

## Singing Our Faith 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 30, 2018

Before I get into the details of the new hymn that will be introduced this weekend, I want to go through a “crash course” on hymnody. Hold on, here we go. Hymn texts are composed to poetic meters with a preset number of syllables per line of text. For instance, the hymns “Alleluia, Sing to Jesus” and “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” share a common meter of 8 7 8 7 D (“D” means “repeat” so it’s literally 8 7 8 7 8 7 8 7). You’ll notice often that a words in a hymn stanzas are capitalized in the middle of sentences – this indicates the beginning of a new line of the poem. One of the practicalities of hymnody is that you can mix and match texts and tunes. In many cases throughout hymnody, a modern text can be paired with an ancient tune. This is an exception in the world of vocal music, since, in most other cases, a composer writes the music **after** the text has been written. Whether composing new music to fit a text, or selecting the right hymn tune for a new hymn text, the nature of vocal music is consistent – **the music expresses the story being told in the text**. In other words, the hymn **tune** we sing should express the hymn **text**.

Jesus doesn’t sugar coat the message in Sunday’s gospel: don’t cause others to sin, and the best way to do that is to nix your own sinfulness. The new hymn “God Whose Purpose is to Kindle” also uses strong language to send us out into the world with the gospel. Just in the first stanza we have words like **ignite, fire, burning, passion,** and **inspire**. While Jesus refers to body parts that actively cause us to sin, stanza 1 of the hymn refers to sins of **omission**, when we choose to refrain from being active disciples - “Overcome our sinful calmness.” Stanza 2 continues in this regard with phrases like “With your sharpened

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Word disturb us, from complacency release!” And so on. The last phrase of stanza 3 expresses why coming to Mass is so important - “Lift the smallness of our vision by your own abundant life.” When we gather as a community, our senses are tuned in to the realm of the Divine as God speaks to us through his Word, and our souls are nourished with the Bread of Life. These spiritual foods lift us from our small comfort zones and help us to realize the physical needs of others in our community and in the world, the spiritual need our world has for Christ, and how we fit into that picture as baptized Christians - priests, prophets, and kings.

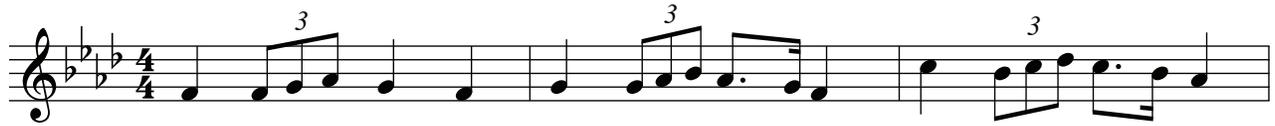
The tune paring for this text is quite excellent, as it exemplifies the strength, nobility, and directness found in the text. The tune’s original name is "Ton-Y-botel" (tune in a bottle) because of a legend that it was found written down on a paper in a bottle along the Welsh Coast. It is renamed “Ebenezer” in many hymnals (ours included) after the chapel which Thomas John Williams attended at the time he composed the tune. The word “Ebenezer” is Hebrew for “Stone of Help” - another **strong** reference! We’ll sing this hymn for several weeks to “work it into our voices” and you may even hear it as incidental music throughout Mass. May this text reignite and inspire all of us in our outreach ministries to the poor, vulnerable, and voiceless of our world.

Stephen Eros

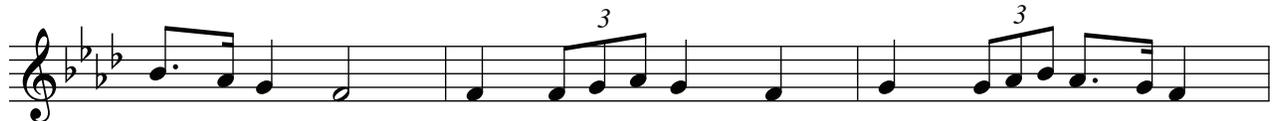
Director of Liturgy & Music

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**God, Whose Purpose Is to Kindle**



1. God, whose pur - pose is to kin - dle, Now ig - nite us  
2. God, who still a sword de - liv - ers Rath - er than a  
3. God, who in your ho - ly gos - pel Wills that all should



with your fire. While the earth a - waits your burn - ing,  
plac - id peace, With your sharp - ened sword dis - turb us,  
tru - ly live, Make us sense our share of fail - ure,



With your pas - sion us in - spire. O - ver - come our  
From com - pla - cen - cy re - lease! Save us now from  
Our tran - quil - i - ty for - give. Teach us cour - age



sin - ful calm - ness, Stir us with your sav - ing name.  
sat - is - fac - tion, When we pri - vate - ly are free,  
as we strug - gle In all lib - er - at - ing strife.



Bap - tize with your fier - y Spir - it,  
Yet are un - dis - turbed in spir - it  
Lift the small - ness of our vi - sion



Crown our lives with tongues of flame.  
By our neigh - bor's mis - er - y.  
By your own a - bun - dant life.