

“Sanctus”

February 10, 2019 - Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,” - Isaiah 6:3b

The third verse of this week’s Old Testament lesson is the source of one of the oldest hymns in the Christian church. Often paired with Matthew 21:9, these verses together comprise the Sanctus portion of the Roman Catholic Mass. The Sanctus proclaims, “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” Many beautiful settings of this text have been composed over the centuries, including those by Franz Schubert, Gabriel Faure, Charles Gounod, and my personal favorite, Lindsay Norden.

The Sanctus is one of the few portions of the Mass that most Protestant churches retain in their liturgies. Occurring as part of the Great Thanksgiving in the service of Word and Table, the Sanctus offers worshippers the rare opportunity to enter into the song of the ages. In the United Methodist communion liturgy, the Sanctus is preceded by the words, “And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn.” In this way, the congregation becomes a part of the communion of the saints, and joins the praise of God that began before the creation of the world and that will continue throughout eternity. As worship artists, let us consider the creative ways we might invite others to join in this unending song.

Prayer: Eternal God, usher us into the unending hymn of the ages, and make us mindful of the saints who sing with us along life’s journey. Inspire us in all that we do to answer, “Here am I; send me!” And when on the difficult road of life we cry, “How long, O Lord,” show us glimpses of the eternity prophesied by Isaiah and offered through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.