

Music Notes for February 25, 2024

The service music during Lent includes the Presentation Hymn (“What shall I render unto you, O God”, listen [here](#)), the Sanctus by David Hurd, one of the preeminent Black composers of the Episcopal Church (listen [here](#)), and the Fraction Anthem (“Christ our Passover, listen [here](#)). The Psalms during Lent will be sung using simple congregational antiphons, mostly composed by me, with verses sung by the choir to traditional plainsong chants. The psalms will be sung *a capella*, with a sample bell accompaniment to give the pitches.

The service today opens with the Decalogue, a recitation of the Ten Commandments. The inclusion of the Decalogue in the Prayer Book began in 1552. After praying the Lord’s Prayer and the Collect for Purity, the priest would stand and turn to the congregation, reading each commandment, and the people responding “*Lord, have mercye upon us, and encline our heartes to kepe this lawe.*” The Decalogue was a required part of the liturgy at one time, though in our current Prayer Book designates it as an optional part of the Eucharist. We are including it again this year to emphasize the penitential nature of the season of Lent. A cantor chants the commandments, and the congregation responds with the sung response, “Amen. Lord have mercy” to a setting from Healy Willan’s *Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena* (listen [here](#)).

The sequence hymn today is “Take up your cross,” based on the words of today’s Gospel lesson.

Today’s anthem is “Give me Jesus,” an old spiritual that reflects the mixing of white hymnody with the songs of enslaved Africans. Despite its uncertain origins, the hymn was much beloved by African-American congregations.

The music during communion during Lent will be Taizé-style chants. Today’s is “*Confitemini, Domine,*” translated as “Fill our hearts with your peace.”

The closing hymn is “In the cross of Christ, I glory.” This hymn was probably inspired by Galatians 6:14: “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (ESV). The first stanza expands on this verse, while the second and third stanzas deal with the meaning of the cross in times of pain and pleasure, and the peace and joy it brings regardless of circumstance. The fourth stanza summarizes the previous ones.

The prelude is a brief piece by the famous Belgian composer Joseph Jongen. The postlude is an arrangement of “*Dona nobis pacem,*” by the American composer Martha Sobaje, Minister of Music at Phillips Memorial Baptist Church in Cranston, Rhode Island.