

March's hymn of the month

By Bill Dagle

In our small town of Granville, New York, lives an eye doctor by the name of Dr. James Morse. On many occasions, he has saved the day for me by removing a nasty speck from my eye. His office in town has become an eye-saving station for many in our community. How precious are our eyes and the earthly vision they provide. Yet the Bible does say something most interesting about this vision: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (II Corinthians 4:18)

Back in 1905, an Irish lady, Mary Elizabeth Byrne, translated an old Irish hymn into English. Then, in 1912, an Eleanor Hull would versify the text into what we sing today, "Be Thou My Vision." The original text is as old as the green hills in Ireland and was chanted by the monks as they went through their daily routine. The hymn might have remained in the monasteries except for one small detail. The words would be attached to an Irish folk tune named Slane, a town in county Meath. This haunting melody gave wings to these important words and has carried the hymn around the world. It is interesting to note that it was at Slane Hill that Saint Patrick challenged the High King of Ireland. Saint Patrick lit a bonfire on Easter eve, 433, in opposition to Celtic polytheism, thus proclaiming the Kingship of Christ. As the fifth verse rightly says, "High King of heaven... O bright Heaven's Sun."

Our earthly vision certainly is precious, but spiritual vision allows us to see beyond this life. It can give us glimpses of what waits for those who are willing to trust in Christ to guide the way. "Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart" should be more than just words of a song. We should learn to trust that Christ has already seen what we don't see coming down the road, to know that He is in control, that His vision can be our vision for the unknown because He is the ruler of all.

Dr. Morse, for years now, has helped my neighbors to see more clearly the world that surrounds us today. He is devoted to his calling. I too, have a calling—to help whosoever will call upon Christ for forgiveness and salvation to SEE that He is the only way into heaven. The hymn, "Be Thou My Vision," directs those who will listen to make Christ first in all that we do and to see the things that are eternal. It also makes for a great hymn of the month for March with its history including St. Patrick. Don't you agree?

Be Thou My Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art Thou my best
thought by night Waking or sleeping Thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom and Thou my true word I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord Thou my great
Father, I, Thy true son Thou in my dwelling and I with Thee one.

Riches I need not nor man's empty praise Thou mine inheritance now and always Thou and thou only
first in my heart High King of heaven my treasure Thou are

High King of heaven my victory won May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun Heart of my own
heart whatever befall Still be my vision O Ruler of all

