St Paul’s, Wokingham

Some Brief Notes for Maundy Thursday 2022

Prelude: Olivier Messiaen, *Le Banquet Céleste*

Anthem : *Ubi Caritas*, by Ola Gjeilo

Messiaen’s music is, like the deep faith which inspired it, often difficult, but ultimately rewarding. *Le Banquet Céleste* (the Heavenly Banquet) introduces tonight’s commemoration of the Last Supper, while also looking ahead to the eternal reward of heaven. The piece is prefaced by John 6:56: “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him". It conveys a tension between the temporal and eternal. Mysterious, slowly changing chords portray timelessness, but these are punctuated by stabbing pedal notes representing drops of Christ’s blood which constantly bring the listener back to the present. It is only in the final, unresolved, chord that we are left with the eternal implication of Christ’s Passion.

*Notes by Chris Cipkin, Organist*

For those experiencing this service at St Paul’s for the first time, these notes might be helpful:

i) the Service is built around the Gospel narrative of Maundy Thursday. The first half of the service is built on the commandment to love one another as Christ loves us, by receiving the Holy Oil which is a visible sign of our ongoing ministry of healing and blessing and by washing feet. The second half is the Eucharist, on the very night it was gifted to us.

ii) incense is always used at St Paul’s. It engages all of our senses in worship and lifts our heart to heaven. Holy things are censed- the altar, the elements, the president of the Mass and the holy people of God.

iii) at the end of the service, the consecrated elements are processed to the Altar of Repose (in the Walter Chapel) and we are then invited to stay and keep watch for as long as we can, along with the disciples in Gethsemane who Jesus asked to keep watch with him.

iv) the service might feel a little different to usual- that is intentional- relax into it- let it do its work on you- Jesus himself invites you to eat.