

The aim of these four Holy Week meditations, which I have called 'Music of the Passion' is to give sufficient background on four relatively short pieces of music that throw some light on aspects of the suffering of Jesus, so that they can help us to enter into those experiences. They are not meant to be teachings, let alone fully worked-out theology, but they are intended to give all hearers space in which to try and comprehend what Jesus took on himself for our sakes.

Tonight's piece is the seventh section of Josef Haydn's 'Seven Last Words from the Cross'. Entitled *Consummatum est* – It is Accomplished, it offers a sense of resolution to the torment Jesus has experienced, and also gives a sense of peace and fulfilment amid the tears. As in a number of the other movements, there is a downward, dropping movement to the melodic themes, intended to symbolise the slow dropping of tears, and the sorrow evoked in the hearer.

Haydn was commissioned to write this piece for a Good Friday service in Cadiz, and the original setting for small orchestra proved so popular that his publisher requested him to produce a reduction for string quartet, which is what we will hear this evening: on Good Friday evening there is a chance to hear the whole work performed live in this church by the Septimus Quartet. The priest who commissioned the work from Haydn sent his payment in a most unusual fashion – Haydn was sent a cake, which when cut was discovered to be filled with gold coins.

We will hear the movement played by the Casals Quartet. When I disappear in a moment I will read a short excerpt from the Passion according to Saint John, containing the words *consummatum est*, and then play the music. You may wish to choose some part of the church to focus on while this is happening, or look at the Lent array with its symbols of the Passion, or simply close your eyes and

contemplate a mental image or nothing at all while considering the intensity of the music and the intensity of what Jesus was prepared to go through for our sake. I will then conclude with a prayer written to accompany contemplation and reflection on this piece of music.

Jn 19.28-30

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Music played

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbTnsArmvuw> (the version as heard in church can be found in this recording of the whole composition:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN4gS7f-9bU>)

Jesus, you saw your mission through to the end
so that you could call out to us and to the Father
that in your death you accomplished
the salvation of the world.

May I persevere with the call you have given me,
whatever the cost;
and may I always be grateful
for all you have accomplished for me

at so great a cost. Amen

PC, 26th March 2024