

Hymn of the Week

All Saints Tide

For all the Saints

Words: William Walsham Howe (1823-1897)

Tune: Sine Nomine – Ralph Vaughan Williams

There really could be no other hymn more suited to this week. The author William Walsham Howe started writing hymns as a boy and shared these with his brother and stepsister, what they thought of them we can only imagine!

Howe was an undergraduate at Wadham College, Oxford where he was much influenced by the growing Tractarian movement and thereafter he remained a resolute High Churchman: He was ordained in 1848 and remained a country vicar for 28 years until the seminal moment in his life when he was in 1879 consecrated suffragan Bishop of London with responsibility for Stepney and the East End. Like many High Churchmen Howe threw himself into work with the poor and deprived and became fondly known as the "omnibus bishop" because he preferred public transport to a private carriage.

For many year Howe declined preferment but in 1889 felt it his duty to accept translation to the newly created See of Wakefield, itself another deprived industrial area where he remained until his retirement. During his life Howe published some 54 hymns many of which have now passed into obscurity "For all the saints" originally "For all thy saints remains a shining exception.

The hymn was for many years sung to an eponymously named tune composed for it by the eminent Victorian composer Sir Joseph Barnby in 1869 but in 1906 Vaughan Williams composed his own tune "Sine Nomine" – "without name" to coincide with the inclusion of the hymn in the English Hymnal and since then Barnby's tune has faded into obscurity.

For all the saints is sung here by the choir and congregation of St. Mark's Church, Philadelphia; if you don't happen to share my and Howe's love of High Anglo Catholic ceremony close your eyes and just listen to the robust singing accompanied by the magnificent, huge and historic Aeolian- Skinner organ in the church

https://youtu.be/_BjxfCCcCe0?list=RD_BjxfCCcCe0

Keith Day

27th October 2025