

TAPE: Alleluin (Stravinski)

EASTER PREFACE

In a very short time now those three astronauts who are on everyone's mind today will be having to make a critical attempt to change their course to avoid shooting past the earth, and tragedy. Their own high degree of training and the vast skill and resources of a huge team of scientists & technicians using their best efforts will ensure that everything humanly possible today will be done to bring them safely back to earth. Yet, there is a doubt and a danger of failure. And so, people pray for their safe return, that despite all the unforeseen happenings, things will turn out right in the end. The danger & the risk has been there all the time, but until something actually went wrong people took for granted the reliability of modern science and technology. But now, we're not so sure, and we pray, together with people all over the world whose imagination, interest and sympathy has been caught by the waiting drama whose end is a matter of life and death for those three men — and we don't yet know which it will be. I'm sure, as you listen to the latest news bulletins, that you are praying for the astronauts, and for all the men and women on whose skills & decisions their lives depend, praying for the guidance of God's goodness and wisdom in their human efforts which have suddenly seemed so fallible and insufficient of themselves. It didn't require Midday Prayer, either, to remind us to pray for the wives and families of the three men, for those who are dear to them and who love them — not only that their husbands, fathers, sons and friends will soon return safely to them, but also that in their anxiety and apprehension they

may experience the strength, encouragement and comfort of God's care given to them. If it has taken a mishap in space to remind us to pray fervently these few days, that does not affect the sincerity of our prayer, though we might offer a prayer of thanks to God that He has recalled for us our need to pray for one another, even strangers. These men and their families may not now be complete strangers, because newspapers, radio and television have somehow brought them close to us and into our homes. They have captured our attention because they're so different from the rest of men, their plight so unique. But they're certainly not the only people whose lives are in danger today — does it really need the wide publicity of modern news-media, or the fact that these men were trying to do something that's been only done twice before, to awaken us to awareness of the needs of others, the need to pray for them? Isn't there something odd that it takes a shattering event to bring people to their knees in prayer to God? How many of us have prayed in thanksgiving to God for the achievements of the human spirit He created, in for instance the launching of Apollo 13 last Sunday, or the successful mission of the two previous moon-slots? We pray now, and sincerely: let us pray also for those who ridiculed and objected to the prayers of the astronauts themselves, for those who will prevent children from praying in school when there is no crisis to remind a nation that "in God we trust" must mean more than turning to God in desperation when everything else has seemed to fail. But let us also ask God's pardon for our own neglect and forgetfulness of them, as we listen to an Easter motet by Orlando



Notes on Apollo Lassus, the divine office responsory "Christus Resurgit", Christ rising from death now dies  
(R25) no more - death has no more power over Him. MUSIC - PRAYERS.

I suppose

people who go in for superstitions of one kind and other will have had their beliefs confirmed by the failure of Apollo 13, even if there are no further failings to this effort - especially the "unlucky 13" brigade. It's strange what a whole cult of superstition and astrology this scientific age has lived - once more, has happened with the ancient Greeks too, the glorification of reason and science has produced the strangest unreason and ignorance, not seldom in the very people who are so proud of their reasonableness and wisdom. Belief in God, Christian faith can be dismissed as superstition, unnecessary & out-of-date on the one hand while at the same time all sorts of refuges and guidance and reliance are sought & put upon gods of men's own making. Small wonder there is such confusion in the world and in men's minds. But have we who do believe in God entirely abandoned false gods of our own making? Have we really given to the world a convincing witness of the faith we have? Or have we only prayed when things haven't gone according to our plans, the way we want, expect or hope them to go? A recent book bore a striking ~~title~~ <sup>title</sup> Prayers as a Political Problem - perhaps it's not so far from the heart of the matter, in our modern world and its confusions, wrongs and woes, to say that the basic problem is the question of Prayer, the recognition of God, who He is, and despite the brilliance - glory of human achievements our utter dependence on Him alone.