

Extension Magazine - Contest/ Survey of Favorite Hymns

In editions of THE CATHOLIC CHAPEL HYMNAL there is a reference to a national survey conducted by Extension Magazine of the ten most popular Catholic hymns. I have a 1958 edition. The Extension Magazine is still in print today but is now the Catholic Extension Magazine. I was granted access to archived issues of the Extension Magazine from January - December 1946 and January - December 1947. I present the following results.

The contest was first announced in the November 1946 issue with a deadline for submissions by Nov. 20, 1946. The contest rules were simple, name your favorite Catholic hymn and tell in not more than 100 words, why this hymn is your favorite. If there are several versions of this hymn, you must specify the composer. A ballot was provided in the magazine. Winner wins an all-expense paid trip to Chicago to appear on a coast-to-coast hook-up of the famous radio program HYMNS FOR ALL CHURCHES, heard daily throughout the country through the facilities of the American Broadcast Company.

Due to over whelming responses, in the December issue 1946, the deadline for submissions was extended to Dec. 20, 1946. The exact date of the winner will be announced in the January issue 1947. A search of the January issue 1947, did not list any hymns or reveal the contest winner.

In the February issue 1947, an announcement was made for the HYMNS OF ALL CHURCHES radio program. Choristers will sing the hymns from the results of the contest scheduled for Feb. 7, 1947; check local listing for radio time.

In the April issue 1947, announcement of contest winner is made, Mary E. Wieland and a list of the ten hymns voted the most popular. Mrs. Wieland was chosen by the Extension Magazine judges not for her hymn Ave Maria, Bright and Pure, but for her letter explaining why it was her favorite hymn. The ten hymns which received the most votes are listed according to their popularity.

Oh Lord I Am Not Worthy
Holy God We Praise Thy Name
Mother Dear, Oh Pray for Me
Good Night, Sweet Jesus
Panis Angelicus
Schubert's Ave Maria
On This Day, Oh Beautiful Mother
Gounod's Ave Maria
Silent Night
Mother At Your Feet Is Kneeling

The combined versions of Ave Maria rated highest in the number of votes received but since it was a rule of the contest that, if a hymn had several versions, the composer must be specified, the votes for the various versions of the hymn were tallied individually.

By 1950 subscriptions for Extension Magazine had reached more than 600,000. Submission ballots and letters from listeners of their favorite hymn(s) do not exist anymore.

Don Howe – 2020.

ANNOUNCING A GREAT NEW EXTENSION CONTEST

ALL-EXPENSE TRIP TO CHICAGO IS THE GRAND PRIZE

EXTENSION, The National Catholic Monthly, invites you to take part in its latest nationwide contest. All our readers are eligible to compete. All you have to do is

NAME YOUR FAVORITE CATHOLIC HYMN

and tell us, in not more than 100 words, why this particular hymn is your favorite.

The letter which, in the opinion of the judges, is considered to be the best, will win for its author an all-expense paid trip to Chicago to appear on a coast-to-coast hook-up of the famous radio program,

HYMNS OF ALL CHURCHES

heard daily throughout the country through the facilities of the American Broadcasting Company.

Because of the tremendous response of our readers, we have extended the deadline to

December 20, 1946



Choristers on the "Hymns of All Churches" program, heard every Monday through Friday over the American Broadcasting System. Consult your newspaper for the time in your locality

Some time in January, 1947 (the exact date will be announced in our next issue), the various hymns voted to be the most popular by EXTENSION's readers will be sung by the above choir on an all-EXTENSION program of the Hymns of All Churches broadcast.

OFFICIAL BALLOT

My favorite Catholic hymn is: _____
(If there are several versions of this hymn, you must specify the composer.)

Tell, in not more than 100 words, why it is your favorite _____

Your EXTENSION Name _____
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Back Again in TINS

INSIDE the cabin, he waited miserably, shivering, still sore from the scrubbing and half wet. Presently the woman came in. She seemed taller than ever.

She knelt beside a chest and took out some pieces of homespun, a thimble, needle and thread. Pushing back her black hair, she looked at the pants, critically.

He pulled his mother's cape more closely about him. It was the same color. The pieces of cloth from the chest were not.

She sorted the pieces of cloth, feeling their weight. She did not look at the cape. "I'm afraid this piece will have to do," she said finally. "It's too dark, but it's good and sturdy, and it's the best I got. You won't mind if the good's not matchin'?"

He still held the cape tightly. "I don't care none."

Somehow, she had understood. She was not going to use the cape!

She smiled at him. "Good. Come over here, please, and I'll go to work."

He shuffled over slowly and stood beside her. She knelt on the dirt floor and began to trim the cloth to the necessary length. He felt her pull at the pants. "Stand straight, now. That knee, too. Tuck the cape up a little. It's in my way. I think we're all goin' to get on fine together."

He tucked the cape up carefully, but he did not answer her.

He watched her thread her needle, holding it up to the light. "I'm real thankful to have found such a good pa for my young'uns," she told him.

"Is your husband dead, ma'am?" he asked her, politely.

"Yes. His name was Johnston. He was the jailer back in the town in Kentucky where I knowed your pa years ago."

He had never thought of Pa's knowing people he didn't know. He had never thought about Pa, except as Pa. He

Then he asked, very low. "Did you know—my ma?"

She went on sewing, calmly. "No. But I've knowed folks that did—and they all say she was one of the finest women that ever lived."

Something tight inside him loosened, then. He watched her fingers as she sewed. They went so fast. In and out. In and out. In almost no time, she needed a new thread.

As he watched her, he clutched the cape less tightly.

Presently the woman went on talking. "Your pa ain't changed a heap since I knowed him. Land, I hadn't seen him in nigh on fifteen years, and he marched right into my house 'n says to me, says he, 'Sarah, I am a lone man, and you are a lone woman. I have knowed you from a gal and you have knowed me from a boy. My young'uns need a ma and your young'uns need a pa, and I have come all the way from Indiana to ask you to marry me right off as I have no time to lose.' " She laughed heartily. "Romantic, wasn't it?"

He grinned, briefly. "Pa means right, ma'am."

"Of course, he does." Pa's wife agreed. "I think the world of Tom." She pulled and patted at her work before holding the needle up to put the new thread through it. "But there's some things he don't quite understand. And from what he told me, I wouldn't be surprised if you would be able to explain one of 'em to me."

"Me, ma'am?"

"Yes, you. Will you go over to that corner chest, please, and bring me what you find clear down in the very bottom of it?"

HE SHUFFLED over, dragging the half-sewed-on piece of cloth from his pants. He fumbled in the chest, swirling its contents all into a ball in the center.

"Heaps of times," she said cheerfully. "But I can't read. Neither can your pa. That's why I wanted to ask you about 'em."

He shuffled slowly back to her, carrying the books carefully. Presently he lifted the cover of the red book with his finger, then let it shut again. He looked at the woman. She was sewing. After a moment, he lifted the cover again. "I ain't read since—in a long spell. But I reckon I can still make out to figger what they are." He studied the page for quite a while. "It's a funny name, ma'am. It says *As-sop's Fables*."

"My!" her tone was admiring. "You can read real pert."

He closed the red book carefully and opened the brown one. "And this here one is called *Life of Washington*, by a feller named We-ems."

He closed the brown book, too, and stood watching her fingers as she sewed. After a while he looked into the red book again. "Why, ma'am, this here book's got a story in it about a man in the woods just like us. I can make out w-o-o-d-s real plain."

"It has?" she asked. "What does it say?"

Reading was never easy, and he had forgotten a lot. The words came slowly and with great effort, and he had to spell out the hard ones. "A man came into a . . . wood . . . one day with—reckon that's axe—and beg-g-e-d all the trees to give him a small br-bran, oh, branch. Whew! What did the man do but fix it into the axe's head—it gets some easier as you go along, ma'am. Then the trees saw how foo-foolish they had been in giving their e-n-e-m-y the means of destroyin' themselves." He thought about this for a few minutes. Then he laughed, quite suddenly. "I never thought none about it, but that is pretty silly of the trees, ain't it, ma'am?"

The woman laughed, too. "It certainly is."

They both laughed.

"Do you go to school?" She gave the pants leg a pat.

"No, ma'am. There ain't no school around here yet."

"Well, when they do start one, you're goin'."

He shook his head. "There ain't nothin' I'd like better than to go to school, ma'am, even if it was only by litters, like in Kentucky. Ma always wanted me to have an eddication, Sally, too. But Pa would never stand for it. He don't hold with book learnin'."

She trimmed the cloth and bit off the thread close to his leg. "You and Sally both'll go to school. I reckon your pa'll change his mind."

"He never has yet, ma'am."

"Then it's high time he was beginnin' to. Will you do somethin' for me?"

"Reckon so, ma'am."

"I want you to keep those books for your own."

He turned them in his hands, carefully. "Reckon I'd rather have these here books than Pa's whole farm. But ma'am, it ain't right. You oughta give them to your own children. They're valuable."

The woman looked at him, steadily. "But you're one of my children now, Abe."

He looked at her, too. He still held the cape, but he put one hand on her shoulder, as if to steady himself. It was warm and soft under his hand. Its warmth and that of the cape became one. A great peace came to him. She smiled at him. He smiled at her.

He said slowly. "Reckon so—Ma."

THE END

HEAR YE! HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Tune in on the **HYMNS OF ALL CHURCHES** on **FEBRUARY 7**, when the results of **EXTENSION'S** gigantic hymn contest will be announced, and a program of **EXTENSION'S** favorites presented for your pleasure!

The broadcast will be made through the facilities of the **American Broadcasting Company**. Consult your newspaper for the hour!

thought about it, now. His right knee sagged a little, and she straightened it, firmly. She began to baste the cloth in place. Finally he said, "You mean—you've knowed Pa a long time?"

The woman laughed. When she laughed, she looked happy all over. "Land, yes. I knowed Tom before he married your ma."

He looked around the cabin. He passed over the fine new bureau and boxes and chests and saw only his mother's Bible. He wished that he could touch it. He clung tightly to the cape.

When he felt something small and hard, he pulled it out. Feeling another hard something, he pulled it out, too. They were books.

"That's them," said the woman. "That's what I wanted to ask you about. Them books belonged to my first husband. But I don't even know what they are."

He held the two books as if they were glass. He ran his fingers slowly over the cloth covers. One was brown, the other red. "Ain't you never looked at them, ma'am?"

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Extension on the air. Left to right: Rt. Rev. Joseph B. Lux, Managing Director; Mrs. Mary E. Wieland; Eileen O'Hayer, Associate Editor; Rev. Kenneth G. Stack, Circulation Manager, shown at the Hymns of All Churches broadcast

Hymn Contest Winner

FROM a small town in the heart of the vast Kansas wheat country came Mrs. Mary E. Wieland, author of the prize-winning letter in EXTENSION'S Hymn Contest.

And Mrs. Wieland seemed to bring a part of that small town with her, just as the town seemed to send a part of itself to her—the flowers the women of Norton arranged to have presented to her at the broadcast—the traveling bag a group of her friends sent her.

Here was a woman well-loved by her town, and who gave it love in return in the form of her activities there: a member of the school board, vice-president of the altar society, and poppy chairman —“We're making big plans for a successful drive,” she explained.

And though she enjoyed herself dining in the Empire Room of Chicago's famous Palmer House, it was evident that such an environment could never give her the peace she found while working in her garden, or the enjoyment that was hers when she accompanied her children as they played the cornet. For her “mother-heart” showed in her face.

But the best description of Mrs. Wieland is the letter she wrote on her favorite Catholic hymn, printed here for those who failed to hear the Hymns of All Churches broadcast, coast-to-coast on February 7, and for those who, hearing it, felt as we felt, that here, for its simplicity, for its overpowering confidence in God, was a truly great letter.

“For years I sang alto in our small choir. We had four children; Albert 18, Joe 16, Jackie 11, and Mary 6. They were everything a mother could wish for. Many times I'd wonder why I was so blessed with happiness. One day, Jackie,

while playing with a penny balloon, inhaled it. After working two hours, we found it useless; Jackie was gone. At his funeral, the choir sang *Ave Maria, Bright and Pure*. After that day it had a new meaning. I felt that Mary, the Mother of God, surely could understand my mother-heart, so I tried to imitate her and accept my loss as she would, knowing she would help me. Three and one-half years later, Albert, a test pilot, crashed. Again as I'd hear *Ave Maria*, I'd feel new hope, knowing she would care for Jackie and Albert. One and one-half years later, Joe, a navigator, was reported missing over Belgium. For six months we still hoped and prayed for his return. During that time I'd plead to our Blessed Mother to intercede for him. Then the final word came. Joe was with Albert and Jackie. Now as I hear *Ave Maria, Bright and Pure*, I can vision our Blessed Mother with my three lovely sons, happy in Heaven.”

Though Mrs. Wieland chose *Ave Maria, Bright and Pure* as her favorite Catholic hymn, the ten hymns which received the most votes are listed here according to their popularity: *Oh Lord I Am Not Worthy; Holy God, We Praise Thy Name; Mother Dear, Oh Pray for Me; Good Night, Sweet Jesus; Panis Angelicus; Schubert's Ave Maria; On This Day, Oh Beautiful Mother; Gounod's Ave Maria; Silent Night and Mother At Your Feet Is Kneeling*. The combined versions of *Ave Maria* rated highest in the number of votes received but since it was a rule of the contest that, if a hymn had several versions, the composer must be specified, the votes for the various versions of the hymn were tallied individually.