



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP
IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL AND
PARISH CHURCH

LATIN PROCESSION IN HONOUR OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL: 9 OCTOBER 2011

RESPONSES FROM ATTENDEES

HOLY NAME OF JESUS PROCESSION 9 OCTOBER 2011

1 Female over 51; regular Cathedral worshipper; seated in stalls in quire

Very moving and meaningful. Learnt a lot about how services would have been conducted and how a participant might have felt. Thank you!

2 Female over 51; regular Cathedral worshipper; seated in stalls in quire

It would have been interesting to have the words of what went on at the start of the service in the Trinity Chapel.

3 Female over 51: came specially for this service

This event is more difficult to write about than the Thursday Mass; the whole thing seems more intangible.

Despite some confusion as we approached the Priest for the Sprinkling, my feeling was that I had experienced something significant, but exactly what is hard to put into words.

My position was near the front of the Procession, and I was surprised at the speed at which we set off – there seemed some urgency to catch up with the Choir, and in general the pace was faster and less ‘solemn’ than I anticipated. I found it difficult not to be preoccupied with the practicalities of the route, not letting gaps develop etc, and so perhaps I missed some of the significance of it all. I can’t honestly say that it felt like an act of worship on a personal level, but that in itself taught me something about the nature and purpose of worship.

The music was haunting and atmospheric, particularly in the cloisters, where there was a sense of walking in the footsteps of history – I found myself smiling. Up to that point I had not tried to join in the singing as I needed to look where I was going, but I wanted to sing as we walked, and was only able to attempt this when we entered the Nave. Coming back into the cathedral itself, there was a sort of shock of recognition and solemnity, and I could see the impact the Procession was having on bystanders.

My experience over the whole weekend has shown me how much of the richness of the past we have abandoned in our present-day teaching and practices. We all need different things to assist us to engage with God; for some, ritual (when explained) can be very helpful.

Trying to make worship accessible to all is a good thing, but perhaps it has come at the cost of a depth of experience for the individual.

Many thanks for all that I have learned and re-discovered.

4 Participant in the St Teilo's Enactments

Female 25-50; came specially for the service; seated in quire

In some ways being able to sing the antiphon at the sprinkling was a good way of being involved in that part of the service – however, maybe it meant that I was a bit abstracted? I did find it interesting that those of us in the stalls all got in each other's way when going up for this – possibly this was authentic?!

I felt very privileged to be a part of the procession as it moved all round the cathedral – especially walking around the cloisters. I was surprised by the speed we walked at – it made me realize that although this was an act of worship, it was also the 'business' of the cathedral – it had to be purified each week.

Having grown up with 'Hail thee festival day' on feast days, it was lovely to use this setting of it – it was dignified and solemn, rather than the raucous and complicated version used today.

This demonstrated how the procession was an act of worship in itself – not just something touched on at the beginning of a service.

5 Female over 51: came specially for this service; seated in quire

An interesting mix of disconnect and involvement if on an intellectual rather than emotional level.

The first 5 minutes when ceremony in the Trinity Chapel was confusing but the musical sound echoing through the quire gave reassurance and introduced the first element of tranquillity.

Procession: an interesting re-creation exercise rather than a true involvement.

Movement / words / music – As before the sounds in the procession flowed through the cathedral were inspiring. With the movement combined – it became more of a 'performance'. Was this created by this procession or by overlaying knowledge of medieval church practice in a hierarchical society? Not sure.

6 Female over 51: regular worshipper; seated in quire

I found the procession and the preparation for it a profoundly moving experience. Coming out from the Quire to the step and receiving a generous sprinkling of the previously blessed water made me feel extraordinarily cleansed and indeed purified. The procession was then a very good experience. Before the sprinkling I had felt anxieties about partaking in it but now I was just happily and reverentially carried along and was soon able to sing the refrain to the Salve festa dies, and enjoy the rhythm of it all. It was wonderful to traverse the whole cathedral in this way and to reverence the Cross at the conclusion. I have never before had such a helpful preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist. Thank you.

7 Female over 51: came specially for this service; seated in quire

I thought that the whole experience was very meaningful. Because it engaged all the senses, including the tactile 'sprinkling', it was a spiritual experience on a profound level. The music was beautiful and, with the incense and the procession, amounted to an extraordinary and deep experience of God. I wish I had been able to attend the Thursday event and the talks.

8 Family of four, came specially for this service; sat in the Quire

My family consists of a son and daughter both under 15 and my wife and I both 25-50.

My family and I took part in the service today and wanted to comment on the following:

The Blessing of Salt and Water – being unseen but experienced through sound this blessing gave a moving introduction that gave a tangible link to the past and the removed spiritual nature of worship (comment from my wife)

Ceremony of purification – an unexpected and enjoyable experience (comment from my daughter)

Procession and moving through the cathedral – a different perspective on a familiar building (my impression); really enjoyable and good to sing while walking (my daughter); fascinating to do something different (my son);

Interaction of movement, words and music – a challenging blend of mystery (not being familiar with the Latin), different style of worship and historical education, that moved us as a family in many different ways (agreed family summary).

Overall – a very enjoyable, moving and spiritual event that should be repeated and extended to other elements of the Sarum Use.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in this service that enriched our appreciation of worship and its historical context.

9 Female over 51: came specially for this service; seated in quire

I came to the cathedral especially for this service which I greatly enjoyed. (I live 25 miles away.) I was seated in the stalls in the Quire.

The information given on p7 of the service booklet indicated that “The experience of worship in the Middle Ages was sensory, emotional and physical”. This was borne out by this morning’s experience of the medieval rite. I’m not sure if the initial distant singing in the Trinity Chapel was Terce but, whatever it was, it set the tone for the rest of the experience as it enabled me to ‘get a whiff’ of the mysterious awesome presence of God (to ‘centre down’ in Quaker terms) and yet at the same time to take part in something very human.

The ceremony of purification with sprinkled water acted as a powerful symbol of being cleansed from one’s sins.

The experience of being part of the procession, moving through the cathedral and being able to join in the singing was great. We certainly romped along at great speed – I wasn’t expecting that but it didn’t detract from the experience.

The interaction of movement, words and music was very powerful. I felt very much a part of what was going on yet at the same time it seemed as if something far bigger than myself, something awesome, was also taking place.

Thank you – and where can I read about the experiment being carried out by Dr Harper?

