



Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!

Text: William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

Tune: Rowland Hugh Prichard (1811-1887)

As the Church remembers Christ's ascension into heaven, we also remember His promises: "I will not leave you orphans" (John 14:18) and "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Though it seems Jesus' ascension goes against His promises, we remember that He is with us in other ways. Though we may not behold Him bodily, the same way the disciples did, Jesus fulfills His promises through His Means of Grace: His Word and His Sacraments. Through these Means He is with us always to give us the comfort that only He can give. In this great Ascension hymn, we confess that, though we do not understand how, Christ is with us as "both Priest and Victim in the Eucharistic Feast."



Wm. C. Dix

This Ascension treasure was given to the Church by William Chatterton Dix. He was born June 14, 1837 in Bristol, to John and Susan Dix. Early in life his father abandoned the family so he could settle in America. His mother raised William and his two sisters in the best manner she could. His sisters went on to become music teachers. William received his early education at the Bristol grammar school and eventually a private school in Frome, Somerset. While in private school, he helped pay for his education by working as a clerk in his grandfather's soap and candle manufacturing works.

Dix found his spiritual home in St. Raphael's, Bristol, a parish known for its dedication to preserving the liturgy and ceremony of the church. About 1859 he wrote his first collection of hymns, *Hymns of Love and Joy*, for the choir of St. Raphael's. This collection

included his best-known hymn, "As With Gladness Men of Old," a hymn for the Epiphany of Our Lord.

The Lord's Supper became the most important thing in Dix's life. Depression affected Dix several times in his life, and he found the greatest comfort in this Sacrament. His father's abandonment afflicted him several times throughout his life. Additionally, around age 29 he suffered a near fatal illness and was forced to spend several months in bed. This sent him into one of his deepest depressions in life. However, it is during this time that he wrote one of his best hymns, "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!" It was included in his *Altar Songs: Verses on the Holy Eucharist* in 1867, and was later published in the popular hymnal *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1868).

Though Dix wrote fine hymns, he was not theologically trained. After he married his wife, Juliet Wartnaby, on June 30, 1864, they moved to Glasgow where he became an insurance broker. In their years in Glasgow the two had seven children (four daughters and three sons). In 1877 they returned to Bristol, where Dix became a clerk in the post office and later an assessor of income tax. The two eventually retired to Cheddar in Somerset, where he died from complications from a bladder infection on September 9, 1898.

The popular hymn tune HYFRYDOL was written by Rowland Hugh Prichard. Prichard was born near Bala, Wales, and spent most of his life there. He was a composer of tunes which appeared in several Wales periodicals. This tune, one of his best, was written when he was only 19 years old. *Hyfrydol* is Welsh for "tuneful" or "pleasant."

"Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!" teaches us about Christ's Ascension. His majesty is seen in stanzas one and four as we sing of Christ's scepter and throne as well as His heavenly enthronement with earth as His footstool. Though He is in His ascended glory, He still is with His children on earth, especially as "Priest and Victim in the Eucharistic Feast." In the Holy Communion He fulfills that promise to be with us, "though the cloud from sight received Him when the forty days were over" (st. 2). Because Christ has ascended and exalted our human nature, we will be with Him to praise Him that "out of every nation," Jesus "has redeemed us by His Blood."