

30.3.69
27.3.72 ✓
16.4.73 ✓

Salvator Mundi (Tuller)
RHM L015/E/50
(Lauds 91: 2nd)
(RS 268)

"Look down, we pray you Lord, on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be betrayed and to be given into the hands of wicked men and suffer the torment of the cross."

Holy Week begins with the thought of the sufferings and death of Jesus, which we listened to yesterday in the reading of the Passion from St Matthew's gospel. [During this week, at Mass, you can hear also St Mark's and St Luke's account;] and on Friday, in the solemn liturgy to mark the hour of Christ's death for us on Calvary, St John's narrative of the Passion. In all four gospels, these events of what St John calls 'the hour of Jesus' are the central facts: the gospels have been called 'Passion narratives', with some introductory material. And if you read carefully the accounts St Luke gives in the Acts of the Apostles of the first preaching about Christ, you'll notice that it very much centres on the fact of Christ being rejected, crucified and rising from death. Only afterwards were other details of His life brought in, in connection with the teaching He gave and the signs of divine power He made. The Christian mystery, and Christian life, centre on the person of Christ and what He did for mankind in dying and rising again, rather than in a set of teachings or on a moral code (no these there are too); ^{people still think they're all the same, it's about} it's this week, in prayer and public worship, in reading and meditating the good news of Christ's Passion - Resurrection, that we are faced with the realities on which our faith is based, and celebrate together what it means to be a Christian, to be assimilated to Christ in His passing through human suffering and death to a new risen life. Some of the most moving religious music has been inspired by the Passion - some of the greatest art - and some of the best spiritual writing. ^{This is a week to savour these.} Sympathising with someone (in the original and fullest meaning of

that word) is a very personal thing - it means suffering with, feeling with the most intimate emotions of another; and that demands a real knowing of a person, who must always remain somehow mysterious, yet with whom one can always feel more and more deeply. It's easy to see why Christian piety has paid so much attention to the suffering of Christ, knowing that what He underwent was entirely for our sakes, for all of sinful mankind, to open the way for us, through His love, to the friendship of God forever. Christ's emptying of Himself, His humiliation only for us, will always be the greatest mystery of human and divine love the world has ever seen; it's for each of us, in this Holy Week, to try to understand, to enter into the heart of Jesus as we hear again the gospel story of His passion and death. Let us ask, in our prayers today, and this week to our risen Lord who remains with us, that He will help us to understand, and to realise what our sins and sinfulness really mean which caused Him such agony and pain because He loves us so much. ^{of Holy Week, the} From the (Good Friday) Liturgy, ^{the} Reproaches addressed us by God: || O my people, what is it I have done unto thee? How have I grieved thee? Answer me. Holy art thou, O God: Holy art thou O mighty one: Holy art thou, O immortal One: have mercy on us" MUSIC

RHM
note for the book

(Victoria: Populi
New)
(R.47)

PRAYERS

It may be so well to say that our contemplation of Christ in His Passion must never become a self-pity or a self-torture. It should lead to a greater personal knowledge and love of Our Lord, and be our inspiration in living a life which is totally centred on Him. This is a very personal affair; but we don't live isolated lives, completely independent of each other - we find Christ today in all our fellow-men

in their needs and joys and sorrows, their suffering. The passion of Christ continues today in His members who are suffering, from whatever cause. And our prayer and contemplation this week should lead us to find Him in them. We also must pray and worship together, socially, as Christians — and this is what the liturgy is. But don't expect the liturgy of these days to supply the personal intimacy with Christ in His Passion which each of us must find for himself & herself in private meditation and prayer. Perhaps this is why people sometimes find the Holy Week liturgy unsatisfying, remote — forgetting (or not knowing) what its function is as a public ceremony and community celebration. [think of the difference between a marriage ceremony and the personal feeling for one another of the bride & groom]. We come together later this week to celebrate all the facets of what Christ has done for us in redeeming us. Clearly, these community celebrations, on Thursday of His last Supper, on Friday of His death on the cross, on Saturday night of His Passover, liberating us, in His rising from death — these will be the more meaningful, the more deeply moving in as much as each of us comes to them with a personal knowledge and love of Christ in our hearts. And this is what Holy Week should lead us to, when we celebrate in joy at Easter His presence, alive, among us.

On Saturday, in "Words & Music" at midday, I shall take up this theme again; then, in Monday, midday prayer in April we will reflect and pray together on the joy of Christ risen from death for us.