

Prelude

Chorale Fughetta on “*O Filii et Filiae*” (O Sons and Daughters)

James F. Konkel (b. 1961)

Dr. Dave Faber, organ

Hymn of Praise 6

I Bind unto Myself Today

ST. PATRICK, DEIRDRE

This hymn text is attributed to St. Patrick, the “Apostle of Ireland,” and is a trinitarian prayer of protection, which is why it is often called “St. Patrick’s Breastplate.” If Patrick is truly the author of these lines, then this text dates to the 5th century. The lines were translated and arranged as a modern English poem by Cecil Frances Alexander in 1889.

“I bind unto Myself Today” is a hymn from a completely different time and place, one in which the things of legends were reality. On the one hand, the revival of interest in Celtic spirituality over the past few generations has likely been part of its endurance, with its melding of the things of the natural and supernatural world. On the other, its bold reliance on the triune God for protection of soul and body is supremely relevant during such turbulent times. It is a reminder that, for the Christian, the idea of “peace” can never mean the absence of conflict, but rather the assurance of a deep faith in the Holy Presence in and around us. Another hymn, Pastor Jones’s favorite hymn, in fact, plainly states this concept:

*The peace of God, it is no peace,
But strife closed in the sod.
Yet brothers [and sisters], pray for but one thing -
The marvelous peace of God.*

This hymn is interesting in that it uses two hymn tunes. Most of it is set to ST. PATRICK, taken from a traditional Irish melody, while one stanza, a solemn, humble prayer in contrast with the rest of the poem, uses DEIRDRE, based on another Irish melody and arranged by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. “I Bind unto Myself Today” first appears in a Presbyterian hymnal in *Glory to God*, while it has been commonly sung in many denominations on Trinity Sunday, for the Feast of St. Patrick, and confirmation and ordination services for well over a century.

Not appearing in *Glory to God* are these stanzas:

I bind unto myself the power
of the great love of cherubim;
the sweet “Well done” in judgment hour;
the service of the seraphim;
confessors’ faith, apostles’ word,
the patriarchs’ prayers, the prophets’ scrolls;

all good deeds done unto the Lord,
and purity of virgin's souls.

Against the demon snares of sin,
the vice that gives temptation force,
the natural lusts that war within,
the hostile foes that mar my course;
Or few or many, far or nigh,
in ev'ry place and in all hours,
against their fierce hostility,
I bind to me those holy pow'rs.

Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry,
Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death wound and the burning,
The choking wave, the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.

Response of Praise 581

Glory Be to the Father

GLORIA PATRI

Hymn of Preparation 1

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty

NICAEA

The beloved and familiar congregational hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy!" was written specifically for Trinity Sunday by Reginald Heber (1783-1826), an Anglican bishop, poet, and a clergyman with an evangelistic fervor. Born into a privileged childhood, Heber made his way from an appointment at a rural England parish, where his father had served before him, to India, where he was consecrated as Bishop of Calcutta. Heber had gained some attention for his poetry while a student at Oxford University, where he won the coveted Newdigate Prize for his poem, "Palestine." As a clergyman, he knew of the hymns being sung in Methodist and evangelical circles written by hymn-writers such as Charles Wesley (1707-1788), and he sought to write beautiful and theologically rich poetry for use in the Anglican churches. Heber appealed to the church hierarchy for permission to publish a compilation, but his proposal was rejected. After three years as Bishop of Calcutta, Heber died suddenly, and after his death, his widow was able to get his volume published. Other Heber hymns still in common use include "Brightest and best of the sons of the morning" (*The Hymnbook* [1955] no. 175) and "Ride on! ride on in majesty!" (*Glory to God* no. 198).

The text is based on the biblical account of the heavenly liturgy in Isaiah 6:3, quoted again in Revelation 4:8:

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

The beasts refer to the angels that continually sing around the throne of God, and they are mentioned in stanza two of the hymn text as the “cherubim and seraphim” falling down before God. The “holy” acclamation also hearkens to the opening line of the *Sanctus* from the Mass, which you will recognize from our Communion liturgy: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.”

The hymn combines biblical imagery to shed some light on this profound mystery. The repetitions of “Holy! Holy! Holy!” are artistically blended with variations in each stanza. According to hymnologist J.R. Watson, “The result is a powerful combination of images which explore the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity, combining it with the aspirations of human worship. Thus although sin prevents us from seeing the glory of God, and his perfection, the congregation on earth (‘early in the morning’) can unite with the saints and with the cherubim and seraphim.

Heber’s poetry brilliantly undergirds the trinitarian emphasis of his text in numerous ways. First and most obviously, the opening trifold acclamation of ‘Holy! Holy! Holy!’ is repeated six times in the four-stanza hymn. The saints join the cherubim and seraphim in falling down before the throne of the triune God, who “wert, and art, and evermore shall be.” Stanza three declares that God is perfect in power, love, and purity. Finally, stanza four calls the works of the Lord to praise him in “earth and sky and sea.”

The tune was called NICAIA after the Council of Nicaea, which clarified the early church’s doctrine on trinitarian theology and delivered to the church the Nicene Creed that is still recited today. NICAIA was composed by John Bacchus Dykes especially for Heber’s text. The tune further reinforces the strong trinitarian structure of the hymn with major triads in the melody. The momentary departure to the dominant key in measure 8 seemingly propels the stately text, not allowing it to be bogged down by the consecutive 12-syllable lines. The minor vi chord underlying the beginning of the fourth line gives a penultimate feel, leading to the strong resolution on the tonic note.

Communion Music

O Sons and Daughters

Alfred V. Fedak (b. 1953)

Dave Faber, organ

Offertory

Gene Coburn, piano

Doxology 609

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Hymn of Commitment 4

Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

GROSSER GOTT, WIR LOBEN DICH

One of the most widely-sung Christian hymns, “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name” is an 18th-century German paraphrase of the 4th-century Latin hymn, *Te Deum*.

*We praise thee, O God we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee the Father everlasting.
To thee all Angels cry aloud the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee;
The Father of an infinity Majesty;
Thine honorable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.
Thou art the King of Glory O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death
thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.
We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants
whom thou has redeemed with thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy Saints in glory everlasting.*

“Holy God, We Praise Thy Name” has been adopted by most Protestant traditions, and is one of the most revered English hymn texts for Roman Catholics, as well. WCPC member Lue Penton, herself raised Catholic, shared with me that this was one of the few hymns she immediately recognized from her childhood after becoming Protestant.

This hymn is broad enough in scope for general use throughout the liturgical year, but the concluding stanza makes it my favorite choice for the hymn of commitment on Trinity Sunday.

Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit: three we name thee,
While in essence only one; undivided God we claim thee,
And adoring, bend the knee
While we own the mystery.

Trinity Sunday is colloquially known among clergy and theologians as “Heresy Sunday.” The reasoning behind this is probably two-fold. Firstly, no one can adequately explain

the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is a mystery we cannot comprehend. Secondly, many of the heresies identified by the early church had to do with beliefs that failed to maintain the delicate tension of the Three-in-One. When I was doing my graduate theological work a number of years ago, I once wrote a heretical research paper on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Please know that I certainly did not mean to do so! But when I got it back from my professor, he actually offered to raise my score by a letter grade if I could only identify the particular type of heretic I had proclaimed myself to be in my paper. So it goes with these difficult theological concepts. In the end, as the hymn proclaims, there is little we can do, other than to join the saints on earth and in heaven and, “adoring, bend the knee” and be willing to, in faith, kneel before such a profound mystery.

Postlude

Toccatà on “O Filii et Filiae”

Lynnwood Farnam (1885-1930)

Dave Faber, organ