

Devotion on Hymns of the Church (Hymn 172 – Now the Day is Over) – 29 July 2014,
Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



O LORD, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. (Taken from Additional Family Prayers, 1928 BCP, pg 594)

Our Evening Hymn for Vespers was written by Sabrine Baring-Gould in 1865. The Music is titled, Eudoxia, or Lyndhurst, by the same author. It was composed for the children of Horbury Bridge School.

This hymn has a double application in meaning: the first is of the end of a day of play and joy; the second is the twilight of life, when the mantle is laid aside and the spirit is lifted on high, which comports nicely with the evening prayer of Family Prayers from the prayer book quoted above.

Now That Day is Over

Now that day is over,
night is drawing nigh,
shadows of the evening
steal across the sky.
Now the darkness gathers,
stars begin to peep,
birds, and beasts and flowers
soon will be asleep.

Jesus, give the weary
calm and sweet repose;
with thy tenderest blessing
may mine eyelids close.
Grant to little children
visions bright of thee;
guard the sailors tossing
on the deep, blue sea.

Comfort those who suffer,
watching late in pain;
those who plan some evil
from their sin restrain.
Through the long night watches
may thine angels spread
their white wings above me,
watching round my bed.

When the morning wakens,
then may I arise
pure, and fresh, and sinless
in thy holy eyes.
Glory to the Father,
glory to the Son,
and to thee, blest Spirit,
while all ages run.

“Now that day is over, night is drawing nigh, shadows of the evening steal across the sky. Now the darkness gathers, stars begin to peep, birds, and beasts and flowers soon will be asleep.” To the child, twilight comes too early, and there is a great reluctance to accept the inevitable quiet that attends it. As a little boy, I remember fighting sleep until it overwhelmed me. Then, I recall that it seemed that I had only barely closed my eyes when suddenly, the morning light was bursting through my bedroom window. There is another night toward which our lives inch moment by moment. Some will fight that night with desperation and ghostly resolve – for they fear the morning at which they may open their eyes in Hell. There are others who will go gently into that night, secure in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our labors finally end at the last breath of this life, so we must be working and serving our Lord while the day endures. *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”* (John 9:4) As the darkness of death gathers about us, our minds will be fixed on those loved ones whom we leave behind. But the Christian saint looks with a deep longing for rest and Sabbath in the Lord. As the bright sun of life’s day fades, the stars of heaven emerge as a guide and compass for the angels to transport us to our Lord.

“Jesus, give the weary calm and sweet repose; with thy tenderest blessing may mine eyelids close. Grant to little children visions bright of thee; guard the sailors tossing on the deep, blue sea.” The seventh day Sabbath of life begins at the Tomb and ends with the coming brilliance of a glorious sunrise in Heaven. Just as Christ is our Passover (see 1 Cor 5:7), He is also our Sabbath Rest – not only beyond the Gates of Splendor, but even during our days upon earth. If we allow Him to work through us,

we need not exert our needless labors – for He works in and through us. All of the life of a saint is Sabbath. The time comes when the saint grows weary and worn. He will welcome the coming Sun of Righteousness that beckons from beyond the Veil. Jesus is the Lord of blessings both to young and old. Little Children – the choice fruits of God’s Kingdom, are given bright visions of angels and beauty. The men of the sea, struggling against the wintry gales and foaming brine, look up to the outstretched arm of God that they know will save them as in old days. He is the Eternal Father of the Seas, strong to save.

“Comfort those who suffer, watching late in pain; those who plan some evil from their sin restrain. Through the long night watches may thine angels spread their white wings above me, watching round my bed.” Jesus, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother, (Prov 18:24) He is with us last of all when we leave this realm of pain and suffering. He knows about that pain and suffering, for He bore our sins on a cruel cross. He is the Friend who is beside our side when the Holy Angels are summoned as our escort to guide us beyond the stars. To the child, their Holy Angels that behold the face of God always, will stand watches of the night over those precious little jewels of God’s diadem until the dawn of morning illumines the eastern sky. Unfortunately, many little children go to bed at night without knowing that security that the angels offer since their parents never told them.

“When the morning wakens, then may I arise pure, and fresh, and sinless in thy holy eyes. Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, and to thee, blest Spirit, while all ages run.” Both child and elderly saint will awaken to the morning light. The child will awaken refreshed and ready to run, play, and learn greater joys of God’s Creation. The elderly saint, at his home-going, will also awaken to a morning sunrise that will be beyond his imagination for beauty and resplendent light. The old saint, made new in body and spirit, will awaken without tired muscles and aching joints. He will be amazed at the lightness of his step, the clarity of his vision, and the beauty of every sight his eyes behold. But the most beautiful of all heavenly sights will be that of the smiling face of the Man with nail prints to show His love and purchase of us. How exciting to awaken with so many great mysteries revealed at once – we shall be at last at the end of our weary pilgrimage, and in the presence of the fullness of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Many, even this late evening, shall fold their hands in sleep and, not expecting the Hand of so rich a mercy, fall asleep for the last time in Eternity. They awaken to an eternal day of light and glory. Others will suffer a long goodbye of death’s slow hand, but the same glory awaits them at the end of that difficult night. In eternity future, no one will recall that last night of suffering, for all will be eclipsed by the majestic beauty of the Presence of God.

What kind of morning will you awaken to, my good friends?