

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Faith of Our Fathers

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Faith of our fathers! living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

[The original first verse was as follows:

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.]

Faith of our fathers! we will strive
To win all nations unto thee;
And through the truth that comes from God
Mankind shall then be truly free.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers! we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach three, too, as love knows how
By kindly words and virtuous life
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

[In Ireland the third verse was changed:

Faith of Our Fathers, Mary's prayers
Will keep our country true to thee.
And through the truth that comnes from God
Ireland shall then indeed be free."]

[There's one more verse in the hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S. (1940):

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free:
And truly blest would be our fate,
If we, like them, should die for thee.]

The 1920 St. Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book renders it, "How sweet would be

their children's fate, If they, like them, could die for thee!" Yuck.

The Episcopalian version also says, "Faith of our fathers, faith and prayer shall win all nations unto thee." I learned the "Mary's prayers" verse in Catholic school many years ago, but I've avoided it because I thought it was divisive. Interestingly, that verse isn't in the 1920 Catholic hymnal. Modern Roman Catholic hymnals say "faith and prayer." [JO]

Here in Canada, the first verse is the same as the original poster, John from Brisbane.

Apparently the original was written by Frederick W. Faber in 1849 so that original posting maybe the correct original. However the other verses were modified in 1981 to be: [GS]

2 Faith of our mothers, daring faith,
Your work for Christ is love revealed,
Spreading God's word from pole to pole,
Making love known and freedom real,
Faith of our mothers, holy faith
We will be true to you till death.

3 Faith of our sisters, brothers too
Who still must bear oppression's might,
Raising on high in prison's dark
The cross of Christ still burning bright:
Faith for today, o living faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

Here are the soul stirring lyrics as I knew them (thanks to Maureen O'Toole from Highton in Geelong). I've notated the two part harmony tune plus LH piano in 4/4. The 3/4 is linked above.

O FAITH of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeons, fire, and sword:
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
O Faith of our fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free:
How sweet would be their children's fate,
If they, like them, could die for thee!
O Faith of our fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

O 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:
O Faith of our fathers! Holy Faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

From: McGrath of Harlow

As far as I can tell the US hymnals seem to contain the 3/4 tune written by Henry Hemy. The

range includes an 1878 Methodist Hymnal, a 1934 Tabernacle Hymns to the modern Methodist

hymnal and others in between. Of course my collection of hymnals is not necessarily an all

denominational sample. If all the hymn sites have the 3/4 version that I know, what is the 4/4 version like? [RR]

Well, I found the song in some 20 hymnals, including 3 Catholic hymnals (one from the 1950's

didn't have it). All of the hymnals had the song in 3/4 time, and not one had the line I learned

about Mary's prayers winning the country back I did find a recording of Frank Patterson singing the "U.S. Version" (3/4 time) and what I suppose is the "regular" version (4/4 time) - they're on a 2-CD set of Irish Catholic anthems, appropriately titled Faith of Our Fathers. [JO]

JiB, RiB, JO
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