



## For All the Saints Who from Their Labors Rest

**Text: William Walsham How (1823-1897)**

**Tune: Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Few hymns have seen such wide acceptance as William How's *For All the Saints Who from Their Labors Rest*. This hymn is a favorite for the Feast of All Saints and funerals because of its joy in Christ which belongs to those who have been added to the Church Triumphant.

The text of *For All the Saints* was written by William Walsham How. How was born in 1823 in Shrewsbury, England. He was Ordained in 1846 and was made Curate (the equivalent of Assistant Pastor) at Kidderminster and later Holy Cross, Shrewsbury. In 1851 he became Rector (one who presides over an ecclesiastical institution) of St. Andrew's, Undershaft. Eventually he became the Suffragan Bishop (regional Bishop) of East London. He was offered the Office of Bishop at Manchester and Durham, two of the most distinguished positions in the Church of England. How authored several books on Pastoral Theology in addition to many hymnals. His first hymnal was *Psalms and Hymns*, which he published in 1854. He later edited *Church Hymns* in 1871, which was a popular Anglican hymnal. He died in August 1897.

The tune of *For All the Saints*, SINE NOMINE (which means *no name*), was written by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Vaughan Williams was one of the leading composers of the 20th Century. His musical training was second to none, including degrees from the Royal College of Music (London) and Trinity College, Cambridge. He also studied in Paris and Berlin, two cities well-known for their musical education at the time. Vaughan Williams went on to serve as lecturer at Oxford University and professor of composition at his *alma mater*, Royal College of Music. His chief area of concentration was choral music. His choral compositions are the finest

compositions of the 20th Century. He also served as musical editor of several hymnals, most notably *the English Hymnal* (1906) and *Songs of Praise* (1925).

When How wrote *For All the Saints*, he penned an eleven-stanza hymn. However, very few hymnals include all eleven stanzas. Most omit three stanzas. *the Lutheran Hymnal* followed suit and omitted the most commonly omitted stanzas, which are the original stanzas three, four, and five. They read:

For the Apostles' glorious company  
Who, bearing forth the cross o'er land and sea,  
Shook all the mighty world, we sing to Thee:  
Alleluia, alleluia!

For the Evangelists, by whose pure Word  
Like fourfold stream, the garden of the Lord  
Is fair and fruitful, be Thy Name adored.  
Alleluia, alleluia!

For martyrs who with rapture-kindled eye  
Saw the bright crown descending from the sky  
And, dying, grasped it, Thee we glorify:  
Alleluia, alleluia!

Interestingly, *the Lutheran Hymnal* alters the order of How's stanzas. What we have printed as stanza eight has never been printed as the hymn's last stanza; it is always the second-to-last stanza. How's original hymn ends with the Doxological stanza, "From earth's wide bounds..." Later Lutheran hymnals have not made the same alteration.

This hymn is a proper hymn for this day. While it calls to mind the "saints who from their labors rest," it always points us to Christ, in whom these saints rejoice. The second stanza is especially comforting to us who remain in the Church Militant, for it confesses that Christ is not only our Fortress, but our Captain who fights for us. Finally, it bids us look beyond this vale of tears to the blest Communion which awaits us, the Communion whose "distant triumph song" we sing each week in the *Sanctus*. This song and Supper preserve us for that glorious day when we join all the saints streaming through gates of pearl, singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: alleluia, alleluia!