

**SEASONS OF THE SPIRIT : MAGNIFICAT****MAY 8<sup>TH</sup> 2002****Choir**      **O Weisheit – No 1 of Seven Magnificat Antiphons**      **Arvo Pärt***(O wisdom proceeding from the mouth of the Most High)*

Today we celebrate Magnificat – Mary’s song of praise, an expression of the unity of humankind, a cry for the abolition of injustice and inequality, a looking-forward to a better world, filled with God’s glory.

**God’s Grandeur**

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?  
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
 And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil  
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
 And though the last lights off the black West went  
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –  
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

**Choir**                      **Magnificat**                      **Stanford in C**

The Magnificat reminds us of the importance of praise in human life, finding God in the commonplace things of every day. In this poem Michael Milton sees in a platform cleaner on St Pancras station a glimpse of the divine.

**The Platform**

Descending from my Midland Mainline carriage  
 I step on to a clean St Pancras platform  
 Made clean by Mary  
 Who, with careful use of her mechanical claw  
 Deftly clears a Smokey Bacon wrapper  
 Placing it with great care into the gaping mouth  
 Of the dark bin liner.

A thousand times she has gripped Smokey Bacon wrappers;  
 A thousand times she has placed them in the bin liner;  
 A thousand people have walked on her clean platform  
 Past Mary, who clears away the litter  
 And thinks of Brixham harbour on a crystal day  
 And her son aching with Aids.

If there was one from heaven  
 Who reached down to clear my path  
 Of all the wrappings cluttering my soul  
 Would he or she keep doing so a thousand times  
 Unnoticed and unthanked  
 And carry in their heart  
 A hope of perfect peace  
 And the pain of anguished lives?

I think so.  
 And I think  
 That platforms  
 Can become  
 Holy  
 Ground.

Michael Milton

The Holy in the commonplace. But here is a reminder that God sometimes needs to be consciously sought in the busyness of everyday life, because if we don't seek Him ourselves, we might miss His Presence altogether.

**Choir**

**Mary's Magnificat**

**Andrew Carter**

**The Secret**

I met God in the morning  
 When my day was at its best,  
 And His presence came like sunrise,  
 Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,  
 All day long He stayed with me,  
 And we sailed in perfect calmness  
 O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,  
 Other ships were sore distressed,  
 But the winds that seemed to drive them  
 Brought to us a peace and rest.

But I thought of other mornings,  
 With a keen remorse of mind,  
 When I too had loosed the moorings,  
 With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret.  
 Learned from many a troubled way:  
 You must seek Him in the morning  
 If you want Him through the day!

Ralph Cushman

**Choir**      **O Morgenstern – No 5 of Seven Magnificat Antiphons**      **Arvo Pärt**  
*(O morning, star, giving light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death)*

If only we have eyes to see, everything around us in the natural world can speak to us of God; miracles are all around.

### **Miracles**

Why, who makes much of a miracle?  
 As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,  
 Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
 Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,  
 Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of  
 the water,  
 Or stand under trees in the woods,  
 Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at  
 night with any one I love,  
 Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
 Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
 Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer  
 fore-noon,  
 Or animals feeding in the fields,  
 Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
 Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so  
 quiet and bright,  
 Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in  
 spring;  
 These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
 The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.  
 To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
 Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
 Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with  
 the same,  
 Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
 The fishes that swim – the rocks – the motion of the waves  
 - the ships with men in them,  
 What stranger miracles are there?

Walt Whitman

Choir**Quia fecit mihi magna (for he that is mighty)  
Et Misericordia ejus (And his mercy is on them)**Bach  
Bach

Magnificat – Mary’s song of praise to God’s glory and presence in her life, in the midst of all life. But are we too busy to hear it? Are our lives too noisy to hear the still small voice of God and too crowded to see His everyday miracles?

One afternoon, some years ago, I was sitting on the platform of a little country station waiting for a train, and by the opposite platform an engine was letting off steam with the most terrible noise. I was reading a book and the engine had been letting off steam for such a long time that I’d got quite used to it. At first the noise had been absolutely earsplitting, but after a bit, I didn’t notice it at all. Then suddenly, the steam was turned off, and the silence that followed was quite overpowering. Then in that silence, I could hear all sorts of quiet and gentle sounds - the wind rustling in the grass, the birds singing and a dog barking in the distance. And I couldn’t help thinking that the noise of an engine letting off steam in a country station is a fairly typical picture of the din and clatter of our modern life and its battle to overwhelm and drown the more quiet thoughtful things. And that’s exactly what our noisy life does with God too. That’s why we hardly ever think of him. If we are not careful we may go on for days, even weeks, without ever thinking of God once. But like those quiet sounds of the countryside, he’s there all the time, and it is only because we are letting off steam so noisily that we can’t hear him.

Somehow, if God is going to be near us, we’ve got to turn off the steam now and again and make ourselves quiet and give God a chance of making himself known to us in silence.

John G. Williams

Choir**O Immanuel – No 7 of Seven MAgnificat Antiphons**  
*(O hope and Saviour of all mankind, make haste to help us)*Arvo Pärt

**Kneeling**

Moments of great calm,  
Kneeling before an altar  
Of wood in a stone church  
In summer, waiting for the God  
To speak; the air a staircase  
For silence; the sun's light  
Ringing me, as though I acted  
A great role. And the audiences  
Still; all that close throng  
Of spirits waiting, as I,  
For the message.

        Prompt me, God;  
But not yet. When I speak,  
Though it be you who speak  
Through me, something is lost.  
The meaning is in the waiting.

R S Thomas