

There is a Witness (Love Divine 1st) Like in many other things in life, there are fashions in religious practice and spirituality too. One of them is about the kind of hymns, verse, religious poetry or songs that people take to at a particular period and that become popular because people like them, whatever their intrinsic artistic, literary or theological merit (or lack of it). These days, in English-speaking Catholic religious practice you will seldom, if ever, hear either the name or the verses of Frederick William Faber: yet, a 100 years ago in England FW Faber was well-known and his hymn-words became popular and frequently-sung, and remained in general use till about a generation ago. The hymn I began with just now, "There is a witness in God's mercy like the witness of the sea" - that's one of FW Faber's, tho' I haven't immediately been able to lay my hands on a full copy of the words because Faber hardly appears at all in the various more-recently-published books of hymns and religious verse that I've checked. And I have to admit too that I can't now remember all the words, as I'm sure I once knew them, because that poem was a favourite and much-quoted one by my own first spiritual guide, mentor and master when I entered religious life. Perhaps you also may have favourite poems or verses that express something for you, whether or not they're "popular" or in fashion today: treasure them, if you have, for they're part of your personal religious heritage and growth, the roots of your present. All this by way of introduction today to a quotation that won't be familiar at all, I'd guess. For what I want to share with you after our formal prayers and hymn in this ^{morning} Midday Prayer, is something from the treasures of Russian spirituality: and that's never really been much known or appreciated in Western Christianity, even tho' from time to time there is a fashion for it.

in some religious circles anyway. The piece I'm going to quote for you is from a conversation with St Seraphim of Sarov which was written down by one Nicholas Motovilov, a man who'd been cured of painful rheumatism and other ills by the saint. Their conversation was about the Holy Spirit in Christian life: and the more-than-natural facial transfiguration recorded in this conversation is (incidentally) a phenomenon recorded of other outstandingly holy people in both Eastern and Western Christianity. St Seraphim, by the way, was born in 1759 and died in 1833 having spent much of his life as a solitary hermit in prayer and as a spiritual guide & director. But before we hear from him, tho' say "Everyone Moved by the Spirit" -

Altogether

MUSIC - PRAYERS

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