

Notes from the Music Director (No. 10)

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rochester, Pennsylvania

Henry Doktorski, III

September 20, 2015—17th Sunday after Pentecost



Jesus washing the feet of the apostles, a painting by Del Parson (b. 1948).

In today's Gospel (Mark 9:30-37) Jesus visits the home of a follower in Capernaum, a fishing village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, and he asks his disciples, "What were you arguing about on the way?" They remained silent, because during their journey they had argued about who was the greatest amongst them. Jesus called them together and instructed, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Today's offertory anthem is "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant" with lyrics and music by Richard Gillard, a very simple but poignant hymn in which the singer(s) offers his or her service to others: "We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load."

Richard Gillard was born in 1953 in Malmesbury, Wiltshire County, England and emigrated to New Zealand with his family when he was three years old. Gillard described his musical training, "I've had almost no formal musical training. I'm a self-taught guitarist and play mostly in a folk style."

Gillard described the origin of the hymn, "It was in the first half of 1976 that I wrote Verse 3 ('I will hold the Christ-light for you') but, initially, no more than that. It wasn't until one particularly summery Sunday afternoon in December 1976 or January 1977, back in Auckland, that I took that scrap of paper out of my guitar case and began to meditate on that single verse, exploring the possibilities that it suggested. I remember that the other verses came quickly – although not in the order in which we now sing the song."

In 2001, Gillard's hymn was featured in a Remembrance Sunday broadcast from York Minster by the British TV program, "Songs of Praise." The composer noted, "[although it] sounded wonderful played on the Minster's grand organ, I still prefer the down-to-earth groundedness of a simple folk-song."

To listen to Richard Gillard's "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant" sung by the choir of the Diocese of St. Benedict Old Catholic Missionaries, go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYpH3y4608E>.

Resources

Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Zonderfan: 1989)

LBW: Lutheran Book of Worship (Augsburg Publishing House: 1978)

WOV: With One Voice (Augsburg Fortress: 1995)

W&P: Worship & Praise Songbook (Augsburg Fortress: 1999)

ELW: Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress: 2006)

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

Hymnary.org: <http://www.hymnary.org>

GIA Publications: <http://www.giamusic.com>

Hymntime.com: <http://hymntime.com>

Singers.com: <http://singers.com>

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