

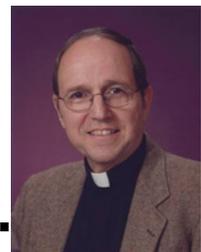
Proper 27 (Series B)

“Lord of All Hopefulness” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #738)

“Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever...Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.” (Psalm 145: 2-3a) The song of praise by David that we know as Psalm 145 sums up in a comprehensive way the right time to be praising God. The words of Psalm 55 are even more specific: “But I call to God...evening, morning and at noon.” (Psalm 55:16a, 17a) What has been described as “the practice of the presence of God” is to be woven throughout each day in all times and in all places. Asking for the presence of God in prayer brings that divine dynamic to each part of the day. In her graciously-worded hymn “Lord of All Hopefulness” twentieth-century author Jan Struther asks the Lord for his active involvement in all parts of her life and our lives with two simple invitational words: “Be there...” In a thoughtful sequence she expands the “be there” motif into the fullness of each day: “Be there...at our waking...our labors...our homing...our sleeping.” There is not any part of our day that is not under the watchful care of our gracious God who, as the Psalmist reminds us, “will neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalm 121:4) God is with us no matter where we are or what time it is or even who we are, for that matter.

On November 2nd the calendars of many Christian Churches list the “Feast of All Souls Day.” Although there are many approaches to the remembrance of the faithful departed in the first days of the eleventh month, one simple way to differentiate between All Saints Day and All Souls Day is to conclude that on November first we are to thank God for all the saints whom we can remember by name and that on the next day we then thank God for all of the saints whose names we do not know but whose witness has informed and encouraged us in our lives of faith. Not every faithful Christian is remembered by name. Many hymn texts have the attribution “anonymous” as do many tunes. Sometimes hymn writers and composers disguise their identities through the use of pseudonyms. One of those people was Jan Struther, the writer of “Lord of All Hopefulness.” Born in London and named Joyce Torrens, she took her adopted penname from her first initial and her mother’s maiden name of Anstruther. A successful author of books including *Mrs. Miniver*, she moved to New York and published literature including poetry, essays and hymns. Through her words we ask for special gifts from the Lord for each day: bliss, strength, love and peace. Although we do know “Jan” as the text writer for LSB 738, we do not know by name the composer of the wonderful Irish melody SLANE to which it is sung in our churches. But whether known by name or not, gifts to the Church such as the renowned lady from London and the nameless tunesmith from Ireland are deserving of our thanks to God whenever—at the break...the noon...the eve...or at the end of the day.

Rev. Gregory J. Wismar
Newtown CT



Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy:
Be here at our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, yours arms to embrace:
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm:
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Text: Jan Struther, 1901-53 Copyright © Oxford University Press
Tune: SLANE, Irish.

[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music. It may be downloaded and duplicated for local use.]