



**June 2020: NOW THANK WE ALL
OUR GOD**

Written by Pr. Ronald Voss
Based on Psalm 136:1

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

Perhaps you know the story that led to the writing of this beloved hymn. German pastor, Martin Rinkart served in the walled town of Eilenburg during the horrors of the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. Eilenburg became an overcrowded refuge for the surrounding area. The fugitives suffered from epidemic and famine. Rinkart, as the only surviving pastor, conducted 4,480 funerals in these years, including the funeral for his wife. In the face of overwhelming pressure, constant risk and horrendous conditions, Rinkart never stopped ministering to the people of his city. He gave away nearly everything he owned to the poor and needy, though he could barely clothe and feed his own children.

After nearly thirty years of ceaseless struggles, it began to look like peace was within grasp. Wanting to give his children a song to sing to God in thanks at the dinner table, Rinkart sat down and composed what would become one of the most well-known Thanksgiving hymns of all time: "Now Thank We All Our God." In fact, it's been said that, aside from Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," no other song is sung more often in Lutheran churches today than Rinkart's simple tune.

Whether you are able to gather as a congregation in a sanctuary or you are still sheltering at home, I would encourage to you look at this hymn and be reminded under what conditions this song of praise and gratitude was written. In a few short months, the United States has confronted health challenges few Americans have seen before. The economy is only beginning to reveal the long-term devastation that is ahead. Our society has been locked down with no access to education, employment, shopping, travel...and worship. As for Pastor Rinkart 400 years ago, everything is in seeming chaos, yet Christians today are still able to proclaim, "Now thank we all our God...who wondrous things has done." Like Pastor Rinkart, in the coming weeks and months, we can praise God with good stewardship of our time and abilities to serve our families, our communities and our churches. Like Pastor Rinkart, we can be faithful in worship, prayer and study. And like Pastor Rinkart, we need to be faithful stewards of our treasures. Our local congregations and the NALC need everyone's financial tithes and offerings to maintain and expand ministry and provide assistance to the many in need due to loss of health and employment.

*Oh, 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 harm in this world and the next.*



**June 2020: NOW THANK WE ALL
OUR GOD**

Written by Pr. Ronald Voss
Based on Psalm 136:1

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

Perhaps you know the story that led to the writing of this beloved hymn. German pastor, Martin Rinkart served in the walled town of Eilenburg during the horrors of the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. Eilenburg became an overcrowded refuge for the surrounding area. The fugitives suffered from epidemic and famine. Rinkart, as the only surviving pastor, conducted 4,480 funerals in these years, including the funeral for his wife. In the face of overwhelming pressure, constant risk and horrendous conditions, Rinkart never stopped ministering to the people of his city. He gave away nearly everything he owned to the poor and needy, though he could barely clothe and feed his own children.

After nearly thirty years of ceaseless struggles, it began to look like peace was within grasp. Wanting to give his children a song to sing to God in thanks at the dinner table, Rinkart sat down and composed what would become one of the most well-known Thanksgiving hymns of all time: "Now Thank We All Our God." In fact, it's been said that, aside from Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," no other song is sung more often in Lutheran churches today than Rinkart's simple tune.

Whether you are able to gather as a congregation in a sanctuary or you are still sheltering at home, I would encourage to you look at this hymn and be reminded under what conditions this song of praise and gratitude was written. In a few short months, the United States has confronted health challenges few Americans have seen before. The economy is only beginning to reveal the long-term devastation that is ahead. Our society has been locked down with no access to education, employment, shopping, travel...and worship. As for Pastor Rinkart 400 years ago, everything is in seeming chaos, yet Christians today are still able to proclaim, "Now thank we all our God...who wondrous things has done." Like Pastor Rinkart, in the coming weeks and months, we can praise God with good stewardship of our time and abilities to serve our families, our communities and our churches. Like Pastor Rinkart, we can be faithful in worship, prayer and study. And like Pastor Rinkart, we need to be faithful stewards of our treasures. Our local congregations and the NALC need everyone's financial tithes and offerings to maintain and expand ministry and provide assistance to the many in need due to loss of health and employment.

*Oh, 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 harm in this world and the next.*