

JUBILATE DEO
OFFERTORY - 2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
Rev. J. E. Ronan 1946

THERE IS SOME doubt as to the exact amount of music Monsignor Ronan actually wrote. It is known that he was a prolific composer, and was in fact writing up until the day he died in 1962. Looking at some of the old manuscripts, it is difficult to know just when a given piece was finally completed to his satisfaction, as he was apt to revise some compositions several times.

Monsignor's magnificent *Tenebrae* music was composed in the 1920's, although the exact date is not known, and, with characteristic thoroughness, and with impatience with anything he considered less than perfect, he even revised these. The *Tenebrae* responsories were written to be sung by the seminarians of St. Augustine's, plus the men of his Cathedral Schola, (in a first and second tenor, baritone and bass configuration,) during solemn evening services held in St. Michael's Cathedral on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Holy Week. These services were held "in anticipation" of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The Music

Tenebrae is still sung in St. Michael's Cathedral each year on Wednesday of Holy Week — usually with a goodly gathering of graduates attending — in the form of a sacred service, with appropriate readings between each of the responsories. These consist of *In Monte Oliveti*, *Tristis Est Anima Mea*, *Ecce Vidimus*, *Omnes Amici*, *Velum Templi*, *Vinea Mea Electa*, *Sicut Ovis*, *Plange Quasi Virgo*, and *Jerusalem Surge*. They are all extremely sonorous, romantic and beautiful in their effect.

These compositions are seldom sung anywhere else, or by any other choir. One notable exception was in 1986, when a Choir School graduate, attending the University of Western Ontario in London, and singing with Western's "Faculty Singers" in the National Choral Competition sponsored by the CBC, suggested to his conductor that *Jerusalem Surge*, which is part of the Holy Saturday Office, be sung by the group. The result was that the "Faculty Singers" not only won an award for the best choir, but also one for the best choice of composition.

Monsignor Ronan would have liked that.

Other well-known and frequently performed Ronan compositions are the *Kyrie* from his Mass in honour of St. John the Evangelist; the *Tu es Petrus*, written in 1938 and sung when Archbishop McGuigan returned from Rome after being elevated to the Cardinalate; *Ave Maria*; *Jubilate Deo*; *Dextera Domini*. In addition to composing mixed and equal voice settings of the Mass (Introits, Graduals, Tracts, Offertories and Communions) for the various Sundays and Feasts of the liturgical year, Monsignor also edited four separate editions of his "Jubilee Hymns", and one edition of "Jubilee Hymns and Parish Worship" hymn books.

In the modern, second edition of *The Catholic Book of Worship*, used for choir and congregational singing all across Canada, a beautiful hymn by Monsignor Ronan, "Out of the depths to Thee O Lord I cry" (*De Profundis*) is included. Aptly, after his death, it was entitled "Adjala", after the Township where he was born.