

# Singing Our Faith

## 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 28, 2018

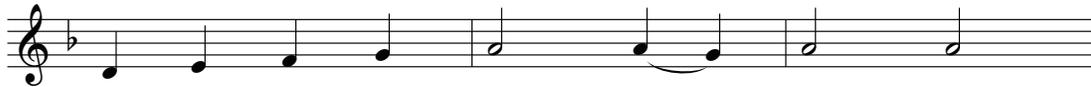
### Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence



1. Let all mor - tal flesh keep si - lence,  
 2. King of kings, yet born of Mar - y,  
 3. Rank on rank the host of heav - en  
 4. At his feet the six - winged ser - aph;



And with fear and trem - bling stand;  
 As of old on earth he stood,  
 Spreads its van - guard on the way;  
 Cher - u - bim with sleep - less eye



Pon - der noth - ing earth - ly - mind - ed,  
 Lord of lords in hu - man ves - ture,  
 As the Light of Light, de - scend - ing  
 Veil their fac - es to the Pres - ence,



For with bless - ing in his hand  
 In the Bod - y and the Blood  
 From the realms of end - less day,  
 As with cease - less voice they cry:



Christ our God, to earth de - scend -  
 He will give to all the faith -  
 Comes, the pow'rs of hell to van -  
 "Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -



ing, Comes, our hom - age to de - mand.  
 ful His own self for heav'n - ly food.  
 quish, As the dark - ness clears a - way.  
 ia! Al - le - lu - ia, Lord Most High!"

Text: Liturgy of St. James 5th C.; para. by Gerard Moultrie, 1829–1885, alt.  
 Tune: PICARDY, 8 7 8 7 8 7; French carol; harm. by Richard Proulx, 1937–2010

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One of the beauties of the Catholic Church's treasury of music is that we sing texts and music dating back many centuries. They are still as beautiful and relevant today as they were hundreds of years ago. The hymn text “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” is a paraphrase of an ancient chant of Eucharistic devotion, with its title based on Habakkuk 2:20. The original text was composed in Greek and likely dates back as far as AD 275. The hymn tune, entitled “PICARDY,” is a medieval French folk melody. It was arranged by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1906 specifically for this text. The haunting and mysterious nature of the tune illuminates the wonder and awe of the words we sing.

The Sunday readings focus on God’s authority and our obedience to it. While the hymn “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” doesn’t directly relate to the scriptures, it focuses our attention on the Mass. The first stanza eloquently tells us: “Pay attention!” It begs us to let go of our worldly worries – “Ponder nothing earthly minded.” Fr. Jim reminded us last week that Jesus is truly present in the Living Word of God and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist at Mass – a presence that “demands our homage.”

As the text goes on, the symbolism and theology get richer. The third and fourth stanzas recall the timelessness of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist. The images of hosts of heaven, cherubim and seraphim descending with the Light of Light remind us of the angels and saints that accompany us every time the Eucharist is celebrated. Notice the

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words “Cherubim with sleepless eye,” which points to the unceasing praise offered in the liturgy of heaven. From the Catechism...

1187 The liturgy is the work of the whole Christ, head and body. Our high priest celebrates it **unceasingly** in the heavenly liturgy, with the holy Mother of God, the apostles, all the saints, and the multitude of those who have already entered the kingdom.

This timeless hymn text fulfills the Church’s purpose of the entrance hymn: “To introduce the thoughts of the faithful to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity.”

The people in the synagogue were amazed: ““What is this? A new teaching with authority.” They had no idea who this teacher was. We do. Despite this, sometimes we need a hymn like “Let All Mortal Flesh” to reminds us of the true beauty and richness of the liturgy. When we realize this, we are reduced to **silence**. Perhaps the words of the saints and faithful disciples can express our affections...

*“If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy.”*

*St. Jean Vianney*

*“Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.”*

*Lazarus’ sister Martha in John 11:27*

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