



by Peter Reske



Bold Confidence

What do Lutherans do when faced with death? They do what they do at every Baptism, at Christmas when they remember Christ's incarnation, at Easter when they celebrate His resurrection. Lutherans do what they do every Sunday: *They sing!*

FOR FUNERALS we often turn to a few beloved hymns, such as “Amazing Grace,” “How Great Thou Art” and “Abide with Me.” There is great comfort in singing these familiar hymns, but there are numerous other hymns for funerals that are worth knowing and singing. Look for hymns that console us by pointing to Christ and His resurrection, remind us of our Baptism and anticipate the resurrection of our own bodies. Here are three examples.

God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It (LSB 594)

This hymn, originally written for Advent, is quickly becoming a popular choice for baptisms and is perfect for funerals. Part of the great appeal of this hymn is the joyful melody, which feels like it was custom-made for the text, although the two were only paired in the last 20 years.

In the catechism, we say that Baptism “works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this.” In this hymn, with bold confidence we directly address sin (stanza 2), the devil (stanza 3) and death (stanza 4) by name and respond to their threats with the assurance of our Baptism and the promise of our own resurrection: “Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ!”

No Saint on Earth Lives Life to Self Alone (LSB 747)

Translated into English from a Dutch hymn, this text was written in memory of a young

mother who died, leaving four children and a husband, who read to her often from Romans 14 during her final weeks. The hymn is a lovely paraphrase of Rom. 14:7–9 and reminds us that as part of the body of Christ we neither live nor die alone. “Through sorrow on to triumph Christ has led, And reigns o’er all: the living and the dead.”

This Body in the Grave We Lay (LSB 759)

While this hymn is the oldest of the three, it is probably the least known. Sometimes credited to Martin Luther, the hymn was written by Michael Weisse in 1531 and has been sung at gravesides for nearly 500 years.

In the creeds, we declare our belief in the resurrection of the body and that we look for the resurrection of the dead. This hymn is one of the best proclamations of this doctrine to be found in our hymnal. We may mourn while this body sleeps, but our sadness will surely be turned to joy at the Resurrection. “We have no cause to mourn or weep; Securely shall this body sleep Till Christ Himself shall death destroy And raise the blessed dead to joy.”

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What do Lutherans do when faced again with the painful reality of sin, death and the devil? We sing. And for our neighbor who is too overcome with grief to use her voice, we sing even louder! LW

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Other Funeral Hymns by Martin Luther



Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands (LSB 458)

From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee (LSB 607)

In Peace and Joy I Now Depart (LSB 938)

In the Very Midst of Life (LSB 755)

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word (LSB 655)

To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray (LSB 768)

Triune God, Be Thou Our Stay (LSB 505)

