



## Glory Be to Jesus

**Text: Alfonso Liguori (1696-1787)**

**Tune: Friedrich Filitz (1804-1876)**

When God was giving the ceremonial law to the Israelites He said, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 17:11) There can be no salvation without the shedding of blood. Therefore it was necessary that for Jesus to make atonement for our sin, He had to shed His innocent blood. This life-giving blood is the subject of the great Lenten hymn, “Glory Be to Jesus.” This hymn centers on the benefits of Jesus’ blood in the life of the Christian.



Alfonso Liguori

Though the writer of this hymn is unknown, it is attributed to Alfonso Liguori. He was born in Naples, the son of Giuseppe and Anna Cavalieri. Early in life he was given a good education, because his family was of noble and wealthy descent. However, he had poor eyesight and chronic asthma, so the military career for which he was being trained was not possible. His father invested in a legal education for Alfonso, and he graduated from the University of Naples at age 16 with doctorates in civil and canon law. He practiced law for 11 years, until he was 27 years old, and resolved to leave the profession after losing his first case since age 19. In a letter to a friend he wrote, “My friend, our profession is too full of difficulties and dangers; we lead an unhappy life and run the risk of dying an unhappy death.” After leaving law he committed himself to a religious life, entering the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, intending to become a priest. His father initially opposed the plan, but came around to it when

Alfonso agreed to study at home. He was ordained December 21, 1726. He spent his first years as a priest serving the homeless and outcast youth of Naples. To serve them he founded something called *Evening Chapels*, places where these young people committed themselves to prayer, hearing the Word of God, social activities, and receiving an education. By the time Alfonso died, there were 72 of these chapels in existence, serving over 10,000 young people. However, he wanted to serve more people so in 1729 he left his family’s home and moved into the interior regions of the Kingdom of Naples, where he found the poorest people of the kingdom, even worse off than the young people of the city proper. In November 1732 he founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, a missionary church founded to serve these poorest people. This body still exists and today serves the poorest residents in 77 countries worldwide. He was made Bishop of Sant’Agata dei Goti in 1762. Though he initially opposed the appointment, he eventually set about trying to correct various abuses in his diocese and seminary and establishing means of helping priests and laity afflicted by sinful lifestyles. He served as bishop until 1775, when he retired and returned to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Pagani, Italy. He died there on August 1, 1787.

“Glory Be to Jesus” is one of two Italian hymns included in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Interestingly, both Italian hymns are in the Lenten section. The other hymn is “Jesus, Refuge of the Weary,” by Girolamo Savonarola.

This hymn praises the blood of Jesus for its role in our salvation. This blood brings “grace and life eternal” (stanza 2) because Jesus shed it in His love and compassion for fallen mankind. He has redeemed us from the “endless torments” of sin by His blood streaming from His pierced side (stanza 3). His blood is what comforts us in our distress, even Abel’s cries for vengeance are stilled by the blood of Jesus pleading for our pardon and admission into heaven (stanza 4). We on earth join with all the company of heaven, wafting our praise on high for this precious blood that forgives us. When earth and heaven join in the Divine Service, we praise God for His love shown in the death of Jesus Christ to make atonement for our sin by the precious flood of Jesus’ blood.