

## L'Orgue Mystique - Charles Tournemire

Charles Tournemire began work on his large scale set of 51 suites for organ in 1927 after many years improvising at the weekly Mass upon the chant propers used at Sainte Clothilde, Paris. Beginning with the suites for Easter and Christmas, Tournemire began to present an eschatological portrayal of the mystery of redemption as it unfolds in the liturgical calendar. There followed suites for the feast of the Immaculate Conception and Pentecost.

Each suite of movements intends to meditate on the liturgy and its texts and uses a unique combination of modal and chromatic harmony, representing the creator God and humankind. Each suite has five movements (excepting Holy Saturday), entitled *Prélude à l'Introït*, *Offertoire*, *Élévation*, *Communion* and *Pièce Terminale* which normally has a specific title. The 51 suites are divided into three cycles: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. As the organ was not normally used during Advent or Lent, there are no suites for those Sundays.

The movements are based on one or several plainchant melodies. The *Introit*, *Offertorio* and *Communion* propers for Mass are used. An antiphon from Vespers is used for the third movement and the final movements use various chants from the day, hymn melodies and other recurring themes taken from the liturgical year.

Tournemire drew heavily for inspiration from the fifteen-volume work *L'Année Liturgique* by the first Abbott of Solemnes, Dom Prosper Guéranger. These volumes had been a gift from Joseph Bonnet who suggested that there was a need for a collection of works for the liturgical year based on Gregorian chant.

Robert has been recording suites from L'Orgue Mystique for a number of years using the virtual realization of the Cavallé-Coll organ in St. Etienne, Caen by Sonus paradisi. He has produced four CDs. These contain two suites each: 7 & 50, 15 & 51, 23 & 27, 26 & 28. Recordings on the St. Martin's website are taken from these CDs which may be ordered online (although should anyone want other movements, individual mp3 files can be emailed free of charge to SSM parishioners).