

The Chaplain writes...*about Easter's song*

Although I am writing this just on the eve of the most intense fortnight of the Church's Year, the day before Passion Sunday, by the time that this reaches your hands, we shall be once more singing the 'a' word – the peculiarly Easter song – *Alleluia*. It was S. Augustine who first said of the Church *We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song*. Or at least he *might* have said it. It's a saying that Pope S. John Paul II used to quote often, but despite Augustine saying quite a bit about *Alleluia* I have never actually found the saying in full anywhere in Augustine's writings, and my searches have always proved fruitless.

But it's true to say that this was very much in tune with Augustine's thought elsewhere. He certainly approved of singing, and he approved of *Alleluia*, as well! A word that we have deliberately given up during Lent. There are some wonderful plainsong chants for this word which date back many centuries, and which express in their beauty something of the power of this strange word which at best we translate as *praise to God*. The rising and falling notes, there just for the joy of it, on which we sing one syllable of the word, *Alleluia*, take us to a new realm of praise where words lose their significance.

Yet this is not without effect in our lives. Through Lent (without benefit of alleluias!) we have spent time thinking about our praying. And within the modes of prayer, we have thought how music can be a vehicle of prayer, as indeed is silence – at least silence from the babble of words that we are inclined to let slip when faced with the mystery of God. The *Alleluia* chants are very expressive of this wordless praise. There are plenty of examples available on the internet, but here is a link to one such - <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=gregorian+chant+alleluia&view=detail&mid=0792C731917B47B141F60792C731917B47B141F6&FORM=VIRE>

Here is what S. Augustine writes in one of his commentaries on the Psalms:

So I urge you, praise God! That is what we tell each other when we say, 'Alleluia.' You say to your neighbour, "Praise the Lord!" and your neighbour says the same to you. When we say, "Alleluia," we are urging one another to praise the Lord. And this praise comes from our whole being; in other words, we praise God not with our lips and voices alone, but with our minds, our lives, and with all we have and do. We are praising God now, assembled as we are here in church; but when we go on our various ways again, it may seem as if we stop praising God. But if we do not cease to live a just life, we shall always be praising God. You cease to praise God only when you swerve from the path of justice. If you never turn aside from that path, your tongue may be silent, but your life will cry aloud, Alleluia! Praise the Lord!

Your life will cry aloud – that is definitely an Easter message. Christ is Risen. And his Risen Body and presence in the here and now of this world are made tangible in us.

As we celebrate Christ's Easter Triumph in the wordless praise of many alleluias, I pray that you will know the power of his words *I am risen and with you always* and the victory they bring into our lives. A victory over everything that separates us from God – sin, evil, and death itself.

A very happy Eastertide to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alec Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the word "Gordon".