



## Make Songs of Joy to Christ, Our Head

**Text:** Jiří Třanovský (1592-1637)

**Tune:** *Velká Partitúra*, 1936

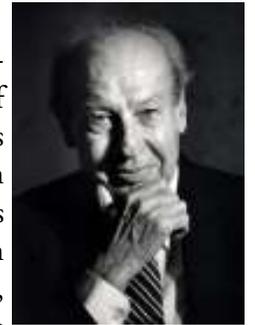
As we continue to sing our joyful Easter hymns, we have the joy of expanding our catalog of hymns. Today's hymn, "Make Songs of Joy to Christ, Our Head" is another good example of an ancient hymn that has been "resurrected" in modern times, a gift to the Church for which we thank God. This excellent hymn, like many others in the Easter section of our hymnal, captures imagery from Paul's great Resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. It is a joy for us to have such a great treasure restored to us!



**Jiří Třanovský**

"Make Songs of Joy" was written by Jiří Třanovský (Anglicized to George), a hymnwriter from the Cieszyn Silesia. He is often referred to as the "Father of Slovak Hymnody" and the "Luther of the Slavs." Třanovský was born in Teschen (modern day Cieszyn, Poland, located in the central south of Poland), and eventually became a student at the University of Wittenberg less than a century after Luther taught there. In 1612 he became a teacher at the Gymnasium (a type of advanced high school and college which gave the equivalent of a modern Bachelor's Degree) in Prague. In 1616 he was ordained in Meziříčí and serves as Pastor there for four years. However, his time there was cut short because of Ferdinand II's persecution of Lutherans in Bohemia. In 1623 he was imprisoned for being Lutheran and his two children died. However, his prison stay was short and in 1624 he received the Call to a church in Bielitz, near his childhood home of Teschen. His final parish post was from 1631-1637 when he served as Pastor in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš, which is present-day Slovakia.

Třanovský was a lover of poetry and hymns. He published several hymnals, the first being in Latin, the *Odarum Sacrarum Hymnorum Libri* in 1629, but his most popular hymnal was the *Cithara Sanctorum* (Lyre of the Saints), which was written in Czech and published in 1636 in Levoča. *Cithara Sanctorum* still serves as the basis for Czech and Slovak Lutheran hymnody to this day. In addition to his work with hymnody, Třanovský also translated the Augsburg Confession into Czech in 1620.



**Jaroslav Vajda**

Thanks to the Rev. Jaroslav Vajda (1919-2008) we have now in English these treasures of Czech and Slovak hymnody. Vajda's father was the Pastor of Holy Trinity Slovak Lutheran Church in East Chicago, Indiana. He began his musical education early in childhood and began translating Slovak poetry at age 18. However, Vajda did not begin to work with hymns until he was near 50 years old. From that time until his death at age 89, he wrote and translated over 200 hymns, which are in use in 65 different hymnals. He became a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, and received numerous honorary doctoral degrees for his work with hymnody. His work with hymnody, like other faithful writers before him, was to fill gaps where they existed in the body of hymns at his time. He wrote and translated numerous hymns for Feasts of the Christ, like Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, and occasions such as Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. In 2000, Concordia Publishing House purchased the rights to all of Vajda's original and translated hymns so the treasure may be preserved for generations to come. Though he retired in 1986, he was very active in the Church until his death.

"Make Songs of Joy" is a triumphant Easter hymn, beginning with an exhortation to sing joyfully to Christ, who lives and once was dead. Bursts of "Alleluia" mark both lines of this hymn and add to its joy. The second stanza calls to mind Isaiah 53, in which the Prophet teaches us that Christ died to pay the price for our sin and to purchase us for Himself. To do this, He had to overcome the tyrants of sin, death, and the devil (stanza four), and by His death has defeated the sting of death and the victory of the grave (stanzas