

## Column

In recent days, words from the hymn “Stand up, stand up for Jesus” have frequently come to my mind: “Ye that are men now serve Him . . . Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.”

No doubt that is the spirit in which we need to confront the crisis we face today. As we breathe in the spirit of courage and exhale the spirit of fear, it is helpful to remember the many brave men and women in times past who have done just that and, in so doing, have blazed the trail for us. These stalwarts of the Faith remind us not to shrink from danger, nor aim for comfort and convenience, but rather for the eternal finish line where our Lord waits to say, “Well done!”

One such person is the Rev. Stephen Patterson. He is commemorated with an impressive monument behind Christ Church Vicksburg, the church that sent me off to theological college now over a third of a century ago. Born in 1812, he was a native of Ireland and became the rector of Christ Church in 1845.

There is more than a little irony that a monument remembering Patterson exists inasmuch as he was not well liked during his lifetime. A contemporary described him as “intolerant of human error, pitiless in his moral judgments, and altogether lacking in the common social graces.”

Whatever his warts, the Rev. Mr. Patterson did exactly what the hymn I have just quoted says. He “let courage rise with danger.”

During a particularly virulent yellow fever epidemic in 1853 when 10 percent of the population of Vicksburg died from the disease and many fled the city, Patterson stayed at his post. He worked in hospitals, fed and bathed patients and attended the dying.

On September 14, 1853, this rough but faithful parson died of the same disease. Who can doubt he received his Lord’s ‘well done’? May he and countless others like him encourage us to stay faithful, focused and at our post.

*Almighty God, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people: send down thy blessing upon all who serve the suffering and stay on the job in good times and bad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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