

Praise

‘Praising, that’s it!’ says in the poet Rainer Maria Rilke in one of his Sonnets to Orpheus. Reading or listening to the media you might think ‘Blaming, that’s it!’ Bad news is more newsworthy than good news. But there is so much to praise, so many extraordinary and ordinary kind people, so much beauty on Earth. So the title of this *Sofia* is *Praise*.

Our first article, by Alison McRobb, is on music and singing. She has suffered from group singing being banned during the lockdown and had to go out into an empty field to sing her favourite hymns alone on Easter Day. She says: ‘I’ll sing as I love.’ The postponed SOF London on music will take place next year.

Vicar Tony Windross, who has a ‘non-realist’ view of God, writes about liturgy as ‘Cosmic Gratitude’. In ‘Mary’s Touch’, Grenville Gilbert describes a loving and loved woman who died during the lockdown without her friends being able to say goodbye.

Dave Francis, Deputy Chair of the Religious Education Council, writes about the struggle to broaden the school curriculum from ‘Religious Instruction’ to ‘Religion and World-views’. He asks: ‘When a young person successfully completes their eleven years of compulsory school religious education, what will there be in their knowledge and understanding of the world and themselves that will be worthy of *praise*?’

Martyn Crucefix revisits Rilke’s *Sonnets to Orpheus*, written in three weeks in a ‘savage creative storm’. We also have Crucefix’s own poem ‘Skype’ and St Francis of Assisi’s *Canticum of the Creatures*.

This will be a short editorial because I offer some thoughts on praise in my article on page 16. There are the usual reviews, John Pearson’s *As I Please* column, this time on ‘Plague – 2020 Style’ and the Letters to the Editor. Please continue to write in to inform, dispute (or praise!).

Sonnet to Orpheus

Praising, that’s it! He was called to praise
and emerged from the silence of a stone
like an ore. O his heart – a temporary press
for man’s everlasting wine.

Nor does his voice grow choked with dust
once it is seized by the god-like example.
All becomes vineyard, all becomes juice
in his southern land, so ripe and sensual.

Even from tombs where kings have decayed
nothing gives the lie to his praising.
Nor can the gods cause any shadow to fall.

He is the one, he is the constant herald
who – even far through the doors of the dead –
holds a bowl of fruit, ripe for the praising.

Sonnet I:7 from *Sonnets to Orpheus* by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Martyn Crucefix. Enitharmon Press (London 2012). Reprinted by kind permission of the publisher and translator.