

GEFANGISGEDICHTE –

A SONG CYCLE SETTING OF THE PRISON POEMS OF FR MAX JOSEF METZGER, MARTYR FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

AMERICAN PREMIERE ST MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH FEB 2 2020
@4pm

St Matthew's Lutheran 405 King St, Charleston, SC 29403. Tel (843) 723-1611



Fr Max Josef Metzger – Army Chaplain in World War 1.

'Gefangisgedicht' are the Prison poems written during three imprisonments of German priest Fr Max Josef Metzger (1887-1944) which have been given a 'Song Cycle' setting by Charleston resident Irish – American composer Cormac O'Duffy. Following his experiences as an Army Chaplain in World War 1, Fr Metzger had spent his whole life dedicated to the causes of world peace and Christian unity. He was constantly hounded by the Nazi authorities and finally was executed for his beliefs and ministry by the Gestapo in a Prison in Berlin on April 17 1944.

Born in the small Black Forest town of Schopfheim, he was ordained the priesthood in 1911 at the age of 24. Later, with two other priest friends, he decided to establish his own religious community as a Catholic type of 'Salvation Army' dedicated to different types of social work. His community was based in the small town of Meitingen in Bavaria, just north of the City of Augsburg, and it was from this base he started his movement called "Una Sancta", taking the title from the Latin words for 'one and holy' from the Nicene Creed. The aim of this movement was to seek to bring together Catholics and Lutherans in Germany who had for over 400 years lived separately from each other in each of the German states, where the King or Duke of each state had decided the religious confession of its citizens, in the spirit of 'Cuius Regio, eius religio'. To Catholics up to this time Luther was often described as the worst of all heretics, whilst to Lutherans, Luther was often thought as the greatest Apostle since St Paul. During the

early part of the 20th century these caricatures were re-evaluated by various Catholic and Lutheran academics, and, in the light of this re-evaluation, Fr Metzger started his Una Sancta movement to help bring together these divided Christians of Germany as a 'one holy' Church. After his martyrdom on April 17 1944 his movement was taken up by both Catholic and Lutheran Churches, finally leading to the historic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification which was signed by leaders of both Churches in Augsburg in November 1999, the first such agreement since the time of the Reformation. In March 2014 the case for the canonization of Fr Max as a Catholic saint was submitted to the Vatican from his home Diocese at the Cathedral of Freiburg in Baden-Württemberg.

The Song Cycle Gefangisgedicht was written in 2018-9 by Charleston resident Irish- American Composer Cormac O'Duffy. When he discovered that 2019 was the 100th anniversary of the founding of Fr Max's Institute in Meitingen, he explored the possibility of having its World premiere in Max's home town as a gift to his Community. The premiere took place on November 3rd 2019 when the Song Cycle was sung by a massed Choir of 90 singers from local Catholic and Lutheran Churches in St Wolfgang's Parish, accompanied by musicians from the local community. Church bells were rung at the end of the performance in both the Catholic and Lutheran churches as a sign of respect for this martyr for faith.

The American premiere of Gefangisgedicht will take place at St Matthew's Lutheran Church on King Street in Charleston at 4pm on Sunday February 2nd. The music will be performed by the Taylor Festival Choir which has been described as 'one of the finest choirs in the world'. It will be conducted by their founder Rob Taylor. In the spirit of 'Una Sancta', the performance will be preceded by the motet Beatus Vir by Catholic composer Claudio Monteverdi and followed by Singet Dem Herrn, the motet by Lutheran composer J.S. Bach and. Tickets are available on line at <http://www.tmgcharleston.com>. or at Church from one hour before the performance.



Fr Max Josef Metzger 1887-1944

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