



# "Faith of Our Fathers"

*June Hymn of the Month*

*Just as picturesque scenes can bring peace and calmness to the soul, so does beautiful music*

## The Hymn



Many countries throughout the world have a day set aside to honor fathers and father figures. The observance is said to have begun in the United States of America

(U.S.) about 1910 and became an official holiday in 1972. Other countries adopted the inspiration and in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and several other countries, the observance occurs in the month of June. It is a time to remember and give thanks to those men who have given us life and the opportunities we enjoy, and/or who have provided support, care and guidance.

Fatherhood can be a sensitive subject as many people don't enjoy good relationships with their biological fathers, and many men don't have children of their own. Fortunately, the definition of the word 'father' also includes originators, authors and leading men, such as those who planned and established communities in new

## The Author



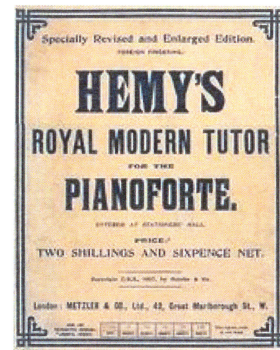
Frederick William Faber was born in June of 1814 to Thomas Faber and his wife in the vicarage of Calverly village, Yorkshire, England. His

grandfather was the clergyman of the Anglican church there. Calverly is about seven miles northwest of Leeds. Frederick was the seventh of eight children in the family, his parents had suffered the loss of two older siblings the previous year and his mother was said to be particularly attached to him.

The following December, his father was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Durham and the family moved 75 miles north to Bishop Auckland. In his formative years, young Frederick was exposed to the splendor of the court at Auckland Castle as the Bishop at the time was also a temporal Count Palatine.

As a child Frederick was described as eager and ardent. His perfect candor

## The Composer



Henri Frederick Hemy was born in November of 1818 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. This city is located in Northeastern England about

nine miles west of the North Sea up the River Tyne.

Little is known of Henri Hemy's early life. His parents were said to be of German descent.

He is known to have been organist at St. Andrews Catholic Church in Newcastle. This in an historic church and is said to have been in service in the thirteenth century, although much alteration and renovation has been done since that time.

Henri is also noted to have taught music at Tynemouth and at St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, Durham. It is assumed that he taught at Ushaw College, which was also known as the college of St. Cuthbert. This was a combined college and seminary for the Catholic Church.



lands, as illustrated by the photo above . Fathers can be men who may not be genetically related but who have played important historical roles that directly impact our lives today. Great men who lived in earlier periods of time, and who through their efforts passed to us a beneficial common heritage, we refer to as our 'forefathers,' or our collective 'fathers,' and we can remember and honor them, whatever our personal family background may be.

We benefit from the work of our forefathers in many areas, one area in particular is addressed by our hymn: the "Faith of Our Fathers." The term 'faith' in this context can refer to both a system of religious beliefs, and also the action of adhering to these beliefs with strong conviction.

Throughout history people have had differing systems of beliefs, however, that have resulted in conflicts and violence.

The first phrase of the hymn text speaks of faith that has survived "In spite of dungeon, fire and sword." This description of faith (the action) that preserved faith (the system of beliefs) can apply to 'fathers' in several periods of time in the history of Christianity.

The first Christians suffered at the hands of the Romans who imprisoned them (dungeon), burned them alive (fire), and executed them (sword), yet they would not renounce their belief in Christ. Interestingly, it would be the Romans who would take Christianity to the Roman Empire after Emperor Constantine decided to tolerate and use Christianity to his advantage about 313 AD.

The empire included England at that time, which would gradually become Christian and remain Roman Catholic until the rejection of the Pope and the establishment of the Church of England in the 1530s by King Henry VIII. Catholics who remained true to Rome then became subject to

and openness and an elastic and buoyant temperament were noted to continue throughout his life. His mother was his first teacher, he then attended the grammar school at Bishop Auckland then went to Kirby Stephen to study under Rev. John Gibson. It is said that while here his poetic tendencies began to emerge. From there he spent a short time at Shrewsbury School, and then in 1827 began study at Harrow where he remained a student until entering Balliol College at Oxford University in 1833.

In 1829 his mother passed away and in 1833 his father also died. His oldest brother and his wife then took Frederick under their care and treated him like their own.

At the conclusion of 1834 he was elected scholar of University College at Oxford and attended there. In 1836 he won the English poem prize. At the age of twenty-two he became a fellow of the college and earned a Divinity scholarship. He was ordained deacon in Ripon Cathedral in 1837, and in 1830 was admitted into Priest's orders. In 1840 left Oxford to become a tutor, and assisted the clergyman of Ambleside where he began to develop as a preacher. This same year he published his first book of poetry. He had become personally acquainted with William Wordsworth, who is said to have had a great influence.

Another great influence in his life was John Henry Newman, leader of the Oxford (or Tractarian) movement, and author of the well known hymn "Lead Kindly Light." While at Oxford, after some internal struggle with his family's Calvinistic background, Frederick became convinced of the validity of the Tractarian arguments and threw himself into the works of the movement.

In 1842 the rectory of Elton in what was then Huntingdonshire was offered to him and he accepted. Shortly after this he made an influential journey

Henri published several music books during his career. His instruction book for piano, shown in the image above was said to have been well received and went through several editions. He also published a book of hymn tunes for Catholic Schools, and his 1864 collection of hymns, 'Crown of Jesus Music' in which our hymn tune, St. CATHERINE, later used for "Faith of Our Fathers" appeared.

Henri Hemy passed away at the age of seventy in June of 1888 and his remains were laid to rest in the church where he served as organist, St. Andrew's at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

## "Faith of Our Fathers"

Text as found in the 1985 LDS Hymnal

Faith of our fathers, living still,  
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;  
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy  
Whene'er we hear that glorious word.

Faith of our fathers, we will strive  
To win all nations unto thee,  
And thru the truth that comes from God,  
Mankind shall then be truly free.

Faith of our fathers, we will love  
Both friend and foe in all our strife,  
And preach thee, too, as love knows how,  
By kindly words and virtuous life.

Chorus:

Faith of our fathers, holy faith,  
We will be true to thee till death.

accusations of treason and many were executed.

The situation in England would reverse for a short time in 1555 under the Catholic Queen Mary who burned Protestants at the stake, and then reverse again in 1559 under Protestant Queen Elizabeth I. England remained Protestant from that time and except for a few years under James II, Catholicism was illegal until 1791.

This English history is of particular interest to our hymn. The author, Frederick W. Faber was born in England in 1814 and educated at Oxford. He became an Anglican (Church of England) clergyman. In 1833 a number of Anglican clergymen at Oxford University began a movement to effect reform within the church. They hoped to encourage a return to the beliefs and customs of the first century church. Frederick Faber was a part of this 'Oxford Movement' and was one of a number who eventually seceded and joined the Roman Catholic Church, considering their practices closer to the original than those of the Anglican Church.

Frederick Faber would be involved in effecting some changes within the Roman Catholic Church in regard to congregational singing. He wrote many hymn texts to allow the English to worship in their own tongue rather than in Latin. Our hymn, "Faith of Our Fathers" was one of these and with his background in the Oxford Movement it seems likely he intended a multiple meaning in the "fathers" mentioned, those apostles and saints of first century Christianity, as well as the Catholics who were martyred in sixteenth century England.

That he retained hope of Catholicism returning as the English state religion is apparent in the original text published at London in his 1849 collection "Jesus and Mary, or Catholic Hymns." The third verse was originally written:

abroad, visited Italy and had an audience with the Pope. The next year he began his service and for two years was said to work tirelessly. He won the affection of the people although he introduced practices that were Catholic in nature.

Frederick is said to have had an experience in performing his Anglican clerical duty where he felt that he didn't have true Priest's authority, and subsequently gave up his position, joining himself to the Roman Catholic church. He was received into the church at Northampton in 1845. The next year with the assistance of the Earl of Shrewsbury, he started a religious community of brothers in Staffordshire. In 1847 he was ordained a priest.

The following year, John Henry Newman, who had preceded Frederick in converting to Catholicism, established an Oratory of St. Philip Neri at Birmingham. This was a house of Catholic priests, most not under vows, who focused on prayer, preaching and the sacraments. Frederick and his community of brothers joined this group and in 1849 were sent to open a similar Oratory in London. Father Faber, as he was then known, became a very popular preacher at the Oratory, which was also a public church.

He wrote over two hundred hymns, most for the benefit of their services, although he felt his lack of musical knowledge somewhat disqualified him. He also published spiritual works. Father Faber accomplished these things although he had not enjoyed good health throughout his life and was said to have Bright's disease, which could be any of several kidney diseases known today.

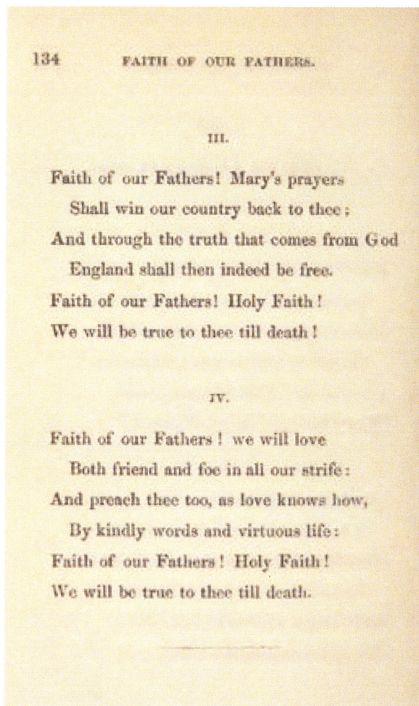
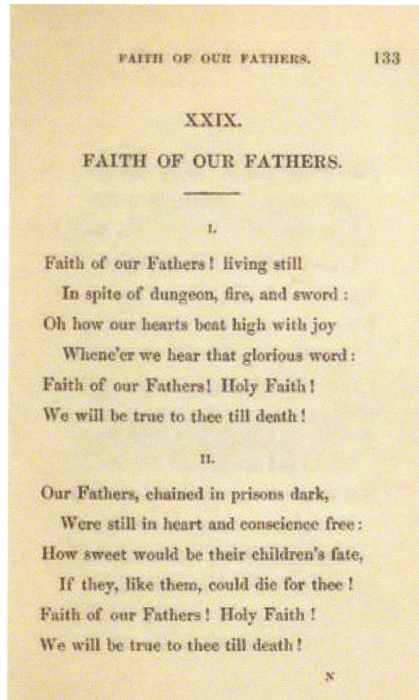
The kidney disease would prove fatal and his final days were spent in the care of his brother Oratorians. He passed away in September of 1863 at



"Faith of our Fathers! Mary's prayers  
 Shall win our country back to thee: And  
 through the truth that comes from  
 God  
 England shall then indeed be free."

the age of forty-nine, and was buried  
 in the Oratory Church.

The hymn text contains four verses as  
 shown in the digitized image below  
 available at [us.archive.org](http://us.archive.org).



It is believed that the third verse was first  
 revised for use in Protestant hymnals in  
 1853 by the editors of a Unitarian



hymnal who replaced 'Mary's prayers' with "good men's prayers." Other non-Catholic hymnals followed, including the hymn with variations of this verse, and it has evolved to emphasize missionary work to all nations. The second verse, which speaks of martyrdom as a sweet fate, is seldom included in later non-Catholic hymnals as seen at [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org).

The fourth verse is unchanged from the original, and relays the universal Christian doctrines of loving our enemies as well as our neighbors, and spreading the gospel through the example of our kind words and Christ-like way of life.

During the same time period as the Oxford Movement, another religious movement was taking place in the United States. In 1830 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) was officially organized, and its doctrines and practices were those of the original church established when Christ was on the earth. Like the first century Christians, leaders and members of this Christian faith community were not accepted by many and suffered imprisonment (dungeon), had their homes and property burned (fire), and were killed by mob violence (sword) at various times in the next three decades.

The first verse of the hymn thus resonates on multiple levels with LDS church members. Verses 1,3 (alt) and 4 were included in the 1985 edition of "Hymns, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Hymnal).

The basic hymn tune most commonly used with the text is said to have been originally written for another hymn, from which the tune name ST. CATHERINE is derived. In 1874, it is said that James G. Walton set the text of 'Faith of Our Fathers' to the ST. CATHERINE tune and composed the additional eight measures of the refrain. This was included in his hymn collection "Plain Song Music for the Holy Communion Office." This

arrangement has become the common version used today.

In modern cultures where so much emphasis is placed on individualism it is easy to forget our forefathers and the heritage they have given us. As we sing "Faith of Our Fathers," we can be reminded of their courage, faith and convictions and strive to emulate them as we find out the eternal truths they knew for ourselves.



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