

Anthem Notes for January 15, 2017

A Clare Benediction

John Rutter (1945-)

*May the Lord show his mercy upon you;
May the light of his presence be your guide;
May he guard you and uphold you;
May his spirit be ever by your side.*

*When you sleep, may his angels watch over you;
When you wake, may he fill you with his grace;
May you love him and serve him all your days,
Then in heaven may you see his face.*

This morning's anthem is a prayer of benediction which pleads for protection in all the aspects of our lives—the Lord's presence is invoked along with a prayer for His mercy, His guardianship and His guidance. The Lord's presence is requested over our sleeping and our waking, our daily living and in the life to come when we see Him at the end of our days. The text and the music of this beautiful benediction were both penned by English composer John Rutter and dedicated to Clare College in Cambridge, England, where Rutter taught for a number of years.

The setting is serene and tranquil, and Rutter's compositional style is evident in every aspect of the music. Rutter is quoted as saying: "*A Clare Benediction* (1998), named in honour of my alma mater, Clare College Cambridge, is one of a number of choral blessings I have written over the years, in every case for a person or institution of special significance to me."

The anthem begins with the women singing the first two phrases in unison; the men sing the next two phrases, also in unison. Continuing the alternation, the women sing with next phrase except the following phrase is sung in unison by the sopranos and tenors, done to accommodate the vocal line which goes to high for altos and basses. The full two verses are repeated, but this time in four-part harmony. This time the men sing about the angels and the women 'float' above them in a lovely descant. Resuming four-part harmony briefly, the sopranos sing the final phrase "Then in heaven may you see his face," with the three lower voices humming as accompaniment. The final phrase is repeated in four-part harmony, emphasizing seeing the Lord's face." The piece offers a rich musical and spiritual blessing.

John Rutter was born in London in 1945. He studied music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he wrote his first published compositions

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and conducted his first recording while still a student. His compositional career has embraced both large and small-scale choral works, orchestral and instrumental pieces, a piano concerto, two children's operas, and music for television. One of his most well-known works, *Requiem*, has been sung by our Sanctuary Choir.

He co-edited four volumes in the *Carols for Choirs* series with Sir David Willcocks.

From 1975 to 1979, he was Director of Music at Clare College, whose choir he directed. After giving up the Clare post to allow more time for composition, he formed the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir primarily dedicated to recording, and he now divides his time between composition and conducting.

In 1984, Rutter formed his own record label, Collegium, in the hopes of bringing choral music to a wider audience through performances of the highest possible quality. Collegium has achieved great success and wide acclaim over the years. "There was a much larger audience worldwide for the sort of music we were recording than we had ever known. It's really, really heartening, because it shows that choral music is much closer to the center of people's affections than is often suspected."



John Rutter

He has guest-conducted or lectured at many concert halls, universities, churches, music festivals, and conferences in Europe, Scandinavia, North America. In 1980, he was made an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, and in 1988 a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians. In 1996, the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Lambeth Doctorate of Music upon him in recognition of his contribution to church music.

He was honored in the 2007 Queen's New Year Honors List, being awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in recognition of his outstanding services to music.

The LORD BLESS *you*