

Singing Our Faith

Feast of the Holy Family – December 31, 2017

Once in Royal David's City



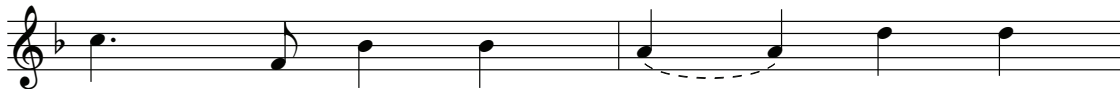
1. Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y Stood a
 2. He came down to earth from heav - en Who is
 3. And, through all his won - drous child - hood, He would
 4. For he is our child - hood's pat - tern, Day by
 5. And our eyes at last shall see him, Through his



low - ly cat - tle shed, Where a moth - er laid her
 God and Lord of all, And his shel - ter was a
 hon - or and o - bey, Love and watch the low - ly
 day like us he grew; He was lit - tle, weak, and
 own re - deem - ing love; For that child so dear and



ba - by In a man - ger for his bed. Mar - y
 sta - ble, And his cra - dle was a stall. With the
 maid - en In whose gen - tle arms he lay. Chris - tian
 help - less, Tears and smiles like us he knew. And he
 gen - tle Is our Lord in heav'n a - bove. And he



was that moth - er mild; Je - sus
 poor and meek and low - ly Lived on
 chil - dren all should be Kind, o -
 feels for all our sad - ness, And he
 leads his chil - dren on To the



Christ, her lit - tle child.
 earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
 be - dient, good as he.
 shares in all our glad - ness.
 place where he is gone.

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It's appropriate that, on this feast that celebrates family, we have a common theme of obedience among the first, second, and gospel readings. The first and second readings talk about Abraham, often called "our father in faith," his trust in God's promise to give him a son, and his obedience when God tested him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. In the gospel, Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple in accordance with the Mosaic Law. It's through moments like these in the New Testament that we see a bridge between Judaism and Christianity – Jesus is the fulfillment of Judaism. After we hear about the family's time in the temple, the gospel reading concludes, *"When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him."*

The hymn above is a celebrated Christmas Carol in many Protestant faiths (especially Anglican/Episcopalian), but, in my experience, is lesser known among Catholics. It appropriately appears in the *Holy Family* section of our hymnal since stanzas 3 and 4 focus on Christ's childhood. Tying into the readings, stanza 3 says that the child would "honor, obey, love, and watch the lowly maiden [Mary]." Stanza 4 captures the humanity of the child Jesus. We're accustomed to hearing about Jesus in his public ministry in his adult life, but this stanza offers a new perspective of the small, helpless child Jesus. The text author, Cecil Frances Alexander, beautifully ties in the mystery of

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the Incarnation in a simple yet profound way throughout the text. It's evident then that this came from her 1848 collection entitled "*Hymns for Little Children*." I find the poetry of stanza 5 especially powerful as it ties in the mystery of the resurrection with the incarnation that we celebrate in this Christmas season.

A fun fact, the iconic **Service of Nine Lessons & Carols** from King's College, Cambridge begins with this carol every year. The service has been a Christmas Eve staple since 1919. **[You can listen to the service by clicking here!](#)**

Blessings on your Christmas Season!

Stephen Eros

Director of Liturgy & Music