

HYMN OF THE DAY INTRODUCTION: by Evangeline Day

video segment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-U4Y1JjQ4I> transcript:

Hello everyone, my name is Evangeline Day. I'm a 3rd year MDiv student at Pacific's Lutheran theological seminary and I am also a candidate for Word and Sacrament Ministry with the Gulf Coast Synod. And today I want to introduce a hymn from the ELCA new hymnal, *All Creation Sings*.

I was happy to see some Asian hymns were included in this new hymnal. And I paid extra attention to number 965, *The Rice of Life*.

I was able to find some information about this hymn in Taiwanese and I feel a desire to share this with English speaking friends, so I made this video.

The footnote in *All Creation Sings* says, in many Asian cultures, rice--not bread--is the staple food. This hymn expands our metaphors for Holy Communion, contextualization in the spiritual image of Jesus as the Bread of life in the Gospel of John, Chapter 6.

So, you will notice that the tempo (and rhythm of this hymn) is very regular, isometric. And you need to know why, because the rhythm is related to rice. The rhythm of the farmer hoeing the land for planting, the rhythm the farmer planting the rice, and the rhythm the workers (husking) or beating the rice to make food. So you will see, in a video I will play shortly after this.

The English lyrics were written by an American Methodist missionary who went to Malaysia to share the Gospel among the Indigenous people, Malaysians and Chinese immigrants in Malaysia. He knew that many Asians need to eat rice, otherwise they won't feel full, like my grandparents--they were all like that. They contextualized the Gospel that Jesus is the *Rice of Life* instead of Bread of Life. Well, in many places in Asia, we didn't have bread until the last century! People would not understand the significance of bread, but rice--the rice of life--will touch many Asian's hearts. So that's the background of the text.

And of the music, the tune was from tribal music in Taiwan, the Bunun tribe¹ and their song of rice beating. And also I want to share that in the Chinese translation of the bible, in John 6:35, the word for bread wasn't translated as bread. It says, "Jesus said I am the braid of life." (The translation reads,) liáng (糧: grain, food, provisions). It has a root of rice instead of wheat. 耶穌說：「我就是生命的糧。到我這裡來的，必定不餓；信我的，永遠不渴。」(糧=米+量)

So I will play a short video to show you the rhythm.

The video I played with the accompaniment it sounds a little bit fancier. I got it from the Taiwanese hymnal. The tune name "____" that is Taiwanese for "rice." And some of the notes you will notice there is a something...(notation ornament)--I don't know how to call it in English. But that's a picture that Chinese music sometimes has.

So when you listen to my other videos I sing in Chinese, you will find out that sometimes I don't sing the notes like exactly that pitch; each that note I will have some "oooh" (glissando & ornamentation). The feeling of that. That's how I learned to sing when I grew up, so I guess what this hymn, what happens in this hymn is a similar thing because in old times in Taiwan, we don't have this music system. We take our notes and so that's why that I feel it is special.

I hope you will enjoy my singing. I don't know if I did the right thing, but I try my best to perform this hymn. Thank you for watching!

The Rice of Life



1 The rice of life from heav - en came to
 2 True rice the hun - gry world has fed, the
 3 The rice of God for all is meant; no
 4 The liv - ing rice, for all a sign, came



bring true life from God a - bove. Re - ceive this gift; God's
 rice re - quired for life be - low. Pro - vide this gift; God's
 one who comes is turned a - way. Be - lieve in Christ whom
 down e - ter - nal life to give. A - bide in Christ, the



mer - cy claim; in joy and pain give thanks for love.
 mer - cy spread; in weak - ness God's com - pas - sion show.
 God has sent; in hum - ble trust God's will o - bey.
 liv - ing vine; in Christ, with peo - ple, die and live.

Text: J. Andrew Fowler, b. 1935

Music: BÍ-NÍU, I-to Loh, b. 1936

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Bunun People of Taiwan: https://ab.hl.gov.tw/en-us/Explore/Ethnic_GroupIntro

Population: Estimated at 8,406. The Bunun, a mountain people divided into five major social groups (Zhuo, Jun, Dan, Ka and Luan), are found in the mountains of Nantou, Hualien, Taitung and Kaohsiung County. They are a gentle people living in harmony with nature and creators of the unique, world-famous 8-part harmony chorus. The Ear-shooting Festival in April and May is an important Bunun ritual. The Bunun pursue millet farming in the mountains and hunting and supplement their livelihood with creek fishing and livestock; fruit and vegetable gathering also remains common among some Bunun. Key skills and craft include bamboo cutting, rattan and bamboo basket weaving, fishnet weaving, hemp weaving and hide tanning.

The Bunun are found in the Central Mountain Range at altitudes of 1000 to 2000 meters, mainly in Nantou County but also as far as Namaxia Township in Kaohsiung County and Hairui Township in Taitung County. Taiwan's Bunun population of about 40,000 are distributed in Renai Township in Nantou County, Sanmin and Taoyuan townships in Kaohsiung County, Wanrong and Zhuoxi townships in Hualien County, and Yanping and Haiduan townships in Taitung County.

