

Holy Trinity Geneva Magazine



The Chaplain writes ... about music and mystery

During Easter week this year, Holy Trinity Geneva hosted the Archdeaconry Choirs' Festival at which, under the direction of Mark Jones, around fifty people sang – first at Choral Evensong and then at the Sung Eucharist on Low Sunday morning. It was a delightful and enriching moment for those of us who were privileged to be present. Some have asked that the homily which I preached at the Evensong might be made available, and though I think that it is on the website I am happy to repeat it as my piece for this magazine. So here it is:

Listen! says S. Paul *I will tell you a mystery*. And although he goes on to *attempt* to do just that, he fails. Like every preacher, before him and since, however, he does expend a fair number of words before he gives up! You will perhaps remember the story recorded of Paul in Acts (20⁷) that he preached a sermon in Troas which lasted until the middle of the night. An unfortunate young man named Eutychus fell asleep during this marathon and fell out of the window to the ground three floors below. The congregation picked him up as dead, but Paul managed to revive the lad, and, undeterred, continued the sermon

until daybreak after what appears to have been an early Eucharist.

This day, rightly called Easter Saturday as it is the Saturday in the Octave of Easter, we are still contemplating the greatest of all mysteries. The mystery of Christ's resurrection. And what this means for us is Paul's subject in tonight's second reading. How because Christ is raised by God from the dead, we too may have that same hope. Though, he goes on, *we shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye*.

To say that Easter is a *Mystery* does not mean that it is a puzzle to be solved. It is a *mystery* in the sense of being something which is just too big to be contained. Contained by *anything* – be that theological speculation or whatever.

But that doesn't mean for a single moment that there should be nothing further said – that somehow or other the tomb was empty on the first Easter morning and that is it. After all, as some of us thought on Easter morning, there could have been a whole number of reasons why *that* was the case, not all of them involving what we believe to be the resurrection!

So of course, since that time people have pondered over, been perplexed over, and put together their reasoned thoughts about

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what happened to Jesus who was executed on the first Good Friday and then subsequently was encountered in different ways, by different people, in different places over the following period of time, prior to the event which we describe as his Ascension into God's glory.

Whatever else the resurrection of Jesus Christ means, it is clear that it means that the course of history is changed for ever. And it also means that our understanding of God, and of who God is, is also changed for ever too. These things we explore through these fifty days of the Easter season.

And yes, it is deeply mysterious. It is *too big* to be contained – certainly it is too big to be contained by rational thought and words alone!

So we resort to other means, too. Including poetry, art, drama – and *music*.

This weekend some of us will be focussing our attention very much upon music. Tonight we have sung a setting of the Canticles by Sir Edward Bairstow, and one of his anthems, too. Bairstow was born in the Woollen district of Yorkshire, an area I know well from my student days. In fact, he spent most of his life working in that county apart from his days at Balliol, and then a couple of organist posts first in a London church under the tutelage of Frederick Bridge, organist at Westminster Abbey, and then he had a spell at Wigan Parish Church. The setting of the Canticles in D comes from 1906, the year he returned to his native Yorkshire and to Leeds Parish Church, where he stayed for seven years until going to York Minster, where he continued through two world wars until his death in 1946. It seems he was happy in Yorkshire, and his character typified the blunt and somewhat terse Yorkshireman. Someone asked him when he arrived in York if he might follow his predecessor to the United States. *I'd rather go to the devil* he replied!



Edward Bairstow

He didn't endear himself to everyone, apparently! Yet out of this gritty character came a lifetime of *musical expression of Christian faith* – including tonight's pieces but many others of exquisite beauty, such as his *Lamentation* which some of us

sang a few days ago, and his settings of the Sequence for the Feast of the Dedication of a church, *Blessèd City, heavenly Salem* or again his *Let all mortal flesh keep silence*.

And it is music that is able to convey the depths of mystery in ways that are just impossible for words alone. Music, I believe, is a *sacramental*. That is to say it is *not a sacrament*, but rather a means by which we can more fully engage with the unseen realities at the heart of our Christian faith. It also, of course, provides a means by which we are able to express our worship and praise of God. In our sacramental faith, this is inevitably a two-way process between us and God. We give praise and at the same time that brings deepened human flourishing and joy.

Few would deny any of that – but the sad fact is that *popular culture* has overtaken the musical world. This at its base manifests itself as a desire for security found in sameness and reproducibility. That this is evident in secular life, one need only listen to the radio to verify. The United Kingdom radio station, Classic FM, panders to this safety in sameness by its choice of snippets of larger works with no reference to the whole and it endlessly repeats the same snippets of music in order to satisfy market forces expressed in audience figures.

Sadly, we see the same phenomenon of musical prostitution within the life of the Church with – in many places – the proliferation of choruses proclaiming *how wonderful Jesus is for bearing my sins away*. I do not doubt that this assertion may, at one rather basic level, be at least partly true! Nor do I want to

deny *any place* for the chorus within worship. But such a place must not be allowed to displace other more creative forms of music which involve not only disciplined composition, but a disciplined creation in performance. This latter discipline is key for those of us who sing in a choir, where we each have to accept the constraints of those around us, respecting them, and respect the constraints, too, of the line of music that we ourselves sing towards the gift of the whole – all of this adding up to what we offer to God in worship.

None of this *stifles* creativity. Rather it makes creativity possible. We can only be truly creative when we properly acknowledge the environment in which we are set – our being part of a material world with its constraints as well as its opportunities. And when at the same time we recognise that Jesus risen takes us with him into the very heart and being of God, in the fullness of God's absolute creativity, his beauty, truth, love and goodness.

Which is surely worth singing about and putting time and energy into doing well. For done well, the best of Anglican Choral music is a metaphor, like all good art, for a reality far beyond us. A 'way in' to that Reality of God who is beyond any of our words, or any imaginings. A 'way in' to the Mystery we describe as the most wonderfully creative God who raises Jesus from the dead. And to whom in this holy season, as always, be ascribed from choirs of humans and angels, all might, majesty, dominion and praise, now and through endless ages. *Amen*.

Aluc Gordon

The Archdeaconry Choir Festival

Other archdeaconries have their residential synods, and Switzerland has an annual residential choir festival, which brings together members of the choirs across the archdeaconry plus others who wish to experience this opportunity to work and sing together under an internationally recognised director, providing the music to enhance worship at both a choral evensong and a sung Eucharist. This year it was Holy Trinity Geneva's turn to host the event.

Many years ago the Saturday after Easter was called just that, "the Saturday after Easter". However, its official title is "Easter Saturday in the Octave" and it was on this rather grand-sounding day that some 50 singers assembled in Holy Trinity from five choirs across the archdeaconry, Basel, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich and our sister church in Geneva, Emmanuel Episcopalian Church. Mark Jones, well-known as a choir director and organist both in Switzerland and the UK, directed, with Mark Charles, Director of Music, Geneva, on the organ.

Greeted by a generous buffet, guests arrived from 5 p.m. on Friday to fortify themselves before a three-hour practice. They were back again at 9 a.m. on Saturday when practising continued with pauses for coffee and lunch until shortly before Choral Evensong at 5 p.m.

The Festival has a tradition of singing works in English and the service began with the Introit, 'If ye Love Me, keep my commandments', by Philip



Wilby. This was an evening for music by Edward Bairstow (1874 -1946) with his settings Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in D, and as anthem, 'Save Us O Lord while waking'.

The Preces & Responses were by John Sanders and Psalm 150 was sung to a setting by C.V. Stanford. The hymns, "There's a wideness in God's mercy" and "How shall I sing that majesty which angels do admire" were written in the 19th and 17th centuries respectively but sung to tunes composed in the 20th century, not necessarily familiar to everyone and they kept the congregation on its toes. This was a beautiful service greatly appreciated by the small number of worshippers who were present.

Dinner followed in the church hall with a Cana of Galilee moment when water was not turned into wine, but reserve stocks did miraculously appear. The choirs returned at 9 a.m. on Sunday to practise for a further hour before accompanying the Eucharist. This time it was the turn of English composer, John Ireland (1879-1962) with the choir singing the whole of his

Communion in C, Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus and Agnus Dei, supplemented by a suitably joyous and fittingly Easter anthem, 'The Strife is O'er' by Richard Shepherd.

Somehow everyone crammed into the Chancel along with candle bearers and servers, making a merry noise on a happy and deeply spiritual occasion.

Mary Talbot and Brenda Stewart

A pocketful of prayer!

Ladies, beware of keeping folded pieces of paper in your handbag. Christine Damary, listed as intercessions leader one Sunday recently, transferred from her bag to her pocket, in preparation for the prayer moment, her carefully written out prayers for the day, only to discover, once she stood at the lectern, that the paper she in fact held in her hand was a ticket for a GAOS concert! Fast thinking and improvisation were the order of the day. The congregation may have thought she hesitated a bit but we hope there were chuckles in Heaven!

NB

The choir will be singing three Evensongs in Chichester Cathedral on the 7th, 8th and 9th August at 17h30.

Unique among English cathedrals in having a bell tower (or campanile), its spire can be seen for many miles across the flat meadows of West Sussex and is a landmark for sailors, Chichester being the only mediaeval English cathedral which is visible from the sea



Our HTC Hero

June 6th this year marks the 75th anniversary of the start of the Liberation of Europe with the D-Day Landings in Normandy. I thought it would be appropriate to call to mind a member of our congregation who was one of the first to land in enemy territory that famous morning: Colonel Bev Holloway. He died in 2008 aged 93.

He was an engineer and signed up on the outbreak of war to join the Parachute Royal Engineers. It is easy to forget in these days of enormous air-power and precision weapons how dangerous an amphibious landing was, especially as the coastline was heavily defended. What the Allies feared most was the enemy bringing up armour and artillery before we could land our own.

On the night of 5th June Bev was in command of a planeload of Parachute Engineers with orders to demolish two bridges over the River Dives thus preventing the enemy getting near the landings. [Incidentally, the River Dives was where William the Conqueror built his ships for the invasion of England in 1066!]

As a considerable number of aircraft had to be assembled, they were in the air for a long time. At 00.55 hrs on 6th June Bev was, as leader, standing in the (open) door of the Dakota but just over the coast they ran into heavy anti-aircraft fire. The pilot took sharp evasive action throwing the men onto the floor. Despite being fit and well trained it was very difficult to get up so heavily laden were they with arms and explosives. However, the shortest Red Light he had ever seen turned quickly to Green and he was in the air. By the light of the gunfire he could see Varavill Church and so knew they were in the right place.

Despite enemy patrols they found the bridges and blew up both of them. But it took them two days, dodging patrols again, to get back to the Allied lines. There is little doubt that, without the destruction of these bridges, the success of the whole operation would have been in doubt.

Bev returned to civilian life in 1946 but went on to command the Royal Engineers in the Emergency Reserve. In 1977 he took early retirement to join the International Standards Organisation in Geneva.

So, Reader, as you are tucking yourself up comfortably in bed on the night of 5/6th June, spare a thought for Capt. Bev Holloway and his men struggling to stand

up under the weight of their equipment and waiting for the Green Light and the order to throw themselves out into the night.

Ben Holt,
June 2019

(We are sorry this edition just misses the actual anniversary of 5/6 June, but the sentiment remains the same! Ed.)

Led Astray by Artistic Imagination

Now this is not going to be an article decrying art from a Puritan perspective - not that you would think I am up to that!

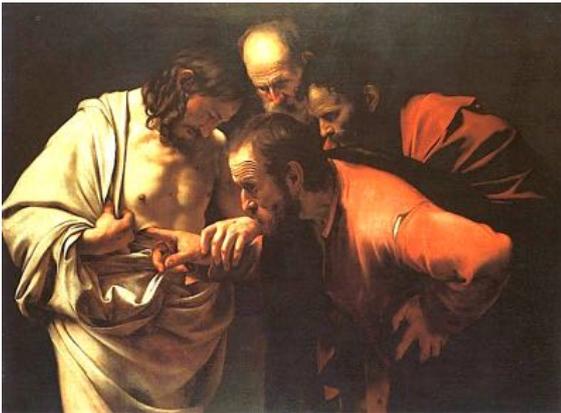
And yet, art can be deceptive; artists naturally want to show something happening, to stage on canvas something dramatic. But this temptation to the dramatic has certain pitfalls. And so I want to share with you two examples where artists may have led us astray, or compounded certain errors of biblical interpretation.

My two examples are Easter ones: the encounter between Jesus and the apostle Thomas, and the meeting of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the garden.

First, Thomas. As we know, Thomas assured his fellow apostles that he would not believe unless he could put his finger in the scars made by the nails in Jesus' hands, and his hand into the wound in Jesus' side. When Jesus appeared to the apostles with Thomas a week later, he challenged Thomas by quoting his own words back to him, to

which Thomas made the reply “My Lord, and my God.”

Now the artists, not surprisingly, delight in the picture of Thomas putting his hand into the side of Jesus or examining the nail marks. So here is Caravaggio’s painting, “The Incredulity of Saint Thomas”



But this is not what the scripture says. What the scripture says is simply “My Lord, and my God.” It was enough to receive the rebuke from Jesus of having his own loud-mouthed intention quoted back at him verbatim, to bowl Thomas completely over from doubt into faith. No touching required despite Thomas’ bold words.

My second example, the meeting of the risen Jesus with Mary Magdalene in the garden. Here the artists so often like to cling to a false interpretation of what Jesus said to Mary, being “do not touch me.” Here, the Authorised Version, which in general I greatly admire, encourages the mistake: “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and my God, and your God.”

In this, the AV is closer to the Latin “Noli me tangere” than it is to the Greek, which is better

represented in translation as “cease holding on to me”.

For it is not that Jesus cannot be touched by Mary, perhaps is even dangerous to touch - but that it would be a mistake for her to think she could continue to hold on to him or continue the pattern of their friendship from former days. She must learn quickly to let go, and perform her next and urgent duty, to be an apostle to the apostles, (a phrase used by St. Thomas Aquinas), taking up the task of being the first apostle with the amazing good news to tell.

Several artists seem to have delighted in portraying this encounter as one where Jesus seems to shrink from the approach of Mary; see the early Renaissance example below:

Far from the truth! This is an intimate encounter grounded in love and should remain so in the Christian imagination.

Ah well! Thomas who did not touch, and Mary who did! It gives us pause for thought...

Alan Amos



SUMMER SUN

*Great is the sun, and wide he goes
Through empty heaven without repose;
And in the blue and glowing days
More thick than rain he showers his rays.*

*Though closer still the blinds we pull
To keep the shady parlour cool,
Yet he will find a chink or two
To slip his golden fingers through.*

*The dusty attic spider-clad
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;
And through the broken edge of tiles
Into the laddered hay-loft smiles.*

*Meantime his golden face around
He bares to all the garden ground,
And sheds a warm and glittering look
Among the ivy's inmost nook.*

*Above the hills, along the blue,
Round the bright air with footing true,
To please the child, to paint the rose,
The gardener of the World, he goes.*

Robert Louis Stevenson

St. Otmar, Father to the Poor

The 2019 Summer Exhibition at the Abbey Library in St.-Gallen is all about St. Otmar.

After St. Gall died, the monastic community he had founded dwindled. The local overlord, Waltram, put Otmar in charge, appointing him Abbot. Otmar had trained in Chur (Coire), here in modern-day Switzerland, and he set to work immediately, breathing new life into the community and establishing the Abbey as a religious centre of growing significance.

Here is what the organizers say: During the 8th century, monasteries began to play a role as reference points for the social order. Otmar's community offered support and refuge to the Alemanic population around Lake Constance. People expressed their gratitude with gifts of land and the abbey grew wealthy. Otmar drew on these economic resources to engage the abbey in charitable works. He helped the poor and set up one of the first known hospitals for lepers in Europe. By introducing the Rule of Benedict (ca. year 747) he established an important foundation for burgeoning religious life in the convent. During a local power struggle, Otmar was caught between two fronts. He died as a prisoner on an island in the middle of the River Rhine in the year 759.

I shall be very happy to lead a group once again to visit this fascinating place. More and more people are making a weekend of it as it's rather a long train journey. However, we usually work this out once we know who is participating and, basically,

each does as he/she wants as there are many possibilities.

I would like to go there in October - do let me know if you are interested and we will decide on details later on.

Finally, there is now lots more to see at the abbey, as they have opened two new exhibition rooms, enabling us to see things that were previously squirrelled away in the archives.

For further information:
polecat.alley@gmail.com

Dorinda Maio

If you would like to make your own arrangements:

www.stiftsbibliothek.ch
(Abbey Library information)

www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch
(tourist information)

www.stiftsbezirk.ch
(Abbey, exhibitions and library information)

Click on E for English



A Happy Coincidence

We were delighted to receive a letter from our old friend Janet Knight, who left Geneva in 1975 and has been following the Holy Trinity Newsletter ever since. As some of our readers may remember Janet and Bill left Geneva for Bill to go into training for the ministry at Mirfield. Janet wrote to tell us that she had been amazed to spot, in our October issue, a photo of the Dancing Madonna statue in St Luke's church Duston. She tells us that the statue had been placed in St. Luke's in memory of a certain Julie Buchanan who was a long-time friend of Janet's and a wonderful clergy wife whose faith and boundless energy, in spite of incapacitating illness, had been an inspiration to many. So Clare Amos' choice of an illustration for one of her talks was quite a coincidence!

(I remember the saying of one wise old nun who apparently claimed that 'coincidence' is merely the name God chooses when He wishes to travel incognito! Ed.)

TABLE OF SERVICES

Date	9h00	10h30	19h00
9 June - Pentecost	Eucharist	Sung Eucharist With Holy Baptism	Holy Communion BCP Sung
16 June – Trinity Sunday	BCP Matins	Sung Eucharist Followed by a reception for Trinity Sunday	Informal worship
23 June – Corpus Christi	Eucharist	Sung Family Eucharist	Evensong
30 June – Trinity 2	Holy Communion BCP	Sung Eucharist	Compline Preceded at 17h00 by organ recital. Claire Hobbs
7 July – Trinity 3	Holy Communion BCP	Sung Eucharist	Choral Evensong Followed by an apéritif
14 July – Trinity 4	Eucharist	Sung Eucharist With Holy Baptism	Choral Eucharist
21 July – Trinity 5	Eucharist	Sung Eucharist	Informal Worship
28 July – Trinity 6	Eucharist	Sung Family Eucharist	Choral Evensong Preceded at 17h00 by Organ recital C. Garcia Banegas
4 August – Trinity 7	Holy Communion BCP	Sung Eucharist	Evensong
11 August - Trinity 8	Eucharist	Sung Eucharist with Holy Baptism	Choral Eucharist
18 August – Blessed Virgin Mary	Holy Communion	Sung Eucharist	Informal worship
25 August – Trinity 10	Holy Communion	Sung Family Eucharist	Choral Evensong preceded at 17h00 by organ recital, Mark Jones

Regular midweek services:

Mondays	07h30 Holy Communion	12h15 Prayers for Wholeness and Healing
Wednesdays	10h00 Small Time Worship	
Thursdays	10h00 Holy Communion (BCP)	
Fridays	07h45 Morning Prayer and Holy Communion	

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022 736 0052

Verger: Christine Damary
022 774 2320

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022 733 83 72

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Gill Howie, Jo Kitson, Julia Lacey, Ann Shazell,
Aylwin Zabula

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022 755 2155

Church Office: Jill Bechet, Secretary.
022 731 5155
admin@holytrinitygeneva.org
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Church activities

Holy Trinity choir: practice Thursdays at 20h00
Mark Charles 079 744 5175

Junior choir: practice Sundays after the
10h30 service Claire Charles

Craft group: Fridays in the church hall
14h15 - contact
Annemarie Hester
022 782 6689

Small-time worship: Wednesdays from 09h30
In the church hall, contact
Amanda Dawson
022 751 2968

Young people: (11-13 year-olds) contact
Innocent Mugabe
mugabeinnocent@yahoo.com

Junior Church: Sundays 1, 2 and 3 contact
Anitha Beulah 022 731 4211 /
078 323 8184

Healing Prayer: Mondays 12h15 in church
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Sheila Mathewson 022 774 0469

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