

Devotional from Donna Buell

In recent weeks the choirs of Grace-Trinity Community Church and White Bear Lake United Methodist Church have been immersed in the music of Holy Week and Easter. As we did last year, our two choirs will be singing together on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Under the direction of Jimmy Finch and Gerald Gurss, we will be singing a varied selection of pieces with texts drawn from scripture and traditional Latin liturgy, set within the context of worship.

I have often struggled with the theology of some of the music of Holy Week and Easter. Some Lenten and Holy Week music over-emphasizes one theological understanding of the crucifixion, known as substitutionary atonement. And some Easter music expresses the good news of Easter with a sense of triumphalism that certainly isn't present in the Easter stories told in the Gospels. At the same time, I have always felt that experiencing the events of Holy Week through scripture and song, can be very powerful, for when we face, squarely, the painful story of Christ's death, we are better able to experience and embrace the good news of the resurrection.

I have been especially moved by the text of two of the songs our choirs will be singing together this Holy Week. One is the Latin text "**Ubi Caritas**" in a setting by Michael John Trotta. Here is the English translation which echoes the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor:

Where charity and love are, there God is.

The love of Christ has gathered us into one.

Let us exult, and in Him be joyful.

Let us fear [revere] and let us love the living God.

And from a sincere heart let us love each other.

The second is an unconventional choice. It is the final movement of a larger work called *The Sacred Veil*. "This collaboration between composer Eric Whitacre and poet/lyricist Charles Anthony Silvestri tells a story of life, love, and loss. Silvestri's wife, Julie, died of ovarian cancer at age 36 in 2005, leaving two young children. Including texts from Silvestri, Whitacre, and Julie herself, the intimate, compelling score tells a story of courtship, love, loss, and the search for solace. Although inspired by this extraordinary and moving relationship, the piece does not mention Julie by name and shares a very human journey – one that so many of us can relate to." ~choralarts.org

As we prepare to sing **Child of Wonder** in the context of Holy Week worship, I find myself hearing the heart of a loving God welcoming the beloved son home at the end of his sacred sojourn on earth. And this song also expresses my deep gratitude as I release all those who have lived and died into the eternal presence of our loving God. Here is the text:

Child of wonder

Child of sky

Time to end your voyage

Time to die

Weary waters beckon

*Dark and deep
Child of soft surrender
Child of sleep*

*Child of sorrow
Child of rain
There is no tomorrow
No more pain*

*Turn your silvered sails
Toward the light
Child of mourning
Child of night*

*Child of iridescence
Child of dream
Stars and moons will guide you
Down the stream*

*Stretched on ocean waves
Exchanging foam
Welcome home my child
Welcome home*