

# Hymn Study: Come Down, O Love Divine

The hymn “Come Down, O Love Divine” is one of those songs that feels both timeless and deeply moving. The words of this hymn were first written in the 14th century by an Italian poet named Bianco da Siena. He was part of a religious group called the “Order of the Jesuates,” who dedicated their lives to prayer, penitence, and caring for the sick. His verses were written in Italian and were simple prayers asking for the Holy Spirit to fill the believer’s heart with love.

During the Renaissance, people across Europe were rediscovering beauty, creativity, and spirituality in new ways. The Renaissance was not just about art and science- it was also a time when sacred poetry and music blossomed. Bianco da Siena’s poetry fits into this Renaissance spirit because it expressed faith in such a heartfelt and beautiful way. His words were not heavy or complicated; they were full of deep longing for God’s presence, something many people of the Renaissance longed for, too.

The hymn became even more well-known in the 19th century when the English priest Richard Frederick Littledale translated Bianco’s Italian poem into English. Later, the musical accompaniment known today was written by Ralph Vaughan Williams, a famous English composer in the early 20th century, who loved to restore old melodies. Vaughan Williams gave the hymn a tune called “Down Ampney,” named after the village where he was born. The result is the hymn we sing today: a Renaissance poem set to a beautiful modern melody.

In many ways, “*Come Down, O Love Divine*” carries the heart of the Renaissance into our time. It reminds us of the beauty of poetry, the richness of music, and the longing for God’s Spirit that people felt then and still feel today. It shows how words written centuries ago, during a time of rediscovery and renewal, can still touch hearts and bring comfort in worship today.

# Come Down, O Love Divine Lyrics

## Come Down, O Love Divine

Come down, O Love divine,  
Seek Thou this soul of mine,  
And visit it with Thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
Within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn  
Till earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming:  
And let Thy glorious light  
Shine ever on my sight,  
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity  
Mine outward vesture be,  
And lowliness become my inner clothing,  
True lowliness of heart,  
Which takes the humbler part,  
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,  
With which the soul will long,  
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace,  
Till he become the place  
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

## Veni, veni Emmanuel (Latin Version)

Veni, veni Emmanuel!  
Captivum solve Israel!  
Qui gemit in exilio,  
Privatus Dei Filio.

Gaude, gaude, Emmanuel  
nascetur pro te, Israel.

Veni o Jesse virgula!  
Ex hostis tuos ungula,  
De specu tuos tartari  
Educ, et antro barathri.

Veni, veni o Oriens!  
Solare nos adveniens,  
Noctis depelle nebulas,  
Dirasque noctis tenebras.

Veni clavis Davidica!  
Regna reclude coelica,  
Fac iter Tutum superum,  
Et claude vias Inferum.

Veni, veni Adonai!  
Qui populo in Sinai  
Legem dedisti vertice,  
In maiestate gloriae.

# Come Down, O Love Divine

Bianco da Siena

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Come down, O Love di - vine, seek Thou this soul\_ of  
O let it free - ly burn, till earth - ly pas - sions  
Let ho - ly char - i - ty mine out - ward ves - true  
And so the yearn - ing strong, with which the soul\_ will

mine, and vis - it it with Thine own ar - dor\_ glow - ing;  
turn to dust and ash - es in its heat con - sum - ing;  
be, and low - li - ness be - come mine in - ner\_ cloth - ing;  
long, shall far out - pass the pow'r of hu - man\_ tell - ing;

O Com - fort - er, draw near, with - in my heart ap -  
and let Thy glo - rious light shine ev - er on my  
true low - li - ness of heart, which takes the hum - bler  
no soul can guess its grace, till he be - come the

pear, and kin - dle it, Thy ho - ly flame be - stow - ing.  
sight, and clothe me round, the while my path il - lum - ing.  
part, and o'er its own short - com ings weeps with loath - ing.  
place where - in the Ho - ly Spir - it makes His\_ dwell - ing.

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