



Worth Abbey

ORGAN VOLUNTARIES

February 2021

In the present time when mass sheets will not be printed details of the organ voluntaries will be posted a month at a time on the Parish website in this PDF form.

During current circumstances we have to forego the major voluntaries which would normally conclude the masses; instead we will have shorter pieces that offer cover for the procession to leave the altar (hence the alternative word of 'Recessional' to the more usual 'Voluntary') and for those attending to leave the Abbey as required. As such these offerings form a kind of musical exclamation mark, or full stop, marking the conclusion of the service; a brief burst of joy or a dramatic gesture affirming what has happened... (The music for the Entrance, Offertory and Communion, which are frequently improvised and dependant on whether a cantor(s) are singing, are not necessarily detailed here.)

LENT MEDITATIONS: We will continue our established pattern during Lent that recessionals be replaced by Lenten Meditations, pieces chosen specifically to reflect the thoughts of the season. It is hoped those who wish to leave without listening to these will do so quietly so as not to ruin the peace for those who wish to have 3-5 minutes reflection and allow the music to given them space.

Saturday 6 & Sunday 7

Communion

Chorale Prelude: Adoro Te

Dom Sebastian Wolff, OSB (b. 1929)

Recessional

Allegro con brio (from Sonata in B flat, Op.65 No.4)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1947)

A member of the community since 1948, Dom Sebastian Wolff was until very recently the Organist of Buckfast Abbey. He has written a fair amount of organ music and is heard today in his prelude on *Adoro te* ('Devoutly I adore Thee hidden deity'). This Eucharistic hymn by St Thomas Aquinas is used in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and is also heard on Maundy Thursday.

Mendelssohn's six organ sonatas were the result of a commission from the London publishers Coventry & Hollier. Their content was not music; he actually selected 24 single pieces he had already written (between 1844 and 1845), brushing them up and organising them into 'suites'. Asked to perform the completed set in Birmingham in 1846, he declined the invitation on account that he felt the key action of the organ was too heavy! By this stage, Mendelssohn had already weakened himself through almost manic working which had taken a toll on his nerves and physique; ill-health had, by this time, begun to take its price. He died the following year. We hear the opening movement of the fourth sonata: as its name implies, it is a bright work, radiating the optimism and energy that so characterises Mendelssohn's ever-delightful music.

Saturday 13 & Sunday 14

Communion

Choral-paraphrase: Attende Domine

Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968)

Recessional

Carillon de Longpont, Op.31 No.21

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

The legendary Jeanne Demessieux, was the first internationally famous woman organist. Born a hundred years ago on February 13, she remains one of the most famous figures among the instrument's titans. Aside from a remarkable concert career, she became organist of Saint-Ésprit in Paris at 13: appointed Organiste-titulaire of the Madeleine in 1962 until her death from cancer at the age of 47 was a great tragedy. Her beautiful setting of the *Attende Domine* ('Look down and have mercy on me, O Lord') is a chant often referred to as the Lent Prose: it expresses much of her personal faith.

Vierne's *Carillon de Longpont* comes from his 1913 collection of '24 Pieces for organ or harmonium'. It is a vigorous musical piece based, as its name implies, on the carillon of the chapel of the Chateau in Longpont: the carillon theme is heard thundered out in the bass supporting joyful chords in a work of celebratory mood. French musicians have long had a fascination with bells and carillons...

Ash Wednesday Wednesday 17

Offertory	Verset sur l'Adoro te	<i>Léon Boëllmann (1862-1897)</i>
Voluntary	Chorale Prelude: Aus tiefer Not, Op.135A/4	<i>Max Reger (1873-1916)</i>

A devoutly Catholic man, the complicated genius Reger wrote several collections of preludes on chorales, works significantly more simple than his numerous and treacherously demanding virtuoso masterpieces and character pieces. Written in 1914, his Op.135b is a collection of 30 of these preludes of which this setting of the 1524 Lutheran chorale 'Out of the depths have I called unto Thee' is the fourth. Luther wrote the text paraphrasing Psalm 130, and the hymn itself was one of eight in the first Lutheran hymnal. The chorale text itself calls people God to hear the voice of the repentant sinner; called the 'De Profundis', it is often used by Catholics at burial services: Luther assigned it to, but assigned it to the Sacrament of Penance. Reger sets the chorale plainly, unadorned in short solo phrases in the tenor; these are then answered in turn by modal harmonisations.

Written by the Italian St Thomas Aquinas, the words of the *Adoro te* are poetically beautiful: 'O Godhead hid, devoutly I adore Thee, Who truly art within the forms before me; To Thee my heart I bow with bended knee, As failing quite in contemplating Thee.' The simple but warmly harmonised setting by Boëllmann, Organist of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in Paris, comes from a collection of pieces he wrote in 1890.

LENT I Saturday 20 & Sunday 21

Communion	Chorale Prelude: Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein, BWV641	
Lent Meditation	Chorale Prelude: Ich ruf zur dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639	<i>J. S. Bach (1685-1750)</i>

Two meditation preludes from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* ('Little Organ Book'): all the 46 preludes in the collection were written between 1708 and 1707 and follow the plan of the church's liturgical year in sequence. The collection has formed the musical rock of every serious organ student because, aside from its purely aesthetic beauties, Bach explore so many diverse technical matters in the preludes that it offers a compendium of organ playing styles and learning in mostly simple settings. (However, although Bach did plan to write a total of 146 preludes, he never realised them.)

The two we hear today concern supplication; in both the chorales are presented ornamented in the soprano line.

'When in our hour of utmost need' presents the chorale highly decorated over a rather austere and slow backcloth of straight harmony. By contrast the second chorale, 'Lord, hear the voice of my complaint... Let not my heart grow faint But deign Thy grace to send me / True faith from Thee, my God, I seek...' is more complicated: a work of tortured angst and despair, in the key so often used by Bach for its 'painful' tonality – F minor. There are three different musical lines: the plaintive (gently embellished) chorale melody is heard in the right hand and portrays both lament and supplication. The more fluid, weaving left hand is heavily weighted by the throbbing pedal-line seems to express both the weight of man's sin, and the painful path walked by Christians along the road to salvation. A work whose impact belies its simplicity.

LENT II Saturday 27 & Sunday 28

Communion	Au Saint-Ésprit, Op.24 / 4	<i>Rolande Falcinelli (1920-2006)</i>
Lent Meditation	Chorale Prelude: Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BWV658	<i>J. S. Bach (1685-1750)</i>

Rolande Falcinelli, one of France's great organists, was appointed Organist of the Sacré-Cœur in 1946: she was the first woman appointed to a major Parisian church. For many years Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire, she was also a remarkable composer. She wrote her *Petit Livres des Prières* ('Small Book of Prayers') when appointed to the Sacré-Cœur, and was surely inspired by the church's remarkable atmosphere: her meditation *To the Holy Spirit* is personal and intimate evocation, the flexibility of which evokes the intangible Holy Spirit.

Bach's prelude expresses man's fear of straying from God; the text of the chorale speaks about the worry of temptation enticing one away from salvation and inherent spiritual weakness as much as it does of faith in God's unswerving constancy.

"From God I do not wish to turn, for he does not abandon me. He leads me in the straight way, for without Him I would go astray. He offers his hand to me in the evening and in the morning. He takes care of me wherever I find myself."

