

THE LITURGY OF ASH WEDNESDAY



ASH WEDNESDAY

2021

THE CHURCHES OF THE MEON BRIDGE BENEFICE

Lent - Introduction to the Season

Lent may originally have followed Epiphany, just as Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness followed immediately on his baptism, but it soon became firmly attached to Easter, as the principal occasion for baptism and for the reconciliation of those who had been excluded from the Church's fellowship for apostasy or serious faults. This history explains the characteristic notes of Lent – self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter, to which almsgiving has traditionally been added.

Now is the healing time decreed
for sins of heart and word and deed,
when we in humble fear record
the wrong that we have done the Lord.

(Latin, before 12th century)

As the candidates for baptism were instructed in Christian faith, and as penitents prepared themselves, through fasting and penance, to be readmitted to communion, the whole Christian community was invited to join them in the process of study and repentance, the extension of which over forty days would remind them of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tested by Satan.

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. The calculation of the forty days has varied considerably in Christian history. It is now usual in the West to count them continuously to the end of Holy Week (not including Sundays), so beginning Lent on the sixth Wednesday before Easter, Ash Wednesday. Liturgical dress is the simplest possible. Churches are kept bare of flowers and decoration. *Gloria in excelsis* is not used. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (*Laetare* or Refreshment Sunday) was allowed as a day of relief from the rigour of Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation almost always falls in Lent; these breaks from austerity are the background to the modern observance of Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

As Holy Week approaches, the atmosphere of the season darkens; the readings begin to anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death, and the reading of the Passion Narrative gave to the Fifth Sunday its name of Passion Sunday. There are many devotional exercises which may be used in Lent and Holy Week outside the set liturgy. The Stations of the Cross, made popular in the West by the Franciscans after they were granted custody of the Christian sites in the Holy Land, are the best known.

The Liturgy of Ash Wednesday

Structure

- ¶ The Gathering
- The Greeting
- Introduction
- The Collect
- ¶ The Liturgy of the Word
- Readings
- Gospel Reading
- Sermon
- ¶ The Liturgy of Penitence
- Self-examination and Confession
- Imposition of Ashes
- Absolution
- ¶ The Liturgy of the Sacrament
- The Peace
- Preparation of the Table
- Taking of the Bread and Wine
- The Eucharistic Prayer
- The Lord's Prayer
- Breaking of the Bread
- Giving of Communion
- Prayer after Communion
- ¶ The Dismissal
- Responsory
- The Dismissal Gospel
- The Blessing
- The Dismissal

The Liturgy of Ash Wednesday - A Penitential Eucharist

In the early church, when the candidates for baptism were instructed in Christian faith and the penitents prepared themselves, through fasting and penance, to be readmitted to communion, the whole Christian community was invited to join them in the process of study and repentance, the extension of which over forty days would remind them of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tested by Satan.



Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross.

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Spiritual Communion

The Prayer Book instructs us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', although we may be unable receive the sacrament physically in ourselves at this time. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;) From the Third Exhortation in the Book of Common Prayer. Making a Spiritual Communion is especially fitting when we cannot receive the sacrament at the great feasts of the Church, and it fulfils the duty of receiving Holy Communion 'regularly, and especially at the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whit Sunday.' (Canon B 15 of the Church of England).

Hymns

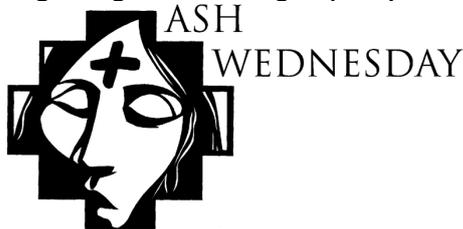
Forty days and forty nights
Just as I am without one plea
Jesu, lover of my soul
Lord Jesus think on me
Take up thy cross

Ash Wednesday

by Malcom Guite

Receive this cross of ash upon your brow,
Brought from the burning of Palm Sunday's cross.
The forests of the world are burning now
And you make late repentance for the loss.
But all the trees of God would clap their hands
The very stones themselves would shout and sing
If you could covenant to love these lands
And recognise in Christ their Lord and king.

He sees the slow destruction of those trees,
He weeps to see the ancient places burn,
And still you make what purchases you please,
And still to dust and ashes you return.
But Hope could rise from ashes even now
Beginning with this sign upon your brow.



Hymn: Forty days and forty nights

1. Forty days and forty nights
You were fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights,
Tempted, and yet undefiled.
2. Shall not we your sorrow share
And from worldly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Strong with you to suffer pain?
3. Then, if Satan on us press,
Flesh or spirit to assail,
Victor in the wilderness,
Grant we may not faint nor fail!
4. So shall we have peace divine;
Holier gladness ours shall be.
Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as served You faithfully.
5. Keep, O keep us, Savior dear,
Ever constant by your side,
That with you we may appear
At th'eternal Eastertide.

Meter: 77 77

Forty Days And Forty Nights
George Hunt Smyttan (1822 – 1870)
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AUS DER TIEFE (Heinlein)
traditional German

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

A reading from the Prophecy of Joel

¹ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near:

² a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them in ages to come.

¹² Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

¹⁴ Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the LORD, your God?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶ gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children, even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.

¹⁷ Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.

Let them say, 'Spare your people, O LORD,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
"Where is their God?"'

Joel 2.1-2,12-17

At the end the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Some verses from Psalm 51

The response to the Psalm is:

Response:

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ♦
according to the abundance of your compassion
blot out my offences.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness ♦
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I acknowledge my faults ♦
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned ♦
and done what is evil in your sight,
- 5 So that you are justified in your sentence ♦
and righteous in your judgement. **R**
- 6 I have been wicked even from my birth, ♦
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me ♦
and shall make me understand wisdom
in the depths of my heart.
- 8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; ♦
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, ♦
that the bones you have broken may rejoice. **R**
- 10 Turn your face from my sins ♦
and blot out all my misdeeds.
- 11 Make me a clean heart, O God, ♦
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence ♦
and take not your holy spirit from me.
- 13 Give me again the joy of your salvation ♦
and sustain me with your gracious spirit;

- 14 Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked ♦
and sinners shall return to you. **R**
- 15 Deliver me from my guilt, O God,
the God of my salvation, ♦
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.
- 16 O Lord, open my lips ♦
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- 17 For you desire no sacrifice, else I would give it; ♦
you take no delight in burnt offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; ♦
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. **R**

Psalm 51.1-18

Response:

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.

Second Reading

A reading from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians

²⁰We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

¹As we work together with him,
we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

²For he says,

'At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way,
so that no fault may be found with our ministry,

⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way:
through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,

⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger;

⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech,
and the power of God;

with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;

⁸in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;

⁹as unknown, and yet are well known;

as dying, and see – we are alive;

as punished, and yet not killed;

¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;

as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing,
and yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10

At the end the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn: Just As I Am Without One Plea

1. Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.
2. Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come.
3. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.
4. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.
5. Just as I am, thy love unknown
Hath broken every barrier down;
Now, to be thine, yea thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.
6. Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Meter: 88 86

Just As I Am Without One Plea

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Arthur Henry Brown (1830 – 1926)

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Gospel Reading

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
The Lord is a great God,
O that today you would listen to his voice.
Harden not your hearts.

All Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

When the Gospel is announced the reader says:

The Lord be with you.

All and also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew.

All Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples, ¹

‘Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

‘So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

Short Homily

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them. Jesus didn't like religion that was more about outward show than inward faithfulness. He came down hard on those who made sure of their piety was on show for all to see. Among his followers, there were to be no trumpets blowing when arms were given, no standing at the Street corner when praying, no looking dismal and fasting.

This was *hypocrisy* -- literally the wearing of a mask. Praying, fasting, giving to charity were all to be personal transactions between the believer in God.

What was at stake, and is at stake as we now enter lent, is the extraordinary ability that we have to turn even innately good actions into opportunities to promote ourselves, and to make ourselves look more important than we really are.

We might look at our culture's obsession with celebrity with a rather superior smile or sneering gaze, but the roots of our self-absorption are buried deep within us all. We long to be noticed, we long to be respected, to be appreciated, admired. We want our name on the door.

The essence of sin is probably addiction to self, and whether this is expressed outrageously or with the subtlety, it is a universal ailment. Beware, sin is a disease of the heart, it is not a minor blemish on the skin. The underlying problem of sin is exactly that, it is underlying; it is deep in our hearts and minds – It is less about the outward and more about the inward.

You can see it in the many expressions prefixed by 'self-':

Selfish, self-aggrandisement, self-centred, self-satisfied, self-opinionated, self-important, self-righteous, self-willed, and so on.

However, as Christians, we follow a man who laid that 'self' down, and in the words of St Paul to the Philippians a man who 'emptied himself... humbled himself... became obedient to

the point of death' (Philippians 2:7, 8).

Lent gives us the opportunity to examine how far we remain addicted to self and whether we have discovered that this addiction is like drinking saltwater: it is never satisfied. The only cure that I know, the only cure that I believe to exist, is to commit to the One whose service is perfect freedom. By carefully keeping these days of, Christians take to heart the call to repentance and the assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel, and so may grow in faith and in devotion to Christ. I invite you, therefore, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy word. Take up your Messiah and he will help you to put self aside. Amen

Intercessions

Lord, meet us in the silence

give us strength and hear our prayer.

The Liturgy of Penitence

Self-examination and Confession

A minister now leads a corporate examination of conscience:

Let us now call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God.

Silence is kept.

God the Father,

All **have mercy on us.**

God the Son,

All **have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit,

All **have mercy on us.**

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity of love,

All **have mercy on us.**

All **Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us.

We have not been true to the mind of Christ.

We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you, Lord ...

All our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Our anger at our own frustration

and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts
and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

All Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship
and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

All Lord, have mercy.

Accept our repentance, Lord ...

for the wrongs we have done,
for our blindness to human need and suffering,
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.

All Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgements,
for uncharitable thoughts towards our neighbours
and for our prejudice and contempt towards those who differ from us.

All Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation
and our lack of concern for those who come after us.

All Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

All Favourably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
that we may show your glory in the world.

All that we may show your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

All bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

Silence is kept.

**All We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**



**All Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

The Imposition of Ashes

Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.

Absolution for the unable to receive ashes

Father God,

give you true repentance;

(+) forgive you your sins of negligence and ignorance
and your deliberate sins;

and grant us all the grace of the Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word.

Amen

Offertory Hymn: Jesu, Lover of my Soul

1. Jesu, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.
2. Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone, still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing.
3. Plenteous grace with Thee is found, grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound; make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart; rise to all eternity.

Meter: 77 77 D.

Jesu, Lover of my Soul
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Aberystwyth

Joseph Parry (1841 – 1903)
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Post Communion Hymn: Lord Jesus, Think on Me

1. Lord Jesus, think on me,
and purge away my sin;
from earth born passions set me free,
and make me pure within.
2. Lord Jesus, think on me,
with care and woe opprest;
let me thy loving servant be,
and taste thy promised rest.
3. Lord Jesus, think on me
amid the battle's strife;
in all my pain and misery
be thou my health and life.
4. Lord Jesus, think on me,
nor let me go astray;
through darkness and perplexity
point thou the heav'nly way.
5. Lord Jesus, think on me,
when flows the tempest high:
when on doth rush the enemy,
O Saviour, be thou nigh.
6. Lord Jesus, think on me,
that, when the flood is past,
I may th'eternal brightness see,
and share thy joy at last.

Meter: SM

Lord Jesus, Think on Me

Bishop Synesius (375 – 430)

Tr: Allen William Chatfield (1808 – 1896)

‘Μνωεο Χριστε (Μνωεο Christe)’

ST PAUL'S

John Stainer (1840-1901)

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Prayer after Communion

Silence is kept.

Almighty God,
you have given your only Son to be for us
both a sacrifice for sin
and also an example of godly life:
give us grace
that we may always most thankfully receive
these his inestimable gifts,
and also daily endeavour
to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **God of our pilgrimage,
you have fed us with the bread of heaven.
Refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The Dismissal

Responsory

This is love, not that we loved God,
All **but that he loved us and sent his Son.**

He is the sacrifice for our sins,
All **that we might live through him.**

If God loves us so much
All **we ought to love one another.**

If we love one another
All **God lives in us.**

cf I John 4.10-12

The Dismissal Gospel

Min Please Stand

The Lord be with you
All **and also with you.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them,
'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

Luke 15.4-7

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Closing HYMN Take Up Thy Cross, The Saviour Said

1. Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
If thou wouldst My disciple be;
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me.
2. Take up thy cross, let not its weight
Fill thy weak spirit with alarm;
His strength shall bear thy spirit up,
And brace thy heart and nerve thine arm.
3. Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,
Nor let thy foolish pride rebel;
Thy Lord for thee the cross endured,
And saved thy soul from death and hell.
4. Take up thy cross then in His strength,
And calmly sin's wild deluge brave,
'Twill guide thee to a better home,
It points to glory o'er the grave.
5. Take up thy cross and follow Christ,
Nor think til death to lay it down;
For only those who bear the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown.
6. To Thee, great Lord, the One in Three,
All praise forevermore ascend:
O grant us in our home to see
The heavenly life that knows no end.

Meter: LM

Take up thy cross, the Saviour said

Charles William Everest (1814 – 1877)

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BRESLAU

Anon in *Hymnodus Sacer*

Arr. Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

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Poem

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Music

Opening Voluntary:

O For A Heart To Praise My God Lyrics

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Hymns

Forty Days And Forty Nights

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AUS DER TIEFE (Heinlein)

traditional German

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Just As I Am Without One Plea

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Jesu, Lover of my Soul

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Joseph Parry (1841 – 1903)

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All rights reserved **Lord Jesus, Think on Me**

Bishop Synesius (375 – 430)

Tr: Allen William Chatfield (1808 – 1896)

‘Μνωεο Χριστε (Μηνωεο Christe)’

ST PAUL’S

John Stainer (1840-1901)

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Take up thy cross, the Saviour said

Charles William Everest (1814 – 1877)

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BRESLAU

Anon in *Hymnodus Sacer*

Arr. Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

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Closing Voluntary

Johann Sebastian Bach – **Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor** (BWV 582) is one of his most important and well-known works. Believed to be written early in his career it had a great influence on 19th and 20th century composers, including Robert Schumann, who described the passacaglia’s variations as “intertwined so ingeniously that one can never cease to be amazed.”

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