

- 1 On the night of the 22nd August in 1741 a bent figure - looking older than his years - was seen to be moving slowly and unsurely along a dimly-lit street in London. The man was ill and depressed and was struggling with his life, especially as he had suffered a stroke a few years before, paralysing his right side, affecting his walking and writing.
- 2 This was the great composer George Frideric Handel, who was the king's chief musician. Feeling in despair he heard some words as he passed a church: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*". These words of a psalm touched him deeply. He returned home and began to write some music. From this day, August 22nd, until September 14th he wrote his music almost non-stop, sleeping and eating little. What he wrote is now world-famous and is called "*The Messiah*". On finishing this masterpiece, he slept for 17 hours. "*The Messiah*" is an opera in which singers present the life of Jesus from his birth to his death and resurrection, and so the music of Handel's "*Messiah*" is often sung, especially at Christmas and Easter.
- 3 When King George II attended a performance of Handel's "*Messiah*" he was so impressed and touched by the "*Hallelujah Chorus*" that he stood up. The audience saw the king and felt that if he stood up, then they should, too. In every performance, now, of Handel's "*Messiah*", all the audience stand up throughout the "*Hallelujah Chorus*".
- 4 Handel was a committed Christian, and all performances of his music whilst he was alive were in aid of charities of his choice. The "*Messiah*" was first performed in Dublin, in aid of some charities which included "poor and distressed

people who were in prison for debt". Whilst talking about the time he was composing the "*Hallelujah Chorus*", Handel is reputed to have said:

"I thought I saw all heaven before me, and the great God himself."

- 5 Handel was completely blind for the last 6 years of his life. He died in London in 1759, and the last musical performance he heard was a week earlier, and it was his "*Messiah*".
- 6 *Let us pray:*

God our Father,

**I thank you
that many people
have used their gifts well
and have helped me and inspired me
and brought cheerfulness and joy
in my life.**

May I, too,

**live in such a way
that I bring blessings to others
by my attitude and actions
and my presence with them.**

Remain with me

**and lead me to that final day
when I, too, will be able to say:
"I see all heaven before me
and the great God himself."**

Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org