

Notes regarding Good Friday preservice music:

The two preservice violin/piano duet music selections are intended to draw our attention to the greatest sacrifice that ever took place, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you listen, reflect not only on the struggling emotions of the eyewitnesses of the Lord's crucifixion, but fix your heart on the crucified LORD. In His life, Jesus witnessed the sin of the world. As He speaks the words "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me*", He is martyred by the sin of the world.

The first preservice piece, entitled 'Fratres' (meaning "brothers" in Latin), was composed in 1977 by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, who was the most performed living composer in the world in 2025. In 1972 Pärt was converted by the Holy Spirit to Christianity. In 1980, after a prolonged struggle with Soviet officials, he was allowed to emigrate from Estonia (a Soviet bloc nation at the time) to Austria with his wife and their two sons.

Good Friday alone does not yet let us appreciate the complete message of the author of Hebrews 2:10-11 when he writes "*For it was fitting that [God], for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make [Jesus], the founder of [our] salvation, perfect through suffering. That is why [Jesus] is not ashamed to call [us] brothers [fratres]*" or per the Vulgate Biblical translation "*Propter quam causam non confunditur fratres eos vocare*". In fulfillment of the words that Jesus spoke to his disciples on Maundy Thursday, "*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13), the disciples see their friend, and fratre brother, hanging and dying on the cross.

The Fratres music has been described as a mesmerizing set of variations on a six-bar theme contrasting frantic activity with sublime stillness. This encapsulates Arvo Pärt's observation that "*the instant and eternity are struggling within us*". Without knowing how the dots will connect on Easter, just as the eyewitnesses were 'punched in the gut' seeing Jesus dying, the experience of a "*war waging within us*" moves us to confess with St. Paul, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Romans 7:13ff).

You may not initially appreciate the Fratres piece, unless you put your mind into what the music is trying to say. As you listen, give thought to the series of Jesus' six last words on the cross followed by his last saying '*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*'. Then follows the darkness, the tearing of the temple curtain, the splitting of rocks, the earthquake, the opening of tombs. The circumstances surrounding the death of our Fratre allows the musical message of Fratres to really jump out at you as we confess with the centurion "*Truly this was the Son of God*".

The second preservice piece is entitled 'Theme from Schindler's List' and was composed in 1993 by John Williams. Its usage for us on Good Friday, beginning at the service start time, is to capture the emotions of melancholy, dismay, resignation and helplessness of the crucifixion eyewitnesses after Jesus has died. These emotions lasted well beyond his burial, even unto the following Sunday. For example, the two travelers on the road to Emmaus "*stood still, looking sad*" as they spoke "*concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how [their] chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him*", thus dashing their "*hope that he was the one to redeem Israel*" (Luke 24).

As the boxer Mike Tyson said, "*everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth*", our own lives also are suddenly traumatized by the bombshells of news. As Steve Jobs said, perhaps unknowingly providing a contemporary commentary on Romans 8:28 and Genesis 50:20, "*[we] can't connect the dots looking forward. [We] can only connect them looking backwards, so [we] have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in [our] future*". Emotions of hopelessness reflect the curse, condemnation, and 'Final Solution' of the Law. We are moved to admit, "*I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities, with which I have ever offended You and justly deserve Your temporal and eternal punishment*". Without the Easter resurrection, we "*are still in our sins*" and "*are of all people most to be pitied*" (1 Corinthians 15:17-18).

Final note: Given their emotional musical motifs, both pieces have been used in the soundtracks of documentaries relating to the 20th century holocaust associated with World War II. Fratres was used to underscore the somber, horrific subject matter of the 6-part BBC/PBS documentary series Auschwitz: The Nazis and 'The Final Solution'. The Theme from Schindler's List captures the melancholy and resignation of those destined to die in the concentration camps.

The Masoretic (Hebrew) text of the Old Testament uses the Hebrew noun '*olah*' 289 times, literally meaning 'that which goes up [in smoke]'. It is translated as 'burnt offering' in English, 'holocausto' in Spanish, and 'holokarposin' in Greek. One of the earliest extant usages of the Greek word 'holocaust' is found in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament written over 2000 years ago. It is associated with the central theme of Genesis 22 (used 5 times in the first 8 verses of the chapter). Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac, his only son, as a burnt offering (holocaust). This event is a Biblical foreshadowing of the sacrificial offering of Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, on the cross. Isaac is spared by God, whilst the sacrificial offering (though not a burnt offering) of Jesus takes place to atone for our sins.

If you wish to listen to these pieces later online, here are links:

Fratres: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yl5-icz-CBQ>

Main Theme-Schindler's List: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLgJQ8Zj3AA>