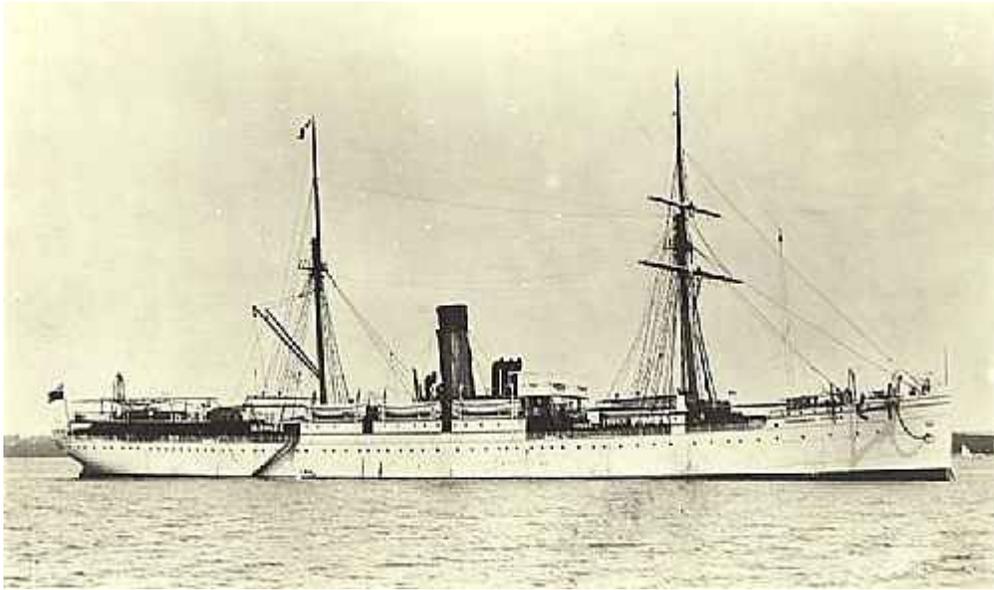


Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 506 – *Father in Heaven* – 3 November 2015,  
Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. (Psalm 32:8)*

Rev. Roger Jessup and I share a common respect and admiration for the author of this hymn – Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). He is defined by a manliness and spiritual depth that characterizes so many great men of history, and it is expressed in a manly deportment and not a flamboyant piety. Kipling had a most interesting background and upbringing that profoundly affected his writing. Born in Mumbai (Bombay), India, to British parents, Rudyard fell in love with the Indian culture and people which was a diverse mix of European Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs. He was robbed of his childhood when, at age six, his mother insisted on sending him to England to attend school at Southsea. Circumstances with his foster parents there were quite strained and Rudyard was miserable throughout that portion of his childhood.

Returning to India in 1882 and marrying Caroline Balestier in 1892, the Kipling's settled in Brattleboro, Vermont where Kipling wrote the *Jungle Book* and *Gunga Din*. He became the highest paid writer in the world and was recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907.

Many of Kipling's works are addressed to children in a presumed attempt to recreate the childhood that Rudyard missed while in England away from his beloved India. In addition to this hymn, Rudyard Kipling also wrote the great Recessional which many of our readers will recall from the first verse:

God of our father, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine –  
Lord God of Host, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

The lyrics for today's hymn are taken from Kipling's, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906). Music is *Truro* (from *Psalmody Evangelica*) by Thomas Williams in 1789. You will observe

that, as in the above hymn, in this hymn Kipling attempts to join moral responsibility, faith and duty with patriotic zeal and love of nation.

### **Father in Heaven, Who Lovest All**

Father in Heaven, who lovest all,  
O help Thy children when they call,  
That they may build from age to age  
An undefiled heritage.

Teach us to bear the yoke in youth,  
With steadfastness and careful truth,  
That, in our time, Thy grace may give  
The truth whereby the nations live.

Teach us to rule ourselves alway,  
Controlled and cleanly night and day,  
That we may bring, if need arise,  
No maimed or worthless sacrifice.

Teach us to look in all our ends,  
On Thee for Judge, and not our friends,  
That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed  
By fear or favor of the crowd.

Teach us the strength that cannot seek,  
By deed or thought, to hurt the weak,  
That, under Thee, we may possess  
Man's strength to comfort man's distress.

Teach us delight in simple things,  
And mirth that has no bitter springs,  
Forgiveness free of evil done,  
And love to all men 'neath the sun.

*Father in Heaven, who lovest all, O help Thy children when they call, That they may build from age to age An undefiled heritage.* Among many profound failures of the Church of the modern day is the failure to establish a moral environment that is conducive to faith, good manners, and a sense of responsibility. The heritage of the Christian faith in the West determined the political, social, and religious contract of society that led to great achievements in art, science, and, yes, religious fervor. Whether we are aware or not, the morals and training we convey to our children determines the heritage of our families, our churches and our political system. A serious assessment of the formerly glorious western culture that trailed in the stream of strong faith and religion will reveal that the fathers of today have failed to pass along the values of the Christian faith to their children. Our culture and faith is of utmost importance in view of John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16) A heritage built upon that solid Rock of Christ will flourish, but those who fall from that high calling will wallow in the dust of failure, strife, and impoverishment.

*Teach us to bear the yoke in youth, With steadfastness and careful truth, That, in our time, Thy grace may give The truth whereby the nations live.* Though while

seedtime and harvest remain, the Door to the Ark of Salvation is open to all comers, yet how much more joyful that youth come to that door and live by that standard in tender years. Sin leaves scars - even forgiven sins - that discomfort in old age. If the tree is not bent as a twig, it will doubtless not be bent as a tall Cedar of Lebanon. *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (Prov 22:6) How quaint to the modern and 'every-thing-goes' ear does "steadfastness and careful truth" sound! In order to sustain honesty and truth, it must be planted, cultivated, and practiced from early youth to maturity, but that is sadly lacking in our youth (and adults) today. Our nation once lived by, and on, the truth of the Gospel of Christ. What vulgar philosophy, however, perpetuates our behavior today?

*Teach us to rule ourselves alway, Controlled and cleanly night and day, That we may bring, if need arise, No maimed or worthless sacrifice.* One can only rule one's own heart by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit! Perhaps it is far more difficult to be honest with ourselves than with others which seems contrary to convenience. *To thine own self be true, and it shall follow as the night the day, that thou canst not be false to any man.* Wm. Shakespeare (Hamlet Act 1, Scene 3, 78-82) That old sage has made a vital point which the ages have proven true. And the rule of our lives must apply to the hours of darkness as well as light. That which is whispered darkness shall be publicly heard. ***What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*** (Matt 10:27) How much greater is the moral contribution of a life lived to full age in Christ compared to that of the vagrant sinner who comes to Christ as an old and decrepit sinner?

*Teach us to look in all our ends, On Thee for Judge, and not our friends, That we, with Thee, may walk uncowed By fear or favor of the crowd.* How many Christians do their alms to be seen of others at church rather than to be done in secret and rewarded by the Father in public! Do we conduct our daily affairs to gain approval of our peers, or to gain the favor of God? Though living to satisfy the watching eyes of others may get us along well in this life for awhile, the dark and stormy days arise in which we find no comfort or peace in our days. It is during such times that we must recognize that Higher Power above all others, and, in the end, the only One that matters. When our days are ripe in age, and our hearts tell us the end is near, what a comfort and strength the Christian has as he approaches those Waters of Jordan while, trailing along doggedly and unwillingly, the non-believer walks in sheer dread and fear of that which is to transpire beyond those turbulent waters.

*Teach us the strength that cannot seek, By deed or thought, to hurt the weak, That, under Thee, we may possess Man's strength to comfort man's distress.* It was the Good Samaritan, not the priest or Levite, who helped the wounded and robbed Jew on the Road to Jericho, and he did so with a human strength born of a heavenly origin - compassion. God is love, and all love descends from Him. That good conscience and moral integrity that restrains from evil and compels to righteousness is born from on High.

*Teach us delight in simple things, And mirth that has no bitter springs, Forgiveness free of evil done, And love to all men 'neath the sun.* A few moments ago, I took a short break from writing to stand outside the doorway of my office. I saw a young man of perhaps 16 or 17 years, badly overweight, poorly dressed, walking to a nearby convenience store. He was paying little heed to where he was going for his face was buried in the screen of his cell phone. He had no idea of his environment, or of matters that bore a strong impact on his livelihood. Our youth are spoon fed technical images and voices that destroy imagination and ingenuity. There are great uses for

technology, however, there is no longer food for the imagination except it be to evil more and more. No longer do our children read in their public school textbooks, as I did when in elementary school, stories of 'When Joseph went down into Egypt,' or 'Daniel in the Lion's Den,' or the life of an old eagle named Hatteras Joe who forsook his God-given abilities to fly above the storm and, instead, placed his faith and confidence in the arm of flesh - and perished!

For some reason unknown to patriots, the 1940 Hymnal committee omitted this last, and most compelling, verse of the hymn:

Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,  
For whose dear sake our fathers died;  
O Motherland, we pledge to thee  
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be.

What a pity to omit this last verse which binds all of the others together in single purpose. We owe to our God-given Country the best that faith has to offer. Men at Concord, at Yorktown, at Vera Cruz, at Chickamauga, at San Juan Hill, at the Battle of Château-Thierry, Ardennes Forest, Iwo Jima, Chosin Reservoir, at Bong Son, at Baghdad, and a hundred other battle-streamered engagements, were indeed led by a force higher than themselves. The pride of the nation is her people of faith and courage. Lacking that attribute, the nation is a mundane power sure to be forgotten. Consider the bloodshed around the world by our fathers who fought and died for the freedoms that we are casting away as worthless tokens of the past! What do we pledge to our Country today? If we pledge at all, it is with great dread and reluctance. We must grow wise on the Manna of Heaven once more; and we must pledge our heads (minds) to plan and provide for responsible government and civil society; our hearts to the Heaven-bought gifts of the Christian faith - and for one another as patriots of this Republic; and our hands to labor to build structures of lasting worth and to provide care and treatment for those citizens whom God has cast before our doors. The answer to our present dilemma is found in God and no place else.