

MUSIC FOR HOLY HOUR

THE EVE OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

The texts below are those of the motets and anthems being sung. Each choral work is preceded by a reading taken from *The Mystical City of God* by Venerable Mary of Ágreda. A few minutes for silent adoration and meditation will be observed before or after each excerpt of the text, which is read by Fr. Zannetti.

✠ PRELUDE: *I sing the birth* - Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

I sing the birth was born to-night, the author both of life and light; the angels so did sound it.
And like the ravish'd shepherds said, who saw the light, and were afraid, yet search'd, and true they found it.
The Son of God, th' eternal king, that did us all salvation bring, and freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take, the Word, which heaven and earth did make, was now laid in a manger.
The Father's wisdom will'd it so, the Son's obedience knew no No, both wills were in one stature;
And as that wisdom had decreed, the Word was now made flesh indeed, and took on him our nature.
What comfort by him do we win, who made himself the price of sin, to make us heirs of glory!
To see this babe, all innocence; a martyr born in our defence: can man forget this story?

✠ EXPOSITION: *O salutaris hostia* - Elgar

✠ THE ETERNAL FATHER AND THE SON

O magnum mysterium - William Byrd (1540-1623)

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger!
O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

✠ MARY'S KNOWLEDGE AND NIGHT OF PRAYER

Mother of God, here I stand - John Tavener (1944-2013)

Mother of God, here I stand, now praying before this icon of your radiant brightness
Not praying to be saved from a battlefield, not giving thanks, nor seeking forgiveness
For the sins of my soul, nor for all the souls, numb, joyless and desolate on earth
But for her alone, whom I wholly give you.

✠ THE PROCESSION - ANGELS AND JOSEPH

My Lord has come - Will Todd (b. 1970)

Shepherds, called by angels, called by love and angels: No place for them but a stable. My Lord has come.
Sages, searching for stars, searching for love in heaven; No place for them but a stable. My Lord has come.
His love will hold me, his love will cherish me, love will cradle me.
Lead me, lead me to see him, sages and shepherds and angels; No place for me but a stable. My Lord has come.

✠ SIMEON AND ANNA

Nunc dimittis in E minor - Daniel Purcell (1664-1717)

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel. Glory be...

✠ THE SWORD AND WHAT MARY SAW

Stabat Mater - Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last.
Through her soul, of joy bereaved, bowed with anguish, deeply grieved, now at length the sword hath passed.
Oh how sad and sore distressed was that mother highly blessed, of the sole-begotten One! Amen.

✠ JOSEPH AND THE FLIGHT

Bethlehem Down - Peter Warlock (1894-1930)

"When He is King we will give him the King's gifts, myrrh for its sweetness, and gold for a crown, beautiful robes," said the young girl to Joseph, fair with her first-born on Bethlehem Down.

Bethlehem Down is full of the starlight—winds for the spices, and stars for the gold,

Mary for sleep, and for lullaby music, songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

When He is King they will clothe Him in grave-sheets, myrrh for embalming, and wood for a crown,

He that lies now in the white arms of Mary, sleeping so lightly on Bethlehem Down.

Here He has peace and a short while for dreaming, close-huddled oxen to keep Him from cold,

Mary for love, and for lullaby music, songs of a shepherd by Bethlehem fold.

✠ WORDS OF THE QUEEN

O Radiant Dawn - James MacMillan (b. 1959)

O Radiant Dawn, Splendour of eternal Light, Sun of Justice:

Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah had prophesied, the people who walked in darkness have seen the great light;

Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. Amen.

✠ **BENEDICTION:** *Tantum ergo* - Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) | *Divine Praises* - Paul Jernberg (b. 1953)

✠ CLOSING MEDITATION

Prayer of St. John Henry Newman - Daniel Golden (b. 2005)

O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life,

until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed,

and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.

Then, Lord, in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

Venerable Mary of Ágreda

Maria de Ágreda was born at Ágreda in Spain in 1602. In her seventeenth year Mary entered the convent of Poor Clares of the Immaculate Conception at Ágreda. She made her profession on the feast of the Purification in 1620 as Sister Mary of Jesus. After she had consecrated herself to God through the holy vows, the young religious strove for perfection with holy earnestness and cheerful surrender to God. At the same time her unassuming humility and kindness of heart made her so beloved by her fellow sisters, that at the age of twenty-five she was elected abbess. The pope confirmed her election to office; and she was obliged to accept it repeatedly for thirty-eight years until her death. As the superior, Mary was always the first among her associates to engage in lowly work. She swept the halls, nursed the sick, washed their linens, and appeared to have a special preference for the most menial services. Venerable Mary of Ágreda governed her subjects with as much wisdom as love. She was endowed with great wisdom, so that persons of the highest rank, also prelates and bishops, and even the king of Spain, asked her for advice. When she spoke of God, all who heard her were inflamed with the love of God. She received special revelations concerning the life of the Virgin Mother of God, which she recorded in her book called *The Mystical City of God*.

A bishop testified that when Venerable Mary of Ágreda went into an ecstasy her body was raised a bit above the ground and appeared to have no weight, moving even to a slight breeze. Her face was very beautiful, though somewhat pallid compared to her normal swarthy hue. She would often remain in this state for hours. Mary died on Pentecost morning, May 24, 1665, at nine o'clock, at the time the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and when the "Veni, Creator Spiritus, Come, Holy Ghost Creator!" was being recited in the canonical hours. When she passed away a heavenly voice was heard to say: "Come! – Come! – Come!" At her grave many miracles were wrought; and her cause of beatification is now being carried on in Rome.

Excerpt taken from *The Franciscan Book of Saints*, edited by Marion Habig, OFM

To read more, visit www.roman-catholic-saints.com/mary-of-agreda.html