

2025-03-16 Meditation for the Second Sunday in Lent is now available at: <https://pgimf.org/meditations/>

[The opening theme song with a poetic paraphrase begins:]

Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe,
O Pow'r of love, all else transcending,
Die sich in Jesu offenbart;
In Jesus present evermore,
Ich geb' mich hin dem freien Triebe,
I worship thee, in homage bending,

Remarks by Randall Thompson:

Many people ask me why it [*Alleluia*] is tinged with sadness. And I thought you might like to know why. It was written at the request of Serge Koussevitzky for the opening event at the Berkshire Music Center in 1940. The first thing that happened was that this piece was sung by the whole student body. They were going to have one hour to rehearse it, and so I thought, when I was wondering what kind of piece to write for him, I better not have too many words . . . And that's how I invented the text.

He [Koussevitzky] had asked for a fanfare to open with. Actually, he would've said "FAHN-FAR!" But I didn't feel like writing a "fahn-far". And you know why? Because, at the very moment I took pencil in hand to write that piece, a piece, those motorcycles were coming down, speeding down, across Belgium and into France. And it looked as if France, that great civilized nation, was going to be destroyed and perhaps all the civilized world as we know it.

Why any alleluia at all, then? Well, it's because the word 'Alleluia' can be said in several different ways. It can be said as it does in *Messiah*, [as] a shout, a jubilant shout of joy, celebration, rapture. Or, it can be said on bended knees: "Lord's name be praised." Here, it is said on bended knees. We find this in the Bible and I don't want to be concerned about it, but I try to explain the quality of that word which so many people sing and have heard sung.

I think the best explanation for that—of the emotional quality of that piece—I think it comes from understanding (and perhaps [you] enjoy it more) to know that it means "Blessed be the name of the Lord" in the sense that it's meant in the book of Job and quoted in the funeral service: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." That kind of resignation to God's will, resignation to your destiny, if you like, or your faith, somehow helps to comfort. Not to fight against it, but to accept it, and it [the sorrow] vanishes. The meaning of

this Alleluia, written in a time of great stress and sorrow, was an attempt to put into music something of what all who were growing up in that time were feeling.

Excuse me for giving this autobiographical note, but since it is sung quite a lot, I felt like telling you what I had in mind and in heart when I wrote it. Thank you.

Alleluia (1940)

Lyrics: Alleluia

Music: Randall Thompson (1899-1984)

Remarks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtFPz1nsWmU>

Artists: Gnessin Choir of the Russian Academy of Music, Anastasiya Sychova (dir.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XAM2t6D1Tg>

Alleluia

[Closing words to our theme song:]

O! dass diess jeder Sünder wüsste,

O! that every sinner would know this,

Sein Herz wohl bald dich lieben müsste.

His heart must soon surely love You.

Evan

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