

“Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf” BWV 226

*Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf, denn wir wissen nicht, was wir beten sollen, wie sichs gebühret; sondern der Geist selbst vertritt uns aufs beste mit unaussprechlichem Seufzen. Der aber die Herzen forschet, der weiss, was des Geistes Sinn sei; denn er vertritt die Heiligen nach dem, das Gott gefällt.*¹

**Du heilige Brunst, süsser Trost
Nun hilf uns, fröhlich und getrost
In deinem Dienst beständig bleiben,
Die Trübsal uns nicht abtreiben.
O Herr, durch dein Kraft uns bereit
Und stärk des Fleisches Blödigkeit,
Dass wir hie ritterlich ringen,
Durch Tod und Leben zu dir dringen.
Halleluja, halleluja.**³

The [Holy] Spirit helps brace up our weakness, for we do not know what we should pray [for], as it behooves [us to do]; rather, the Spirit himself intercedes for us, to the best [advantage],² with inexpressible sighing. But [God] who searches our hearts, he knows what the mindset of the Spirit is; for he [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to that which pleases God.

**You holy ardor, sweet comfort [of the Holy Spirit],⁴
Now help us to steadfastly remain
Joyously and comfortably in your service;
[Help us, that] tribulations not drive us away [from you].
O Lord, prepare us through your power,
And strengthen the [moral] weakness⁵ of the flesh,
So that we may valiantly⁶ wrestle here,
Through death and life, to press on to [be with] you [in
heaven].
Hallelujah, hallelujah.**

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV226> for an annotated translation

¹Romans 8:26-27.

²Some Luther Bibles of Bach's day give "vertritt uns gewaltig" ("intercede for us mightily"), and others (e.g., the Calov Bible, which Bach owned) read simply "vertritt uns."

³A stanza of "Komm Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott." This chorale setting is probably not, strictly speaking, part of Bach's motet. Bach's original performing materials include instrumental doubling parts for the setting of the scriptural text, but they conclude with the word "Fine" and do not include the chorale stanza. The instruction to the copyist "Choral seqt" ("chorale follows") in Bach's composing score and the inclusion of the chorale in the vocal parts suggest that it was heard at the same occasion as the setting of the words from Romans—perhaps graveside after the memorial service for which the motet was composed—but probably not immediately following the scriptural setting.

⁴Acts 9:31 speaks of the "Trost des Heiligen Geistes" ("comfort of the Holy Spirit"), and John 14:26 of "der Tröster, der Heilige Geist" ("the comforter, the Holy Spirit").

⁵"Blödigkeit"—not to be confused with "Blödsinnigkeit" ("daftness," or "stupidity")—is used here as an older German synonym for "Anfälligkeit" in its sense of "susceptibility" (i.e., to sin).

⁶The adverb "ritterlich" here is an older German synonym for "tapfer" ("valiantly").