More About NUNC DIMITTUS

Nunc Dimittus is one of three canticles from the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke which are sung at prayer services known as the **Lauds** or **Liturgy of the Hours. Nunc Dimittus** is the night office (Compline), while **Benedictus** is morning office (Matins), and **Magnificat** is evening office (Vespers).

Also called the **Canticle of Simeon**, *Nunc Dimittis* is the traditional Gospel Canticle of Night Prayer (*Compline*). Included in both the Catholic and Lutheran services of *Compline*, the *Nunc Dimittis* is part of the liturgical night office of many Western denominations. In Eastern tradition the canticle is included in Eastern Orthodox Vespers.

According to the narrative in Luke 2:25-32, Simeon was a devout Jew who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem for the ceremony of redemption of the firstborn son, Simeon was there. He took Jesus into his arms and uttered the words that became the canticle and are rendered in the Latin Vulgate as follows:

Vulgate text (Luke 2:29-32):
Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace:
Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum
Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:
Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

English translation:
Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace;
Because my eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples:
A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Over the centuries, numerous composers have produced a great many musical settings of the *Nunc Dimittus*. Some of the better-known of these include those by Heinrich Schütz, Thomas Tallis, Charles Villiers Stanford, and Herbert Howells.

Nunc Dimittus has been recorded for commercial release by the Kühn Choir of Prague and is available on the album **Celestial Voices** from Navona Records.
Go to the Discography page on my website for more information.