

A psalmist on his one hundredth birthday

by [Jill Peláez Baumgaertner](#) in the [October 10, 2018](#) issue

(For Paul Bouman)

This long stretch of years, fast dissolving into the past,
Is merely the instant before the conductor raises his baton,
Before the first stirrings of soil as the green-tipped crocus breaks through,
Before the images fill the page of the poet
When beauty is no more than a tug of words on the tongue. *Selah.*

Now his one hundredth summer is blooming, blooming,
And stretches its long stems toward the birthday that marks a century
Of beginnings—of liturgies sung and the pure tones of children’s voices,
Of worship in a place of anthems and cantatas,
Of the organ in the choir loft imprinted with his DNA,
Its pipes and ranks deft with Bach, with Luther’s hymns,
And the psalmist’s own harmonies, deep and delicate. *Selah.*

Centuries ago an artist painted Christ stretched on the cross,
The cross a giant lute, the strings the seven heavenly spheres,
Their music created by God’s hand tuning the instrument,
Stretching Christ tighter, tighter until the melody of our salvation
Bursts forth from the universe, newly redeemed, restored. *Selah.*

This resurrection is the psalmist’s music, the only song he sings
Amidst lament and joy, a holy melody, the bread of life his flesh,
his to put on, the Word made flesh his canticle. *Selah.*