

LLANDUDNO

Cylchgrawn Plwyf
Parish Magazine



30p

March 2008

Services

Holy Trinity Church, Mostyn Street

Sundays

- 8.00 am Holy Eucharist
- 10.30 am Sung Eucharist (1st, 3rd & 4th Sundays)
- Matins followed by shortened Eucharist (2nd Sunday)
- Combined Matins and Eucharist (5th Sunday)
- 5.00 pm Evening Prayer
- 6.00 pm Exploring Worship - in Church Hall (2nd Sunday)

Weekdays

- 8.30 am Morning Prayer (Tue, Wed & Thurs)
- Holy Eucharist with Morning Prayer (Fri)
- 9.00 am Holy Eucharist (Wed)
- 11.00 am Holy Eucharist (Thurs & Major Saints' Days)
- Holy Eucharist in Welsh (Sat)
- 5.00 pm Evening Prayer (Tue, Wed, Thurs & Fri)

St Tudno's Church Great Orme

- 9.00 am Morning Prayer (Sat)
- 11.00 am Open Air Service (Sun from end of May to end of September)
- On the first Sunday of each month, the service is followed by a shortened Eucharist in the church.

The pattern of Sunday and Weekday services sometimes changes. Please check the calendar in each month's magazine and the weekly bulletin.

The Rector is in Holy Trinity Church on most Saturday mornings from 11.30 - 12.00 to see parishioners on any matter – for confessions, spiritual guidance, the booking of baptisms or weddings etc.

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www.llandudno-parish.org.uk

The deadline for copy for any edition is the 7th of the previous month. Please leave copy in box near pulpit in Holy Trinity Church or e-mail:

editor@llandudno-parish.org.uk

Copy may be on disk, printed or handwritten.

A Letter from the Rectory

The race to succeed George Bush as President of the United States of America has been fascinating to watch over the last month or so. The American system of primaries and caucuses, 'super Tuesdays' and the like, all leading up to the conventions of the two major parties at which the candidates are finally chosen is quite unlike anything we are used to in British elections but all the more interesting for that. It's a long road ahead until the actual election for the President takes place in November.



In fact I'm getting quite frustrated that I will have no vote in this election! As I'm not an American citizen I could hardly expect to have one of course. But on the other hand the President of the United States makes decisions which will most certainly affect my life and the lives of non-Americans throughout the world, so it sometimes feels as though we should all have a say in the Presidential election.

I can't imagine why anyone would actually want to hold such an office with all the terrible responsibilities that go with it. The need to make decisions involving war and peace affecting millions of people would keep me awake all night and drive me mad! But someone has to do it. Let's hope and pray that the person who is eventually sworn in next Janu-

ary will have a real concern for justice and fairness for all the people of the world and will have a sensible strategy to cope with the major problems facing our world, problems like climate change, terrorism and tense international relationships. The new President will need the Wisdom of Solomon!

One thing the incoming President will soon discover is that despite holding the most powerful position in the world, there are many situations both in America in the wider world which he cannot control. The power any politician can exercise, especially in a democratic country is limited.

In the Gospel accounts of Our Lord's Passion we see how a powerful figure like Pontius Pilate, with the full authority of Rome behind him, is forced, very much against his better judgement to authorize the crucifixion of Christ. He has to exercise political expediency to avoid trouble from the Jewish authorities. His power, like that of today's American President is limited in all kinds of ways.

When we look at Christ's Passion where in fact do we find true power? It certainly isn't in the figure of Pontius Pilate. Nor is it with the Jewish leaders. For the Gospel writers the true power in this situation lies with the

figure of Christ. Yes, it seems as if Pilate and the Sanhedrin are in control, but their power is illusory. Yes it seems as if Christ is powerless, nothing but a humiliated victim. But scratch below the surface of things and the positions are reversed. True power is to be seen in the person of Christ.

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than at the moment in St John's account of the passion in which Jesus, comes out wearing his crown of thorns and purple cloak, a parody of an earthly king, covered in lacerations from his flogging, bleeding and dirty. 'Ecco homo' says Pilate, 'Here is the man'. To those present he was weak, humiliated, finished. But to those with the eye of faith this is a moment of real glory for him. St John doesn't wait until the resurrection to proclaim Christ's glory. He sees it here in this moment of Christ's showing: 'Here is the man'. He sees it as Jesus dies on the cross, and cries out: 'It is accomplished' – a cry of triumph not

failure. At his showing and on his Cross Our Lord shows forth a mighty power, the power of love and sacrifice.

All I can say is that I'm glad beyond words that ultimate authority and power lays with this Man and not with any politician, President or Prime Minister however worthy they may be. As we celebrate Holy Week and Easter together may we see more clearly than ever the power of love revealed in Christ crucified and risen and learn to put our trust more firmly in him.

With my prayers and blessing for Holy Week and Easter.

Fr John

the
Risen
Christ

Rector's Notes

Confirmation

We have arranged for a Confirmation service to be held on Sunday November 16th. Preparation for both Junior and adult candidates will begin in September, though we may call a preliminary meeting before the summer holiday period begins. Watch this space for further details.

Sad news

We were distressed to hear of the death of Mandy Edwards, daughter of Angela & Doug Pritchard and mum to Ben and David. We send them the assurance of our prayers and love at this time.

Calendar for March

Sat 1st	St David, Patron of Wales 11 am Bilingual Eucharist
Sun 2nd	Fourth Sunday of Lent (Mothering Sunday) Services at the usual times. 10.30 am Family Eucharist
Tues 4th	10 am <i>A Pilgrimage of Prayer (Cytûn Lent activity) at Stella Maris</i>
Weds 5th	7 pm <i>Compline & Address in the Hospital Chapel</i>
Thurs 6th	10 am Guild of St Raphael meeting 11 am Eucharist with Ministry of Healing
Sat 8th	10 am Parish Quiet Day at the Loreto Centre (see below) Ends at 3.30 pm
Sun 9th	Fifth Sunday of Lent Services at the usual times
Weds 12th	7 pm Compline & Address in the Hospital Chapel
Sun 16th Palm Sunday – Sun 23rd Easter Day For services for Holy Week and Easter please see opposite	
Sun 30th	Second Sunday of Easter Services at the usual times
Mon 31st	Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary 11 am Eucharist

Parish Quiet Day for Lent

'The Foolishness of God'

The Loreto Centre, Saturday 8th March, 10 am - 3.30 pm

Leader: The Revd Rex Matthias

Vicar of Betwys-yn-Rhos & Petryal

Come and share in a peaceful day of preparation for Holy Week & Easter. There will be a small charge to cover costs.

Please put your name on the list at the back of church if you wish to come.

Holy Week & Easter – an explanation of the services

Palm Sunday (The liturgical colour is red for the passion)

There are two main elements in the traditional service for Palm Sunday:

1. The Palm Procession – Hosanna to the Son of David.

This is the commemoration of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem and it consists of the reading of the Gospel account of this event followed by the blessing of Palms and the Palm Procession (sometimes led by a donkey).

2. The Eucharist.

The Eucharist proper moves away from the events of the triumphal entry and begins the Church's solemn commemoration of the Passion. The normal Gospel reading is replaced by the reading of the accounts of the Passion. Often this is done in a dramatized way with several people playing the various parts and the congregation taking the role of the crowd etc.

Monday – Wednesday (the liturgical colour is red)

There are no special liturgies for these days. The Eucharist is celebrated and there may be devotions such as Stations of the Cross in which we follow Christ on his 'via dolorosa' (way of sorrows) to Calvary by moving around

the church from one 'station' to the next recalling the various events which either the Gospels record or people have imagined might have happened.

Maunday (or Holy) Thursday (the liturgical colour is White)

Traditionally there are two main celebrations of the Eucharist. In the morning the diocesan clergy gather in the Cathedral for the 'Chrism Mass'. During this service the clergy renew their ordination vows and the Bishop blesses the holy oils

In the evening the 'Mass of the Last Supper' is celebrated. This service commemorates Christ's institution of the Eucharist. After the address the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet is enacted reminding us of Christ's action in washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper as a lesson that they must love one another.

After Communion the joy of the Eucharist gives way to desolation mirroring the events which took place as soon as Jesus and the disciples left the upper room. The church is stripped of all its ornaments leaving it bare and desolate. A silent vigil of prayer is then kept at an 'altar of repose' as we seek to watch with Christ as he goes through the agony of Gethsemane and faces arrest and trial.

Good Friday (the liturgical colour is red)

On this day the church remains stripped of all ornaments and devotional items. Anglicans have often kept this day with devotional services of prayers, meditations, musical items and hymns sometimes lasting for the 'three last hours' of Christ's time on the cross. In modern times there in many places ecumenical processions of witness. The main service of the day however is the **Liturgy of the Passion** – sometimes known by Anglicans as the 'Ante-Communion'. This may consist of: 1) A ministry of the word which includes the reading of the Passion from St John's Gospel; 2) The solemn prayers of Good Friday or the Litany; 3) A devotion to the Cross – often using a large cross or crucifix as a focus for devotion, which is brought in or unveiled at this point. 4) Some churches (not Holy Trinity at present) also give Communion from the reserved sacrament (the Eucharist itself is not usually celebrated on Good Friday). To emphasis the solemn character of the day the organ is only used to accompany hymns and no blessing is given.

Holy Saturday (or Easter Eve)
(Not to be confused with Easter Saturday – the Saturday after Easter)

This is a 'non-liturgical' day – and apart from the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer has no services because we are waiting for the resurrection. However

in the evening (or sometimes in the early morning of Easter Day) is celebrated the **Easter Vigil** or **Easter Liturgy**. The Vigil part of the service consists of a number of readings, psalms and prayers in a darkened church. This is preceded or followed by the kindling of the new fire, the lighting of the Easter Candle, the singing of the Exultet (a special Easter chant) and the proclamation of the resurrection with organ playing, the ringing of bells etc. Water for baptism is blessed and the congregation are then invited to renew their baptismal vows. In some churches this is followed by the First Eucharist of Easter, in others the service ends at this point with the first Eucharist delayed until Easter morning.

(In our parish the Vigil takes place at St Tudno and the Easter Candle is then taken to Holy Trinity where it is solemnly brought into church in the procession at the beginning of the Choral Eucharist).

Easter Day (The liturgical colour is white)

The **Easter Eucharist** is the most important service of the whole year. It is celebrated with extra rejoicing and the church is richly decorated with flowers etc making a real contrast with the bareness of the church on Good Friday.

Attendance Figures for January

Holy Trinity

Tuesday 1st January	11.00 am	Holy Eucharist	17
The Naming of Jesus			
		Total of other Weekday Eucharists	28
Sunday 6th	8.00 am	Holy Eucharist	16
Epiphany of Our Lord	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	82
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer	10
Monday 7th	2.30 pm	Holy Eucharist (MU)	13
		Total of other Weekday Eucharists	25
Sunday 13th	8.00 am	Holy Eucharist	23
Baptism of Christ	10.30 am	Choral Matins	63
	11.50 am	Shortened Eucharist	22
	10.30 am	Sunday School Service with Eucharist	36
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer	6
	6.00 pm	Exploring Worship	52
		Total of other Weekday Eucharists	24
Sunday 20th	8.00 am	Holy Eucharist	18
Epiphany 3	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	77
	5.00 pm	Cytun President's Service	84
Friday 25th	11.00 am	Holy Eucharist	4
Conversion of Paul, Apostle			
		Total of other Weekday Eucharists	23
Sunday 27th	8.00 am	Holy Eucharist	22
Epiphany 4	10.30 am	Sung Eucharist	81
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer	12
		Total of other Weekday Eucharists	14

From the Parish Registers

The Departed

3rd Jan: Derek Calderbank (68)
of Winllan Avenue, Llandudno
(Cremation at Colwyn Bay)

9th Jan: Dewi Wyn Evans (23)
of Parc Bodnant, Llandudno
(Service at Holy Trinity followed by burial at The Lawns,
Llanrhos)

14th Jan: Elizabeth Jean Mortimer (82)
of St Andrew's Road, Llandudno
(Cremation at Colwyn Bay)

May the souls of the righteous rest in peace and arise in glory

Sidespersons for March

March 2nd	Kath Lloyd Mary Rees Judith Williams Joyce Crosby	March 23rd	Pat Ridler Margot Hughes Stan Whittaker Ray Millington
March 9th	Dorothy Trent Roy Rees-Jones Sandra Davies Doug Pritchard	March 30th	Kath Lloyd Mary Rees Judith Williams Joyce Crosby
March 16th	Annabel Jones Angela Pritchard Eira Jones Eileen Roberts	April 6th	Dorothy Trent Roy Rees-Jones Sandra Davies Doug Pritchard

Ash Wednesday Frugal Lunch

Ash Wednesday was so very early this year but the Winter Warmers team were well prepared to provide the usual frugal lunch. The team, as usual, made three varieties of home made soup, while others provided lovely crusty bread and cheese.



We had a lot of visitors as well as our regulars who enjoyed not only the lunch but fellowship together. The proceeds are going to the “Seeds for Uganda” project co-ordinated by our diocesan link. We banked more than £260, for which we are very grateful.

Our next frugal lunch will be on Wednesday in Holy Week, March 19th.

A big thank you to all our supporters from all the team.

Barbara Scott



Mothers' Union



Wave of Prayer meeting, 21 January.

We started our first meeting of the new year on January 7th with a Eucharist Service led by the Reverend Jane Allen.

On January 21st we enjoyed our Wave of Prayer service when members lit a candle for our link diocese (Mumias,

Matabeleland, Fianarantsoa, Katsina, Ogbomoso, Dublin and Glendalough, Lango, Bangor). This was followed with a quiz.

On February 4th, one of our members, Margaret Rostron gave a very interesting talk on Pathways.

We have some interesting meetings ahead and look forward to our annual outing to Bridgemere Garden Centre near Nantwich on Monday 28th April. Some members will be attending the Mothers' Union Diocesan Quiet Day at Noddfa Convent, Penmaenmawr on 23rd April.

Visitors are always most welcome to attend our meetings.

Barbara Yates

The Mary Sumner Prayer

All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live.

Amen.

Our Sunday School

I've deliberated highlighted the word 'Our' in the title above because it's so important that parishioners and Sunday School children (and their parents) understand that we too are a worshipping and learning part of the congregation in our Parish. I also felt that this might be a good time to give you an update on the Sunday School, so let me tell you a little bit more about us and what we do.

First of all, our Sunday School falls into three sections – infants, juniors and seniors, and it's good to report that there seems a nice flow between the three sections. We have some interested and committed seniors who work with Sandie, and they have quite lively discussions, exploring in a little greater depth the teaching from the Bible Story. They also write prayers – and very good ones they are too. Our juniors happily answer questions and ask them as well, and everybody (including the grown-ups) enjoys the craft work we do – which ranges from making paper bag puppets, to colouring, gluing, making collages, etc. Importantly, the craft work is for a purpose, which is to help make the Bible Story we always have at the beginning of each session more alive and real.

Just let me give you an example. We have been learning about the 'lost' stories which Jesus told – the lost sheep, the lost coin and just before half term, the lost (or prodigal son). When we

had heard the story of the lost son and how sad his father was when the son went away and seemed to be lost to him, we then made paper bag puppets. Each child was given a big paper bag (representing the father) with a face on each side, and then made a sad face and a happy face, and a smaller bag, again with a sad and happy face which represented the son. We stuck hair on the faces, put on lips turned up on one side and down on the other, and then told the story again using the sad and happy faces as appropriate. The children really learnt a lot from this particular activity. You might like to look out for some of the things the children bring in when they join you at the altar rail – the children have worked hard to make them.

We enjoy saying verses with actions, singing songs, doing drama and mime, and again all of these things reinforce the Bible story and the teaching we take from it. We are getting a good selection of these together, and hopefully you'll hear some of them when we are next in Church for a special service.

Christina and Sandie are our two leaders, and we meet when we can during the week to plan out the following Sunday and to see what preparation work needs doing. An hour of Sunday School usually needs several hours of preparatory work, and I have very much appreciated the help given by many of

our parishioners in cutting out, cutting up, drawing faces, etc. Christina, Sandie and myself also appreciate the extra help given on a Sunday morning by those kind people who come in and stay for the whole of the session, especially when one of us cannot be there.

An added bonus is the help and commitment we have from three Trygs members – Lewis, Seren and Rebecca who are working towards getting a Junior Sunday School Helper Certificate. They are invaluable, helping with setting out, tidying up, giving a lead to the children and in many other ways. This term they are keeping log books to describe the sessions in detail and make comments.

And finally, we have also started having a Service at least once a term which

includes the Eucharist. This is carefully explained, and we have lots of visual aids to help the children become familiar with the Service. The children take as active a part in this as possible, from setting up the altar, to lighting the candles, to giving out books, etc, etc. We are learning responses too so that when we are in Church we can join in as much as possible. Those who have been confirmed take Communion which gives an opportunity for communicants to experience the full Communion Service.

So please keep us in your prayers, and if you ever want to attend and observe any Sunday morning, please speak to me – we would love to welcome you. If you would like to help on a regular basis, again please just have a word.

The Parish Share or Quota for 2008 is

£68412

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The Quota is the sum of money that we have to give the diocese each year to forward to the Church in Wales to pay the stipends of our clergy. We were able to pay this sum last year by using our reserves. This year the Quota is 4.51% more than 2007 and it seems certain that we will not have the reserves to pay it.

Please consider revising your regular giving so the Parish can pay its dues.

If you are a payer of income tax or capital gains tax, please declare your regular giving and donations as 'Gift Aid'. This is a scheme where HM Revenue and Customs refunds the tax you paid on earning your gift.

So if you make a donation of £10, the Parish receives an extra £2.80 (£2.50 from 6/4) at no cost to you.

Please contact Stan Whittaker, the Gift Aid Secretary. (Tel: 596796)

Trinity Players' Summer Season

We thought that both parishioners and visitors who come to listen to our concerts in the summer season might be interested to know how the money we raise is distributed. Here below is

the list of charity donations given out during this year.

Thank you to all who contributed to this by having purchased a ticket.

Peter & Wendy La Trobe

British Red Cross - Flood Appeal & Collection	£1354.67
St David's Hospice & Collection	£1040.00
Neurofibromatosis Research (Type 2)	£300.00
Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group	£300.00
Christian Aid (Llandudno Branch)	£300.00
Hafal	£300.00
Mind (Aberconwy Branch)	£300.00
Cruise Bereavement (Aberconwy Branch)	£300.00
Barnados	£300.00
RSPCA (Bryn y Maen)	£300.00
Breast Cancer (Llandudno Branch)	£300.00
British Heart Foundation (Llandudno Branch)	£300.00
MacMillan Nurses (Llandudno Branch)	£300.00
Leukaemia Research (Llandudno Area)	£300.00
Conwy Scout Association (Rowen Camp)	£300.00
No Limits Outdoor Pursuits	£300.00
Llandudno Junior Rugby Team	£300.00
Ty Llewellyn	£300.00
Llandudno Mayor's Charity	£300.00
Paphos Lions - Cyprus + Stock of CDs	£1632.00

New signs

Parishioners and visitors alike will be pleased to know that the badly weathered signs outside Holy Trinity church are to be replaced with new signs that will incorporate a large acrylic-covered notice box. A matching board and no-

tice box is also being produced for St Tudno's church.

The PPC authorised the cost of £2000 at its February meeting. It is anticipated that the signs will be erected during March.

Great Hymns — Dear Lord and Father ...

High amongst polls of favourite hymns is 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' by John Greenleaf Whittier.

The curious thing is that Whittier did not claim to be a hymn writer. From Quaker stock, hymns were not part of his upbringing: 'I am really not a hymn writer for the simple reason that I know nothing of music. Only a very few of my pieces were written for singing. A good hymn is the best use to which poetry can be devoted but I do not claim I have succeeded in composing one.'

Whittier's modesty belies the fact that he is credited with 60 hymns that also include the popular 'Immortal love for ever full'. He was born in Massachusetts in 1807 to farming parents and after spending several years in Boston as a newspaper journalist and editor he returned home in 1831 to combine journalism with farming. In 1836 Whittier was elected Secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Dear Lord and Father was the last part of his religious poem 'The Brewing of Soma' which he wrote in 1872 and published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The derivative hymn was first published in 1884 in Horder's *Congregational Hymns*.

To a modern eye, 'The Brewing of Soma' is poetry from a bygone age. Soma was a sacred ritual drink in Vedic religion, going back to Proto-Indo-

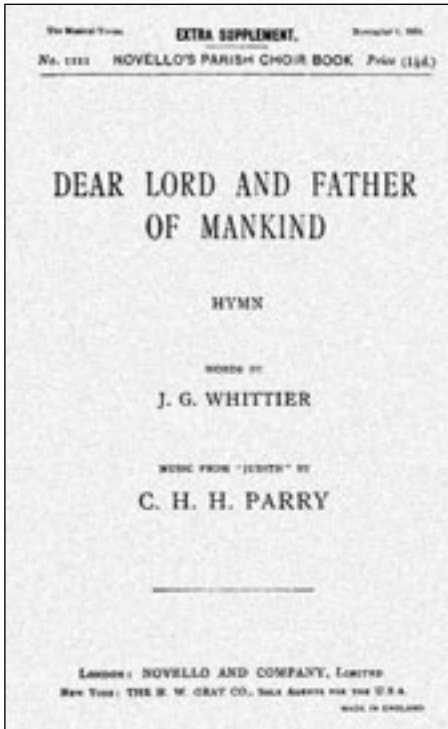
Iranian times (c 2000 BC), possibly with hallucinogenic properties.

The story line is of Vedic priests brewing and drinking Soma in an attempt to experience divinity. It describes the whole population getting drunk.

After a catalogue of feverish distractions Whittier suddenly, with great effect, introduces the note of quiet: 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind'. The rest of the poem expresses the Quaker conviction that God is to be found in silence and stillness, through the inward peace of the worshipper. Whittier likens the drinking of Soma to the use of incense and music in some churches as distracting the mind from its proper purpose of worship.

Still often used in the USA is the tune 'Rest' by Frederick Maker (1887). But here in the UK, the definitive tune is 'Repton' by Sir Charles Hubert H Parry, originally written in 1888 for the contralto aria 'Long since in Egypt's pleasant land' for his oratorio *Judith*. (Parry's other major contribution to hymnody is the tune to Blake's *Jerusalem*.)

In 1924 Dr George Gilbert Stocks, director of music at Repton School, set the Parry's aria to 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind' in a supplement of tunes for use in the school chapel. Despite the need to repeat the last line of words, Stocks created a classic.



The Brewing of Soma

'These libations mixed with milk have been prepared for Indra: offer Soma to the drinker of Soma.' *Vashista*, translated by Max Muller.

*The fagots blazed, the caldron's smoke
Up through the green wood curled;
'Bring honey from the hollow oak,
Bring milky sap,' the brewers spoke,
In the childhood of the world.*

*And brewed they well or brewed they ill,
The priests thrust in their rods,
First tasted, and then drank their fill,
And shouted, with one voice and will,
'Behold, the drink of the gods!'*

*They drank, and lo! in heart and brain
A new, glad life began;
They grew of hair grew young again,
The sick man laughed away his pain,
The cripple leaped and ran.*

*'Drink, mortals, what the gods have sent,
Forget you long annoy.'
So sang the priests, From tent to tent
The Soma's sacred madness went,
A storm of drunken joy.*

*Then knew each rapt inebriate
A winged and glorious birth,
Soared upward, with strange joy elate,
Beat, with dazed head, Varuna's gate,
And sobered, sank to earth.*

*The land with Soma's praises rang;
On Gihon's banks of shade
Its hymns the dusky maidens sang;
In joy of life or mortal pang
All men to Soma prayed.*

*The morning twilight of the race
Sends down these matin psalms;
And still with wondering eyes we trace
The simple prayers to Soma's grace,
That verdic verse embalms.*

*As in the child-world's early year,
Each after age has striven
By music, incense, vigils drear,
And trance, to bring the skies more near,
Or lift men up to heaven!*

*Some fever of the blood and brain,
Some self-exalting spell,
The scourger's keen delight of pain,
The Dervish dance, the Orphic strain,
The wild-haired Bacchant's yell, -*

The desert's hair-grown hermit sunk
The saner brute below;
The naked Santon, haschish-drunk,
The cloister madness of the monk,
The fakir's torture show!

And yet the past comes round again,
And new doth old fulfil;
In sensual transports wild as vain
We brew in many a Christian fane
The heathen Soma still!

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
And noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
Thy beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the hearts of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be numb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and
fire,
O still, small voice of calm!



JG Whittier



CHH Parry

The next Exploring
Worship service
is on
Sunday 16 March
(Palm Sunday)
in the church
hall at 6 pm.
Do come and
join us.

The Young Person's Guide to the Chorus

The Sopranos are the ones who sing the highest and because of this they think they rule the world. They have smarter hair, fancier jewellery and swishier skirts than anyone else and they consider themselves insulted if they are not allowed to go at least to a high F in every movement of any given piece. When they reach the high notes, they hold them for at least half again as long as the conductor requires and then complain that their throats are killing them and that the composer and conductor are tyrants.

Sopranos have varied attitudes toward the other sections of the chorus, although they consider all of them inferior. Altos are to sopranos rather like second violins to first violins – nice to harmonise with, but not really necessary. All sopranos have a secret feeling that the altos could drop out and the piece would sound essentially the same and they don't understand why anybody would sing in that range in the first place – it's so boring!

The Sopranos think that tenors can be very nice to have around; besides their flirtation possibilities (it is a well-known fact that sopranos never flirt with basses) sopranos like to sing duets with tenors because all the tenors are doing is working very hard to sing in a low to medium soprano range, while the sopranos are up there in the stratosphere

showing off. To sopranos, basses are the lowest of the low – they sing too loud, are useless to tune to because they're down in that low, low range – and there has to be something wrong with anyone who sings in the F clef.

The Altos are the salt of the earth – in their opinion at least. Altos are unassuming people who would wear jeans to concerts if they were allowed to. Altos are in a unique position in the chorus in that they are unable to complain about having to sing either very high or very low, and they know that all the other sections think their parts are pitifully easy. But the altos know otherwise. They know that while the sopranos are screeching away on a high A, they are being forced to sing elaborate passages full of sharps and flats and tricks of rhythm, and nobody is noticing because the sopranos are singing too loud (and the basses usually are too). Altos get a deep, secret pleasure out of conspiring together to tune the sopranos flat. Altos have an innate distrust of tenors, because the tenors sing in almost the same range and think they sound better. They like the basses and enjoy singing duets with them – the basses just sound like a rumble anyway and it's the only time the altos can really be heard. The Altos' other complaint is that there are always too many of them and so they never get to sing really loud.

The Tenors are spoiled! That's all there is to it. For one thing, there are never enough of them and conductors would rather sell their souls rather than let a halfway decent tenor quit, while they're always ready to unload a few altos at half price. And then, for some reason, the few tenors there are always really good – it's one of those annoying facts of life. So it's no wonder that tenors always get swollen heads – after all, who else can make the sopranos swoon? The one thing that can make tenors insecure is the accusation (usually by the basses) that anyone singing that high couldn't possibly be a real man. In their usual perverse fashion the tenors never acknowledge this but just complain louder about the composer being a sadist for making them sing so high. Tenors have a love-hate relationship with the conductor too, because the conductor is always telling them to sing louder because there are so few of them. No conductor in recorded history has ever asked for less tenor in a forte passage. Tenors feel threatened in some way by all the other sections – the sopranos because they can hit those incredibly high notes; the altos because they have no trouble singing the notes the tenors kill themselves for; and the basses because, although they can't sing anything above an E, they sing it loud enough to drown the tenors out. Of course, the tenors would rather die than admit any of this. It is a little-known fact that tenors move their eyebrows more than anyone else while singing.

The Basses sing the lowest of anybody. This basically explains everything. They are stolid, dependable people and have more facial hair than anybody else. They feel perpetually unappreciated, but have a deep conviction that they are actually the most important part of the chorus (a view endorsed by musicologists, but certainly not by sopranos or tenors), despite the fact they have the most boring part of anybody and often sing the same note (or in endless fifths) for an entire page. They compensate for this by singing as loudly as they can get away with – most basses are tuba players at heart. Basses are the only section that can regularly complain about how low their part is, and they make horrible faces when trying to hit very low notes. Basses are charitable people, but their charity does not extend so far as tenors, whom they consider effete poseurs. Basses hate tuning with the tenors more than almost anything else. They do like altos – except when they have duets and the altos get the good part. As for the sopranos, they are simply in another universe which the basses don't understand at all. They can't imagine why anybody would ever want to sing that high and sound that bad when they make mistakes. When a bass makes a mistake, the other three parts will cover him and he can continue on his merry way, knowing that sometime, somehow, he will end up at the root of the chord.

Via Wendy Lonsdale