

## All Creatures of Our God and King

### ~Other Speakers G-L: Hymn Stories:

**Author --Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226**

**English Translation --William H. Draper, 1855-1933**

**Music --From the Geistliche Kirchengesänge of 1623**

**Tune Name --"Lasst Uns Erfreuen"**

**Scripture Reference --Psalm 145**

"All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." Psalm 145:10,11

This inspiring expression of praise found in nearly every hymnal was originally written in 1225 by one of the most interesting figures in all of church history. Giovanni Bernardone, who was better known as Saint Francis of Assisi, was a mystic, medieval monk who spent his lifetime as an itinerant evangelist, preaching and helping the poor people of Italy.

Saint Francis was born in Assisi, Italy, in 1182. After an early indulgent life as a soldier, he reformed his ways dramatically, at the age of twenty-five, and determined to serve God by imitating the selfless life of Christ in all that he did. Although his family were people of considerable means, Francis scorned the possession of material goods, denounced his inherited wealth, denied himself everything but the most meager necessities, and devoted himself completely to moving about his area as Christ's representative. At the age of twenty-eight Francis founded the influential Franciscan Order of Friars, which developed into a large movement of young men and some women who adopted his religious beliefs and ascetic style of life.

Saint Francis was known as a great lover of nature, seeing the hand of God in all creation. One of the well-known master paintings from this time was done by the famous Italian artist, Giotto, and shows Saint Francis feeding the birds. The following well-known verse was written in tribute to this man:

Saint Francis came to preach--with smiles he met the friendless, fed the poor, freed a trapped bird, led home a child; Although he spoke no word--his text, God's love, the town did not forget.

Another familiar verse that has become especially popular in recent years is the thoughtful prayer written by this medieval monk during the early years of his life:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is discord, unity.  
Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is error, truth.  
Where there is despair, hope. Where there is sadness, joy. Where there is darkness, light.  
O divine master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console.  
To be understood, as to understand. To be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving, that we receive. It is in pardoning, that we are pardoned.  
It is in dying, that we are born to eternal life.

There are many interesting but strange incidents and legends associated with the life of Saint Francis which are difficult to explain. Historical accounts relate various visitations that Saint Francis is supposed to have had with the Lord. One of those occasions was while Francis was fasting for forty days in the lofty mountain of LaVerne. It is said that this encounter left him for the remainder of his life bearing on his hands, feet and body the stigmata or painful wounds of the crucified Lord. Another account, whether fact or fiction, states that as his soul was being committed to the creator, a flock of larks gathered unmistakably about his little hut and rose, singing a beautiful song in the still evening air.

"All Creatures of Our God and King" is from another of Saint Francis's writings entitled "Canticles of the Sun," said to have been written one hot summer day in 1225, one year before his death, while Francis was very ill and suffering the loss of his eyesight. Throughout his life Saint Francis made much use of singing and believed strongly in the importance of church music. In all he wrote more than sixty hymns for use in the monastery. This beautiful expression of praise is one that has survived the passing of these several hundred years.

The English translation of this text was made by William Draper, a village rector in England, who prepared this paraphrased version for a children's choir festival at some time between 1899-1919. The tune for this text first

appeared in a Roman Catholic hymnal in Cologne, Germany, in 1623. After being forgotten for a time, the tune was revived in the present century and appeared in the English Hymnal, published in London, England, in 1906. An interesting congregational use of this hymn is to sing it as a two, three, or four part round or canon. This can be done simply by disregarding the hold or fermata at the end of the second line. Another interesting practice is to sing the alternating phrases antiphonally.

Although there is much that is difficult to understand and explain about the author of this text, we certainly can be thankful that God ordained the birth, translation and the preservation of this fine expression of praise for His people to enjoy even to the present time.

It should be noted that the Keswick Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," with the alleluias, can be used effectively with this tune.

"Art is man's nature: nature is God's art." --Philip James Bailey

"At home with Nature, and one with God!" --Florence Earle Coates

"Nature is but a name for an effect whose cause is God." --William Cowper

"The man who can really, in living union of the mind and heart, converse with God through nature, finds in the material forms around him, a source of power and happiness inexhaustible, and like the life of angels. The highest life and glory of man is to be alive unto God; and when this grandeur of sensibility of Him, and this power of communion with Him is carried, as the habit of the soul, into the forms of nature, then the walls of our world are as the gates of heaven." --George B. Cheever