

Reflection - The Navy Hymn



"Eternal Father, Strong to Save"

*I urge you now to keep up your courage; not one of you will be lost...
God has granted safety to all who are sailing with you...Acts 28; 22-25*

"Eternal Father, Strong to Save" is the salutation of a familiar hymn sung in both Britain's Royal Navy and the U. S. Navy. It is simply called "The Navy Hymn." But over the years its humble petition for divine protection has extended well beyond the Navy.

And so we invoke it today "For those in peril on the Sea"--- acknowledging the tenuous fragility of our human condition and the juxtaposed joys and dangers of a summer on the water.

This universal benediction extends to passengers, crews, swimmers, skiers, divers, surfers, waders and particularly poolside children. All of which remains very true to its origins.

The hymn was originally composed as a poem – a gift for a student about to journey across the Atlantic. In 1861, the Anglican priest, John Dykes, composed the powerful score Melita to set the poem to music. Melita is an archaic term for Malta, the ancient Mediterranean seafaring nation and site of the Apostle Paul's shipwreck on his journey to Rome. Paul's faith gave hope and courage to all aboard and they were saved. In that spirit we pray for God's protection for all on or near our waters this summer.

Let us pray:

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddist the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word
Who walkest on the foaming deep
And calm amidst its rage did sleep
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Father, King of Earth and Sea
We dedicate these ships to thee
In faith we send them on their way
In faith to Thee we humbly pray:
O hear from Heaven our sailors' cry
And watch and guard them from on High!

God love you!