

KING'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE



Evensong

15 June 2014

3.30pm

Evensong today comprises the first complete performance of 'lit by holy fire.'

Music, Francis Grier

Words, Elizabeth Cook.

This is interspersed with biblical readings.

'lit by holy fire'

The vespers service, traditionally celebrated at sundown - the moment when day gives way to night, has a long history but no strict form or structure. The only constant element is its culmination in the singing of the Magnificat - the psalm of praise attributed to Mary by Luke at the time of the Annunciation. This is usually preceded by a selection of psalms, often those that are associated with light and darkness and the celebration of God as our refuge. There is an association of this time of day with Holy Saturday, the day when the crucified Christ is in the tomb and the Resurrection - as celebrated in the fires of Easter vigils - is about to take place. Death and birth (both the Annunciation of Christ's birth to Mary and the new birth of the Resurrection) are inextricably entwined. It is a moment of transition, of trustful surrender to the darkness. There is an association with fire and the offering of incense. In this setting the introit marks the moment of change, when day becomes night. The fine line of smoke from the offered incense becomes the 'primitive streak' that appears early in embryonic development: the beginning of structure and differentiation in the body.

This vespers celebration is less traditional than most. Instead of using full psalms from the Psalter, we have created a sequence of new poems/songs/psalms upon an armature of verses from Coverdale's BCP translation of the Psalms. Those verses were selected to create an implicit psychological/spiritual narrative. The movement is from a sense of dissonance and rebellion at the way of things, through a discovery of sanctuary to a spirit of joyful praise in which the inherent radiance of the Creation sings out. Much of that arc of feeling is adumbrated in Psalm 73 from which the first verses are taken. Poem 1 expresses discomfort, flight, rejection, before arriving, rather tentatively, at the possibility of sanctuary. The memory of George Herbert's 'The Collar' is somewhere behind the emotional arc of this poem.

The poems (perhaps they should be called 'songs' for they were written to be completed by music) are in very different styles, their linguistic register moving between the colloquial and dramatic and a higher, more conventionally poetic language. Poem 2 makes implicit allusion to the eve of the Resurrection and to the creative darkness in which new life may be formed. Poems 3 and 4 in different ways evoke a profound silence of trust and a radical simplicity of surrender. Poem 5 - perhaps the least song-like, in this sequence and the most historically grounded, takes those ideas of trust and radical surrender further. The darkness evoked in this poem is not the comfortable light-deprivation of song 2 but a darkness of active evil. It specifically names Saint Maximilian Kolbe who was able to find - and communicate - the spiritual gifts of love, joy

and peace within such a darkness at Auschwitz.

After encountering this nadir of darkness in poem 5 we move to a spirit of beneficence and celebration. Poem 6 employs a simple Q&A form to celebrate the great gifts of light and water without which there would be no life here. Poem 7, with its evocation of the meal shared with the resurrected Christ at Emmaus, suggests the ready availability of spiritual nourishment in the form of a simple meal, the Eucharist. It is followed by a joyful song of trustful repose, a song that is generated in a potentially endless way by the word dwell.

The Latin Magnificat follows with an antiphon chosen for its sense of glad surrender to God's will. The sequence concludes with Magnificamus ('we praise'): a poem that opens out into a declaration of praise from the whole of creation.

The music is set for unaccompanied choir. The scoring and musical atmosphere follows the emotional sequence of the poems, leading essentially from darkness to light, from music often of brooding intensity and simplicity towards more complex and more animated forms and tonal pictures. The full resources of the choir are utilised, from unison and homophony to fully contrapuntal configurations. Solo voices from all the different sections of the choir sing in contrast to the tutti; the dynamic range is extreme; and the tessitura in all parts ranges from the lowest to the highest vocal ranges. The musical style overall is intended to show some indebtedness to Rachmaninov's soaring setting.

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Organ music before the service:

Symphonie-Passion – Le Monde dans l’attente du Sauveur
Op. 23 No. 1

Dupré

¶ *All stand at the entry of the Choir and Clergy.*

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

(Genesis i, 1-2)

¶ *All sit.*

Introit

First dark.
It begins
as a drift of smoke,
a fine grain
censing the air.
You draw a line
as when you divided
the day from the night.

Primitive streak -
the dent in the bean.
The tiny shoot seeks light
and climbs towards it.
The beginning of life;
of left and right:
Your thumb
marking the clay.

I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.

(Jeremiah iv, 23-26)

Antiphon

My feet were almost gone, my treadings had well nigh slipt...All the day long have I been punished and chastened every morning...Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. (Ps lxxiii)

There is nothing
that has not been sold:
first breath
last breath,
all on the telly.
A sky crazed, made crazy
with signals,
the ground owned,
guttled and planted
with land mines,
power lines,
pipe lines,
crops with no seed.

The tar sands spread,
grey all the green,
and air grows dark
with greasy smoke
while rivers choke
on toxic waste and plastic.

There is nothing and nowhere
not occupied, owned
disputed, lied for,
killed for,
died for;
minds crazed, made crazy
with push, prod, get
and keep.
Keep out. No
thing to
cling to. No
where to
make to.

Make do. In the small
space between the in-
breath and out-
breath: sanctuary
with no wall
no lock no key

Antiphon

My feet were almost gone, my treadings had well nigh slipt...All the day long have I been punished and chastened every morning...Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare, if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth, and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it because thou wast then born, or because the number of thy days is great? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the

hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?

(Job xxxviii, 16-27)

Antiphon

He made darkness his secret place. (Ps. xviii)

Thou art a place to hide me in. (Ps xxxii)

Flawless and smooth the egg.

Flawless the dark of the sky.

Perfect the seal of the tomb.

In the warm heart of the leaf-pile
the hedgehog is asleep.

Don't disturb him.

From the kernel of the dropped fruit,
small filaments of root
are reaching into hospitable earth.

Let it be

if you hope for a tree.

Beneath the rock

where the grass is crushed and blanched
small life is teeming.

In the blue-black canopy of heaven
unseen galaxies are pulsing.

In the silence under the tongue
a new word is forming.

Antiphon

He made darkness his secret place.

Thou art a place to hide me in.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

(Ezekiel xxxvii 1-6)

Antiphon

Thou requirest truth in the inward parts and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly. (Ps li)

Then we were quiet, having come

to a wall of smooth mica:

no handhold

no foothold

nothing to grip there.

There was not so much as a little chink

in which to lodge a pieten.

We could not go on.

Nor could we go back

for the track we had followed was already dark

and the last of the light shone

on the narrow ledge we were standing on.

Then all the light had gone,
and as there was no moon
we had to feel to know -
though what we knew was small:
warm breath, pulsed blood,
the marvellous frame of our bones
that held us upright in that place of stone.

Antiphon

Thou requirest truth in the inward parts and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, let them not depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

(Proverbs iii, 13-23)

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

(Matthew vii, 13-14)

Antiphon

Order my steps in thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me. (Ps cxix)

the space between
too little and too much
too near
too far
is just as fine
as the very fine blade
whereon they choose
to walk who choose
to walk with the Lord.

Antiphon

Order my steps in thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans viii 32-39)

Antiphon

[Blessed are those]who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water. (Ps lxxxiv)

How shall the conflict cease
in the mountains, in the deserts
if within there is no peace?

'We must sanctify the whole world' said Kolbe*
including the starvation cell
where prisoner one six six seven o
sang hymns of praise to Mary, gave comfort, spread peace
made sanctuary in hell;

and as others walked into the building
to be first stripped, then shorn
to enter the killing chambers,
they embraced, held hands, raised their heads high,
flung into the horror a posy of song.

Antiphon

[Blessed are those]who going through the vale of misery use it for a well: and the pools are filled with water.

* Saint Maximilian Kolbe OFM, 1894-1941. Polish Franciscan friar and priest, imprisoned at Auschwitz where, when ten prisoners had been arbitrarily selected to die by starvation in retribution for the escape of three, he volunteered to take the place of one. While in the cell he celebrated the Mass in what way he could and led his fellow prisoners in hymns to Mary to whom he had a special devotion. He died on August 14th and was cremated the following day, on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelations xxii 1-5)

Antiphon

*For with thee is the well of life and in thy light shall we see light.
(Ps xxxvi)*

All my fresh springs shall be in thee. (Ps lxxxvii)

The river of God is full of water. (Ps lxxv)

Q. How would you explain water
to a creature who lived on a dry planet?

A. All that refreshes, slakes, renews,
makes clean. It plumps out every living cell,
it penetrates the smallest crevice;
it tumbles, rushes, splashes, pools, and flows.

Piled-high, wind-whipped - a terrible
and mighty power not easy to resist;
contained in rivers, irrigation pipes and wells
it's sweet and satisfactory as light.

Q. What can you say of light
to a creature who lives on a dark star?

A. It dances over every surface
revealing shape and contour,
texture of fur and leaf and feather.
It calls the seed up from the earth.

It opens up the understanding,
makes clear, exposes snags and falseness.
We need it for our bones' strength,
this light that's born of fire.

Brimming water, arising and flowing forever
as brook, stream, fountain, ocean, lake and river.
Living water, lit by holy fire.

Antiphon

*For with thee is the well of life and in thy light shall we see light.
All my fresh springs shall be in thee.
The river of God is full of water.*

And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on, for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

(Genesis xviii 1-8)

Antiphon

Thou hast set my feet in a large room. (Ps xxxi)

It was an ordinary room
a table with a jug upon it,
fresh bread, a handful of grapes, their bloom
still evident;

two chairs and a bench - so three
or more could easily gather -
the door open for a traveller to see
the waiting meal, and enter,

find a welcome, be restored
for the next dark leg of the road,
Share the bread broken, the wine poured.
Know this place hallowed.

Antiphon

Thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

(John xv, 4-11)

Antiphon

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Ps xxiii)

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple. (Ps xxvii)

as a baby cradled
as a seed kernelled
as a bean in its pod
as a nut in its shell
as a hare in its form
as a heron in its high nest
as a lark in her moor nest
as a boat rocked in harbour
as my love on my breast
as my heart in my chest
as my feet in their shoes
as my bones in the earth
as the dew in the air
as fire upon the mountains
as fish in the stream
as the crackle in the glaze
the spectrum through the rainbow
as the germ in the wheat
and the red in the wine
as light in your eyes
is light on the sea
as my home with my love
as my home in my love

Antiphon

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

(Luke i, 26-38)

¶ *All stand.*

Antiphon to the Magnificat

*In the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil thy will, O my God: I am content to do it; yea, thy law is within my heart.
(Ps xl)*

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo,

Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent
omnes generations,

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est
et sanctum nomen eius

Et misericordia eius in progenies et
progenies timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;

Deposuit potentes de sede,
et exaltavit humiles;

Esurientes implevit bonis
et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum
memorari misericordiae.

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.
Amen

Antiphon

In the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil thy will, O my God: I am content to do it; yea, thy law is within my heart.

¶ *All sit.*

Magnificamus

Antiphon

Thou that makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise thee. (Ps lxxv.)

Let the field be joyful and all that is in it: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. (Ps xcvi)

They stoop then lift,
loft lovely tresses,
flash green and silver;

gleam on silken water gathers,
deepens to a roll, breaks
into white fire laughter;

the scales of the serpent
pulse in undulation
shine and shift in the sun;

pelt of cat and bear and otter,
- and every other furred creature -
lustrous in its nap and texture;

the comb of the cockatoo,
iridescence of the dragonfly,
pale lamp of glow-worm,

star points of fire-flies
that dance in low constellations
beneath the brighter lights of heaven;

each cut crystal shines
each burnished fruit glows
and every flower's a flame;

from gleam to incandescence
in bioluminescence
the whole of life is burning
in the fire of Your Name!

Antiphon

Thou that makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise thee. (Ps lxxv.)

Let the field be joyful and all that is in it: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. (Ps xcvi)

Dean: Let us pray.

¶ *All kneel or remain seated.*

Prayer of Benjamin Whichcote, Provost (1644-1660)

Let the light of truth, and the help of grace, be vital principles of action in us; that we may, in the time of life, attain the ends for which we live; and that our religion, which begins in knowledge, may proceed in action, settle in temper, and end in happiness: that we may make it the work and business of our lives, to reconcile the temper of our spirits to the rule of righteousness; and to incorporate the principles of our religion into the complexion of our minds; that what we attribute to God, as his moral excellencies and perfections; we may propose to our selves, as matter of practice and imitation; and that what is our best employment in this world, and will be our only employment in the next, may be our free choice, and our transcendent pleasure.

All: Amen.

Blessing

Dean: God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you now, and remain with you always.

All: Amen

Organ music after the service:

Symphonie-Passion – Résurrection Op. 23 No. 4

Dupré

KING'S COLLEGE CHOIR

The Director of Music, Stephen Cleobury, is always pleased to receive enquiries from potential members of the Choir.

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The next auditions for Choristerships will be
On 27 September 2014 and 24 January 2015.