

The Light of Faith

A hymn for the 125th anniversary of St. Francis Xavier Parish

Author's Notes

As I read the story of St. Francis Xavier and the history of the founding of St. Francis Xavier parish, the common thread that emerged was that of a deep faith. For both St. Francis (as a missionary and cofounder of the Jesuits) as well as the founders of the parish, the words “brave” and “strong” to describe their faith came to mind, and so those words appear early on in the hymn.

Jesus' command to his disciples “Let your light shine” (Mt. 5:16) kept recurring to me as well, so it serves as the core concept uniting all the stanzas of the hymn.

To honor St. Francis' missionary life, I chose not to use the hymn text device of rhyming at the ends of lines. These rhymes provide resting points throughout a hymn, and I wanted this text to have a stronger sense of forward motion. There is only one end-rhyme in the text: between the second lines of each stanza. Instead of end-rhymes, I chose to “anchor” the beginnings of lines three, four, and five with words that share some common sound; the words don't rhyme, but they will resonate with each other when sung.

I also wanted the hymn to honor the Holy Trinity, who appears in the final lines of the first three stanzas.

Since this text is for a most joyful celebration, to the three virtues of faith/hope/love, I added “joy,” and intentionally used positive, action-oriented words throughout as a mark of this festive occasion. This allowed for the greatest of the virtues—love—to be reserved for the final stanza.

As we all were named for Christ (Christ-ened) in baptism, I concluded the text with one of his titles from the Creed: Light from light.

In order for the hymn to be truly unique to this parish anniversary, its pattern of syllables and lines (also called its meter) does not match up with any already-existing hymn melodies (the way that “Joyful, Joyful” and “Alleluia, Sing to Jesus” can be sung to each others' melodies).

I encourage the people of St. Francis Xavier parish to get to know this text before learning it in its musical setting. Speak it aloud, pray it together, find your own faith story at this point in the parish journey of faith.

Congratulations and many more years of blessing!

Alan Hommerding

The Light of Faith

Let the light of faith shine bright,
A faith brave, sure, and strong:
Ready to be Church on mission;
Mercy urging every action;
Glory rings throughout our future—
Let the light Divine shine bright,
Shine through us today!

Let the light of joy shine bright,
A joy where all belong—
Font of graced and saving waters;
Word of wisdom, challenge, healing;
Cross of sacrifice and myst'ry—
Let the light of Christ shine bright,
Shine through us today!

Let the light of hope shine bright,
A hope that counters wrong—
Calling us from daily living;
Forming us around the altar;
Sending us to be a blessing—
Let the Spirit's light shine bright,
Shine through us today!

Let the light of love shine bright,
A love to fill our song!
Faithful to God's lasting promise;
Joyful in a life of service;
Hopeful for our home in heaven—
Let the Light from light shine bright,
Shine through us today!

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