

## A Peek into the life of Fanny Crosby

“Safe in the Arms of Jesus”, “Rescue the Pershing”, and “Blessed Assurance” are some of the most famous hymns written. But the story behind them is part of the moving power in each hymn. Frances Jane Crosby was born in 1820 to John and Mercy Crosby. However, at the wee age of six weeks, something happened that dramatically changed her life. She later wrote: “When about six weeks old, I was taken sick. My eyes grew weak, and those who had charge of me poulticed my eyes. Their lack of knowledge and skill destroyed my eyes forever”.

Yet, although she was deprived of such a gift as sight, Fanny never let it make her bitter. At the age of eight she wrote this poem:

O what a happy soul am I!  
Although I cannot see,  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be.

How many blessings I enjoy,  
That other people don't.  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,  
I cannot, and I won't.

When her Grandmother learned that her granddaughter would be blind for life, she purposed to become Fanny's “eyes”. In vivid, descriptive words she told Fanny everything she saw. As well as being her eyes, her Grandmother taught her many other things including much Scripture. “This Holy Book nurtured my early life. When a girl, I could repeat from memory the five books of Moses, most of the New Testament, many of the Psalms, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the Book of Ruth.”

Later she began writing many poems and hymns, having completed over eight thousand when she died at the age of ninety-five. Once, the composer William Doane came to Fanny with some music for a hymn but no words. He explained that he needed the words right away for an important meeting. After he played his melody, Fanny said, “Your music sounds like ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’”. And with that she wrote the words to this hymn. This poem was written shortly after the death of her only child, a daughter, when she was still very little. The chorus goes:

Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on his gentle breast,  
There by His love o'ershaded,  
Sweetly my soul shall rest.

Some time later, when a carriage driver learned that his passenger was Fanny Crosby, he took off his hat and wept. He called a policeman and asked him to guide her safely to the train adding, “We sang ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’ at my little girl's funeral last week”.

Once, a Scottish minister remarked to Fanny, “I think it is a great pity that the Master, when he showered so many gifts upon you, did not give you sight.” Fanny replied, “Do

you know that if I had one petition to my Creator it would have been that I should remain blind?” “Why?” asked the surprised and astonished minister. She said,

*“Because when I go to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”*

Her willingness to serve her Master even with her physical “defect” has enabled thousands more to rejoice abundantly through her poems and hymns.

All the way my Savior leads me;  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who thro’ life has been my Guide?

All the way my Savior leads me,  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for ev’ry trial,  
Feeds me with the living bread.

All the way my Savior leads me;  
Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father’s house above.

~Fanny Crosby