

5. 3. 70

29. 3. 73

21. 3. 74

London's 91 location

TAPE - Ps 90
Schwan

SUNDAY LENT PREFACE

(Marked
RHK-PAW)

That prayer is the special Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass for the Sundays of Lent. It's one of the new ones, and is worth reflecting on a little for the way it expresses the meaning of Lent and the spirit of our thanksgiving in the celebration of Mass during this season. There's one phrase in it, in particular, which may cause surprise because it's so different from the more recent notion most of us grew up on, that Lent was a dreary, gloomy time. We proclaim, in this prayer, that God our Father bids us prepare with joy for the paschal feast. With joy? Yes, that's what it says. When you think of it, isn't this just what got lost in the old 'strict' Lent - for most people anyway. The stress on physical fasting had made the note of privation perhaps more important in people's minds than the purpose of it all, despite the reminder given by the Church at the beginning of each Lent in having us listen to these words of Isaiah: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, ... the glory of the Lord shall be with you. Then shall you call, and the Lord will answer." Fasting, in Christian tradition has not been exclusively associated with daily penance - the note of joyful anticipation is there too; and that is what's been re-found and stressed in the Sunday Lenten Preface. After all, we have the joy of Christ's

RHK
PAW-22

Poulenc
4 motets
(RHK-ERA(6)7)

presence, of His being risen to new life for us: Lent was never a make-believe that this somehow hadn't happened yet. At the same time we do recognise the need to cleanse our hearts and prepare for the fullest celebration of the paschal feast at Easter, and in the final Kingdom of God. That's why we pray that our observance of Lent may make us more fervent in prayer, more generous in works of charity, more eager in celebrating the saving mysteries of Christ for us. While we always and everywhere give thanks to God, the particular causes of thanksgiving change from season to season in the liturgical celebration, focusing in turn on different aspects of what God in His love has done for us in Christ. The meaning of our Baptism into His dying & rising to new life, and what our dedication to Christ calls for in the way we live - this is one of the major themes of Lent. And each Sunday's scripture highlights an important feature of these realities and their links with the Passion of Christ we celebrate. / For a prayer is music today, here's one of a set of 4 motets for a time of repentance, by the modern French composer Francis Poulenc - the first one, Tirion et Tirion. Before Easter I intend to let you hear the other 3 as well. MUSIC

the extract from the setting of Ps 129 (De profundis) by Poulenc

PRAYERS

God's initiative and care, and His continuing faithfulness in saving His people, despite their ingratitude and forgetfulness; His mercy even when His will has been ignored and his people are suffering the consequences of their own folly; the extent to which, despite all this, His love for mankind ^{will go} and His will for all men freely to come to share His life and happiness - these are the ideas the Church wants to ^{among}

remind us of and educate us in, in the selection of scripture chosen for next Sund.,
 the text of this season properly for Easter. ^{For instance,} The exile of the people of Israel in
 captivity in Babylon, and later their release and return to Jerusalem were salutary
 experiences for them - recognizing their unfaithfulness and wickedness, they became
 afraid that God wd. deservingly abandon them, that He wd. no more be with them and
 their prayer and sacrifice unavailing. But His mercy and compassion did remain
 with them, a grace freely given because He is God. There is another liberation
 and return from exile, though, besides the one the O.T. Chronicles tells about.
 St John describes it: "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever
 believes in Him shd. not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world,
 not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him." The Son
 of man wd. be lifted up, in dying on the cross and rising to return to His Father's
 side, that whoever believes in him might have eternal life. St John calls Christ the
 light that has come into the world, that can be seen by everybody, that shows up
 what is in man and his activity, demanding a choice between hiding away in the
 comfortable darkness of self-isolation or welcoming the presence of God into our lives.
 The Faith in Christ who has shown us the depth of God's love and mercy is how God
 saves us and makes us alive together with Christ - faith which is itself a grace, a
 gift of God given us, offered to us, not because of anything we've done or can do to
 deserve it but because God is love and will remain faithful to His purposes;
 it's we who can be un-faith-ful, un-grace-ful: the prayer of Lent is intended to
 keep this breath alive in our minds & hearts.