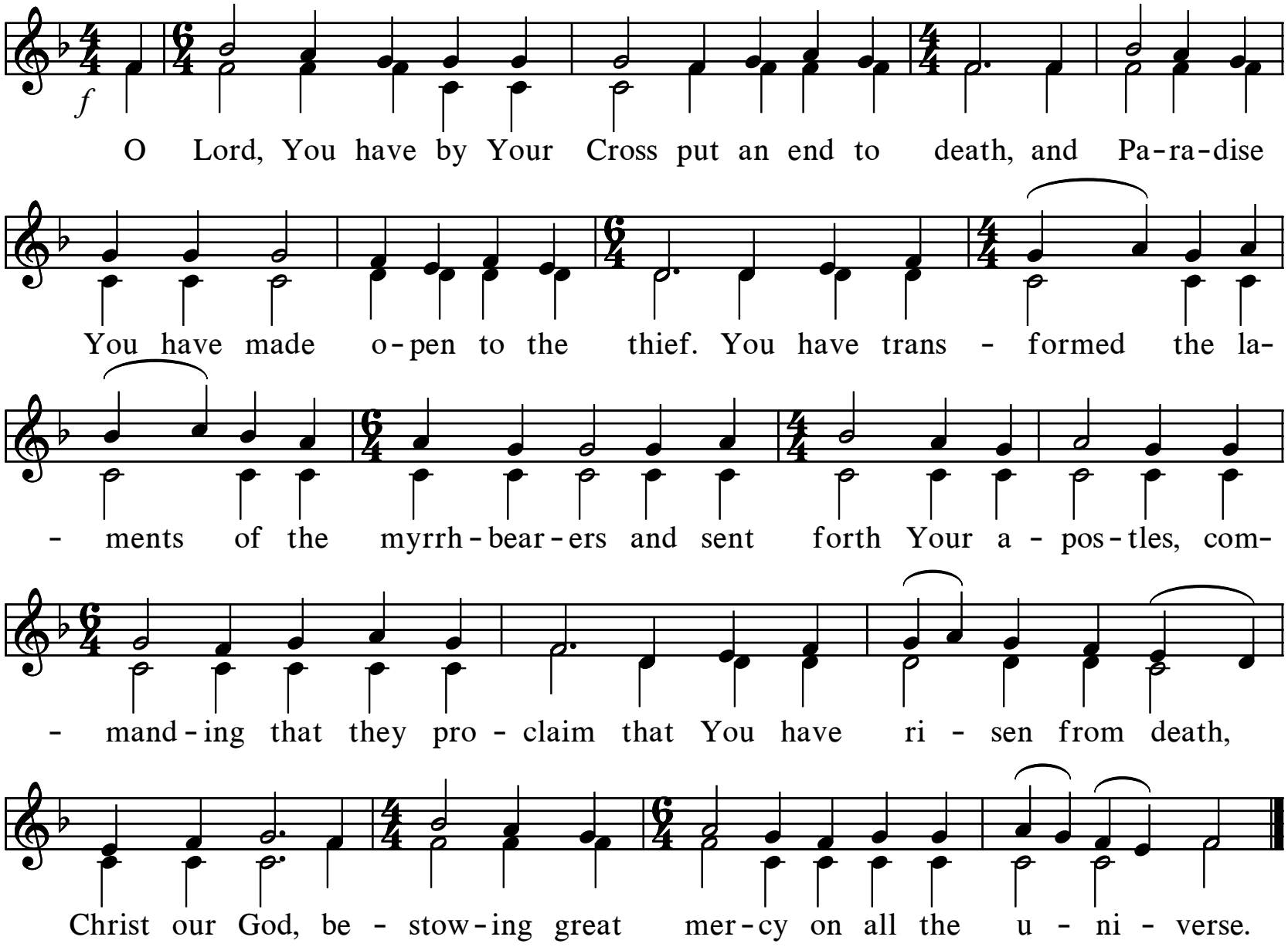


Third Tone - Long Mode, Enharmonic



Grave Tone - Short Mode, Enharmonic

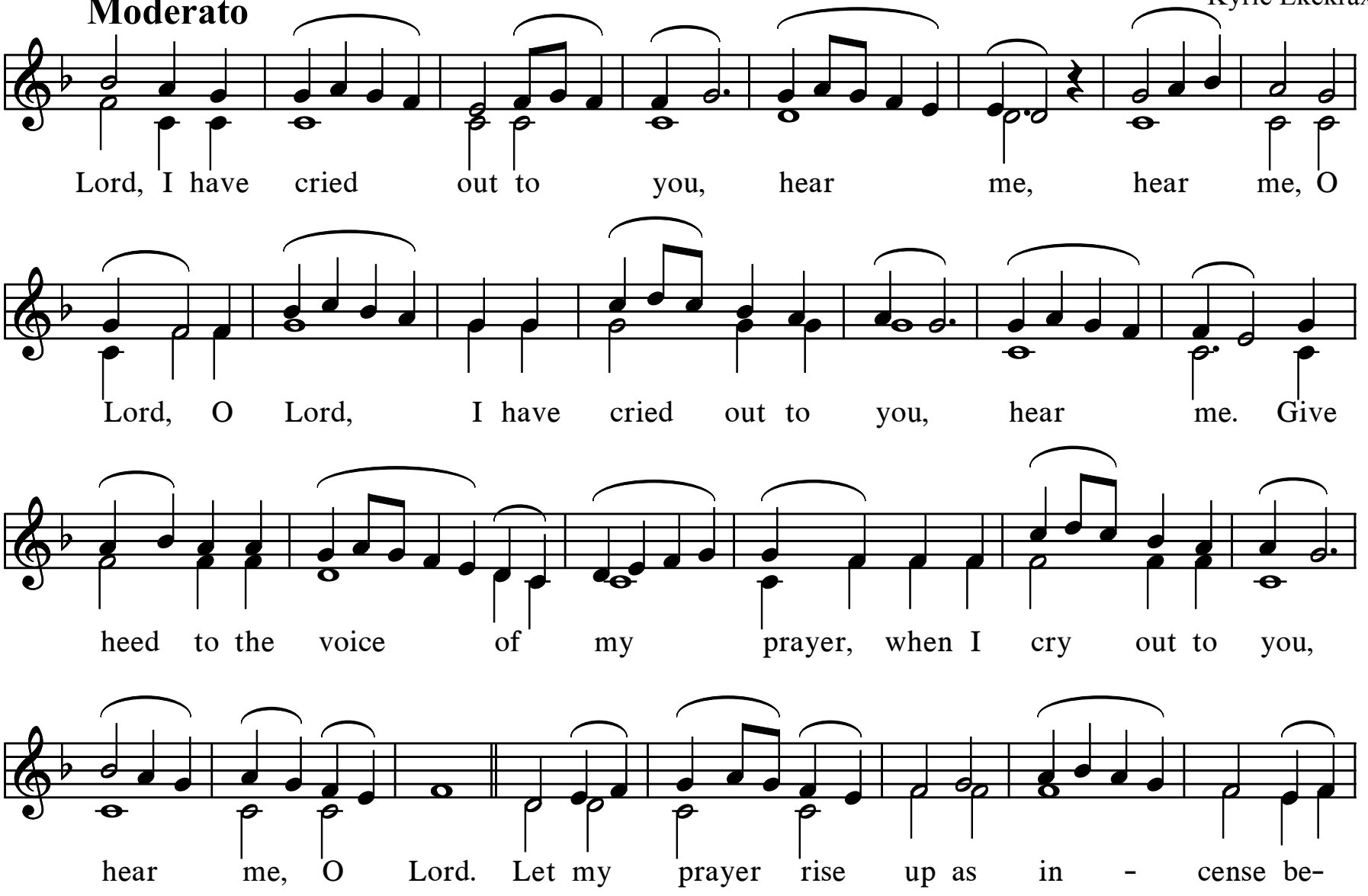
Allegro



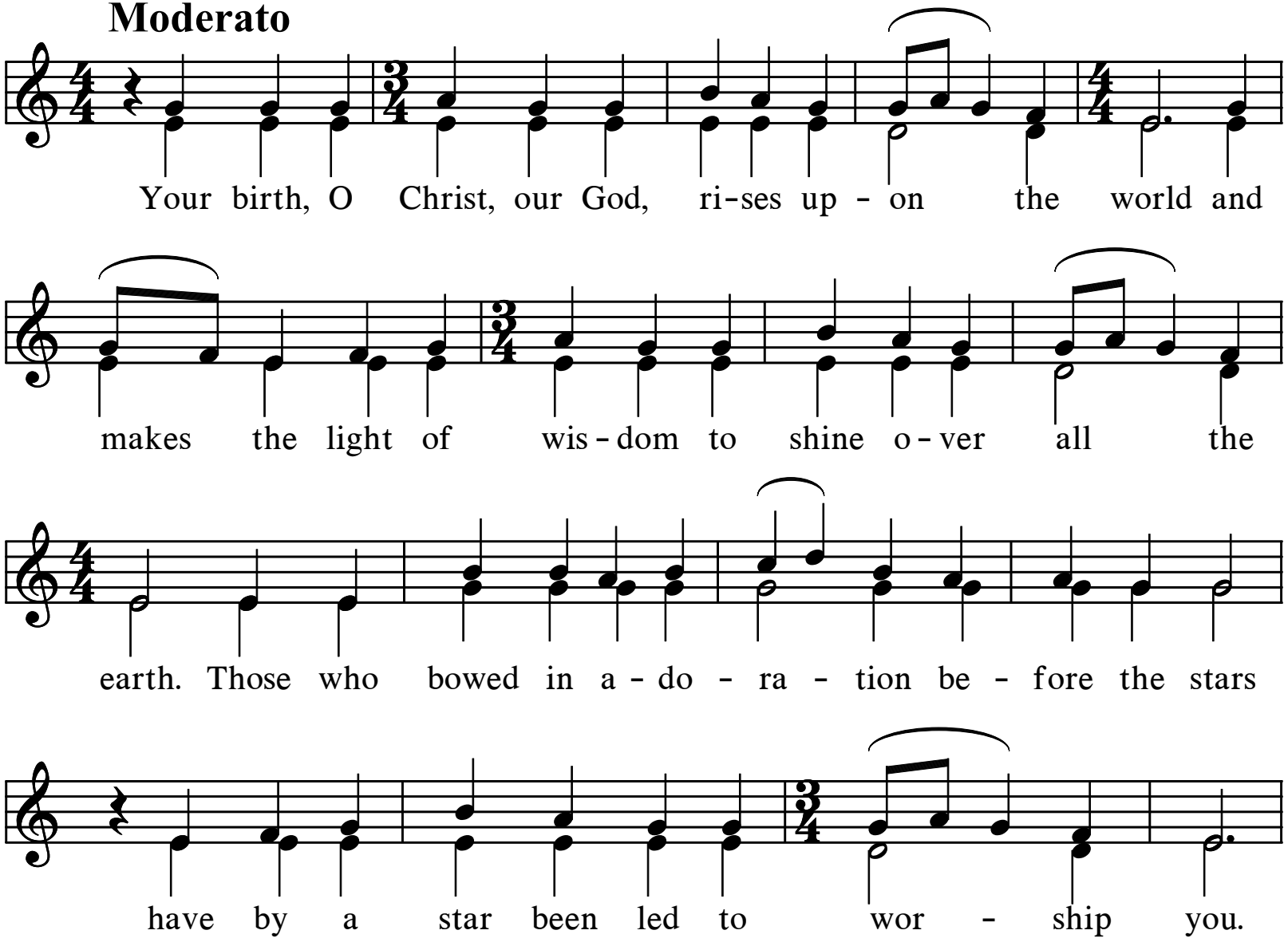
Grave Tone - Long Mode, Enharmonic

Kyrie Ekekraxa

Moderato

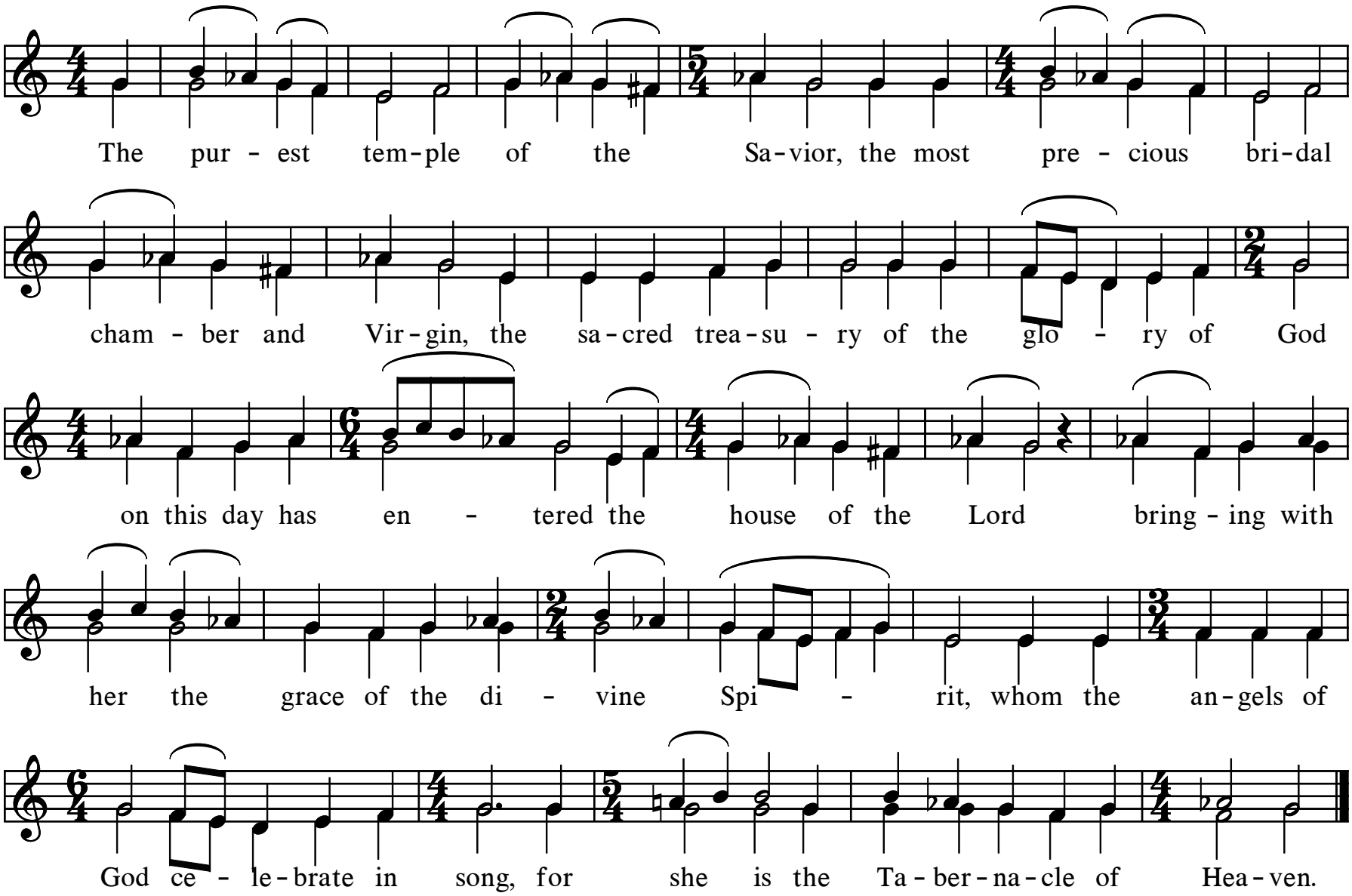


Fourth Tone - Short Mode, Diatonic

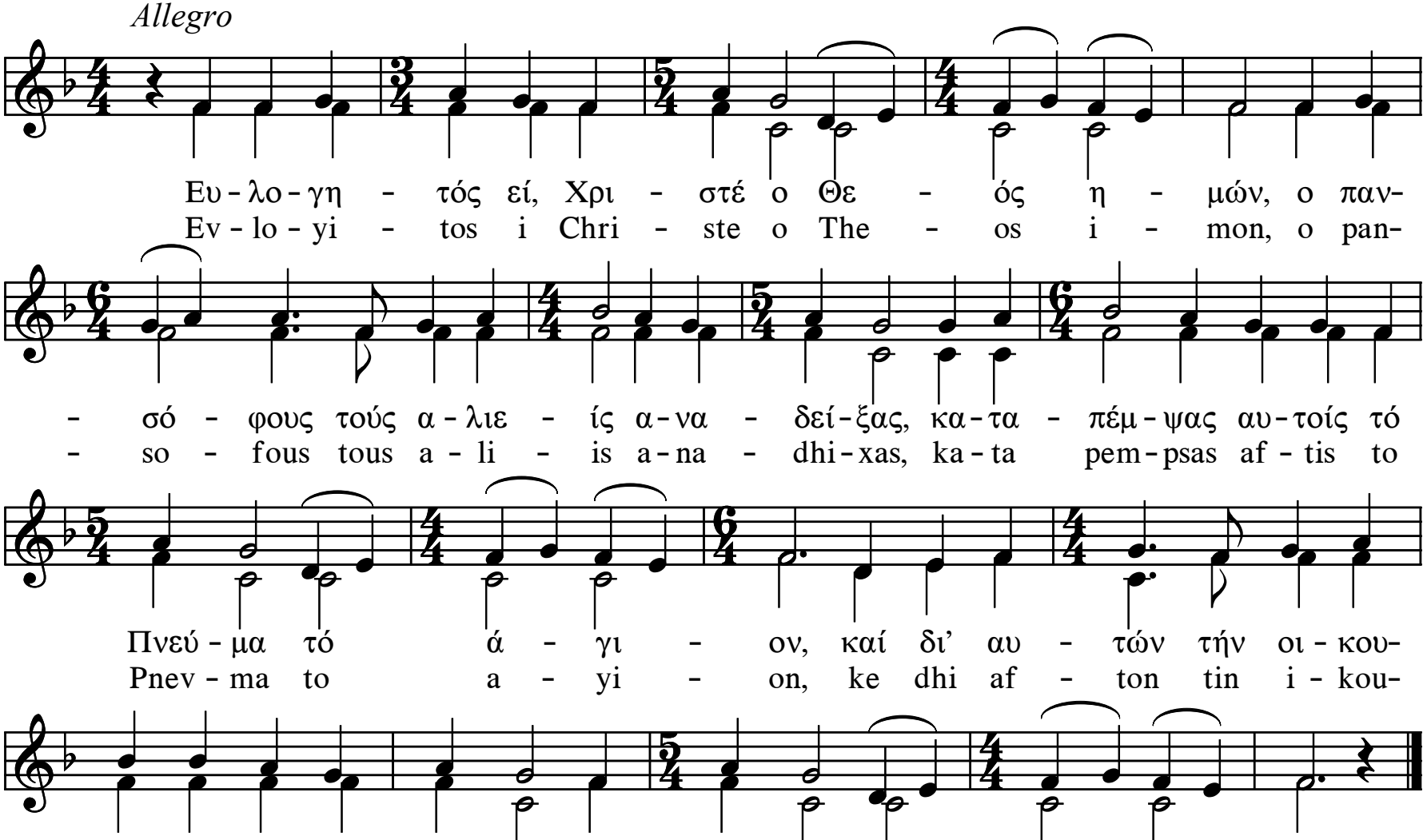
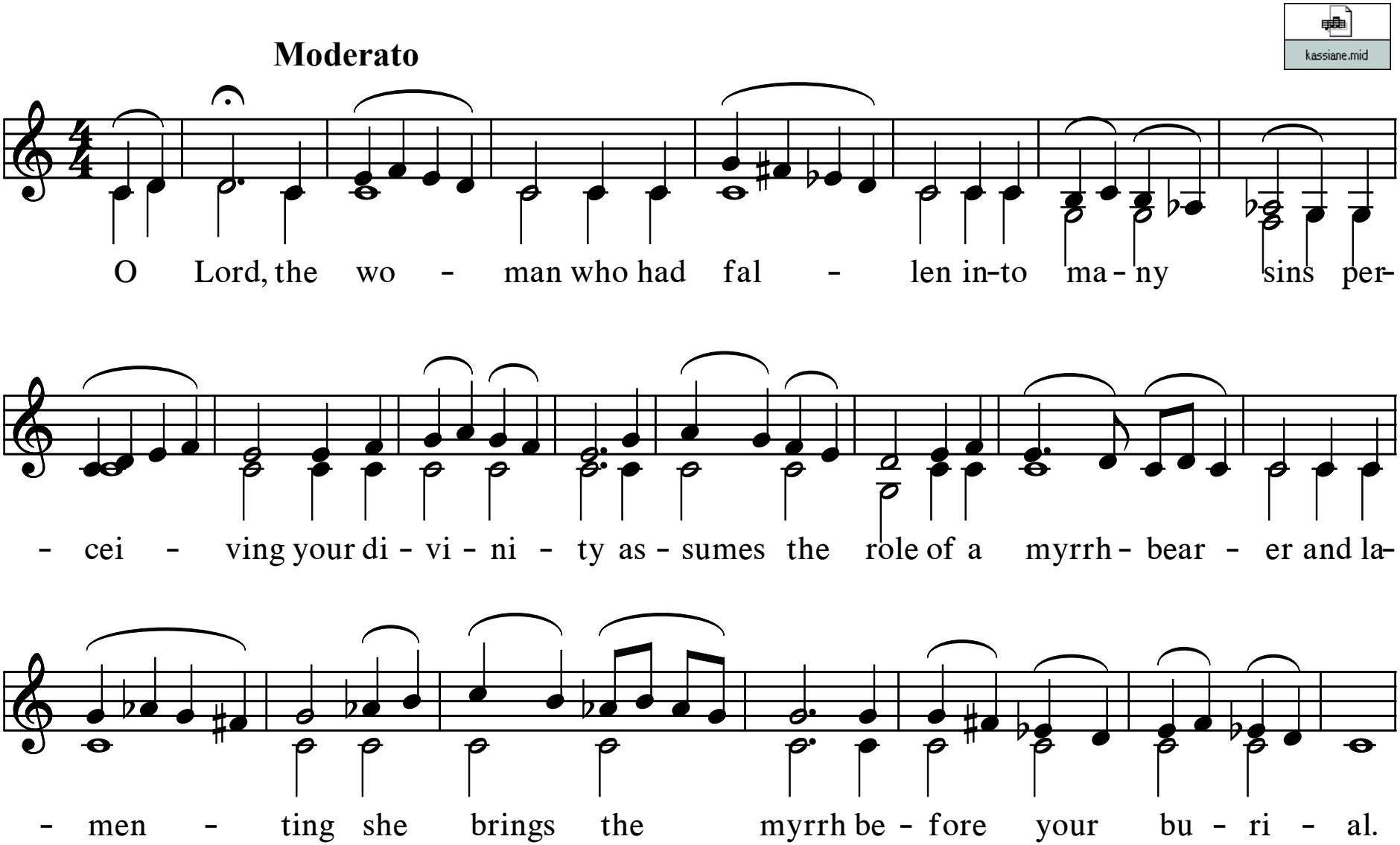


Fourth Tone - Unique Melody, Soft Chromatic

Moderato



Plagal Fourth Tone - Short Mode, Diatonic



Plagal Fourth Tone - Long Mode, Diatonic