



Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

Small-town pastor feels our pain – and much more

Martin pastored in the small town of Eilenberg, Saxony (in present-day Germany), for the duration of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). His walled town became a refuge for countless war exiles, and the struggles increased exponentially with the advent of the Plague of 1637. As others died or fled, Martin soon became the sole minister; at one point he was officiating as many as 50 funerals per day (almost 4,500 total) . . . including that of his wife.

Martin was also an accomplished musician (he was a child chorister in the Leipzig church where J.S. Bach became music director some 125 years later!) and gifted writer – including 66 hymns. The one hymn most of us know (from the *Thanksgiving* section of most hymnals) was written for his family to sing as a blessing around the meal table.

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms, has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given;
The Son, and Him who reigns with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God, whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

(Tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1856)