# SUSPENSION:
## A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:5

I hope you all had a restful weekend.

Today I'm drawing on the work of one of the most prolific and famous composers of British choral music, Charles Villers Stanford. For many reasons, which I'll outline in just a moment, I have chosen 'O for a Closer Walk With God'. I think you will agree it really is stunning.

Today marks the Anointing at Bethany, the point during Holy Week when Mary (sister of Martha and Lazarus) prepares Jesus for his burial by cleansing him with expensive oils, and oil that is used to anoint at baptism is done in imitation of this. Now, there's a whole heap of music written for, or performed during, baptism. There are countless hymns, psalms, songs, anthems, meditations and so on, all of which reflect on the process of baptism and its meaning for Christians.  In my humble opinion, none articulates quite as beautifully as this does, the notion that baptism is the first step in the life of a Christian.

The theme of walking with God, however, has further significance at this point in time.  Yesterday I was reminiscing with my family about the wonderful procession St. Barnabas members led across Clapham Common on Palm Sunday last year. I thought about the millions of Christians across the world who, for the first time in many years, will have found themselves unable to take part in this symbolic walk with Christ yesterday. I hope that listening to this piece will in some way be a way of simulating that virtually.

**Something to listen out for in this piece:**  Stanford's writes the theme of walking *into* the piece.  For starters, the tempo marking is 'andante molto tranquilo' which means 'at a walking pace, very calm'.  He even sets the words to a never-ending stream of moving crotchets, which makes the music feel like a gentle stroll.  While you're listening, try walking around your living room or your garden in time to the beat of the music, and I think you'll see what I mean.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ezFY-icxH8

Sarah