

# Gaelic Blessing

(Tonn leat)

There are several well known "blessings" with their origins in the Gaelic language which could be called "Gaelic blessings." However, "Deep peace of the running wave to you" is, arguably, the best known and beloved "Gaelic blessing." The original Gaelic, included below, is quite archaic and challenging to translate, even for those well-versed in the idiosyncrasies of the language.

<i>Suaimhneas síoraí an tonn leat</i>	<i>May the peace of the wave always be with you</i>
<i>Suaimhneas síoraí on aer leat</i>	<i>May the peace of the sky (air) always be with you</i>
<i>Suaimhneas síoraí an talún ciùin leat</i>	<i>May the peace of the quiet land always be with you</i>

## Pronunciation

*Síoraí* = sih-uh-rah-ih (as in English "sit," "up" and "ah")

*Tonn* = tuh-n (as in English "son")

*Aer* = ah-eh-r (as in English "cot" and "let")

*Leat* = lyeh-uh-t (as in English, "let" and "up")

The English translation above is traditional, and so it was included in this preface. However, a closer look at the translation of the Gaelic yields some additional insight.

Interestingly, "ton" (first line) is old Gaelic for "sea wave," but had a much deeper meaning relating to the "carrying of news and happenings across the seas." Ships brought supplies AND news to lands far away. Therefore, "tonn" more aptly means "good news"—or in relation to this text, "May you ever receive only good news." "Síoraí" means "eternal" or "always."

"Aer" translates "air" or "sky." The second line of the Gaelic text, then, could be translated "May you ever enjoy only peaceful skies."

Relative to the third line, "Talún ciùin leat," "talún" translates "earth" or "land", and "ciùin" translates "to become quiet or peaceful." In context then, this line of text translates "May the land around you be peaceful."

May this piece stand as a blessing to all people, and be a reminder of the need for roots and an anchor in a sometimes turbulent world.

*(For a recording of the work, refer to the website below.)*

Z. Randall Stroope  
[www.zrstroope.com](http://www.zrstroope.com)

Commissioned by All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta, Georgia,  
with special dedication to Raymond and Elizabeth Chenault  
for their thirty years as organists and choirmasters

# Gaelic Blessing (Tonn Leat)

SATB and Organ

Irish traditional

Z. Randall Stroope

Flute 8', 4' *mp*

Organ

Strings 8' *p*

16', 8' *p*

4

S  
A

*mp*

Deep peace of the run-ning

T  
B

*mp*

Deep peace of the run-ning

Text: Irish traditional (PD).  
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7

wave to you, Deep

wave to you, Deep

The musical score for measures 7-9 consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines in treble and bass clefs, respectively, with lyrics 'wave to you, Deep'. The piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom two staves, with a treble clef staff containing a melodic line and a bass clef staff containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

10

peace of the shin - ing stars to you.

peace of the shin - ing stars to you.

The musical score for measures 10-12 consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines in treble and bass clefs, respectively, with lyrics 'peace of the shin - ing stars to you.'. The piano accompaniment is shown in the bottom two staves, with a treble clef staff containing a melodic line and a bass clef staff containing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

13

*mf*  
Tonn le - at,  
*mf*  
Tonn le - at,

16

aer le - at. Deep peace to  
aer le - at. Deep peace to

Strings 8' *mp*

20

*mp*

you. Deep peace of the qui - et

*mp*

you. Deep peace of the qui - et

Oboe 8'

24

earth to you, Deep

earth to you,

27

peace of the shin - ing stars to you.

Deep peace of the stars to you.

The musical score for measures 27-30 consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines in G major, with lyrics 'peace of the shin - ing stars to you.' and 'Deep peace of the stars to you.' respectively. The piano accompaniment features a right hand with a melodic line and a left hand with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present above the piano part.

30

Tonn le - at,

Tonn le - at,

The musical score for measures 30-33 consists of four staves. The top two staves are vocal lines in G major, with lyrics 'Tonn le - at,' and 'Tonn le - at,' respectively. The piano accompaniment features a right hand with a melodic line and a left hand with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present above the piano part.

33

aer le a - at. Deep

*air*

aer le - at. Deep

\*Sw. } *pp* (Box closed)

36

peace to you.

peace to you. Deep peace of the gen - tle

*mp*

\*Gt: Flute 8', 4'; Sw. and Ch: Flute 8', 4', Strings 8'; Ped: to balance; Mans. coupled.