

# When The Saints Go Marching In

Words & Music:  
Traditional American

*After reading a great deal about this tune, I believe that this is a true public domain song with no-one "owning" it, per se. According to the Copyright Office, it was first published in 1896 in Songs Of The Soul, No. 2 with James M. Black (the editor of said collection) claiming credit for the words and Katherine E. Purvis for the tune. Most likely, they were smart enough to publish and claim the rights to a popular local tune, but didn't actually write it. Other editors & publishers in the early 1900s also said they "owned" the tune as they published their arrangements of it. My gut says that it was an early call & response tune from the South. Beyond that, I won't speculate and add to the confusion.*

*It is strongly associated with New Orleans. Too much so for some - it is said The Preservation Hall Jazz Band had a sign up which stated: "Requests \$1; The Saints \$10". As Sarah Vaughan once said in concert, "Yes, you can get sick of a tune."*

*Many, many verses have been added to it over the years, since so many have covered it. Verses have been borrowed from other tunes, too. It can be sung straight or as a call & response, since the tune leaves room for you to do so. You can also use the first verse as a chorus and repeat it through the tune. Or just use the last line as a constant chorus. Or change it to match the verses. The simple tune & chords also leave you room for many different variations on what style to play it. Choose what you will and play what resonates with your heart. There is a nice guitar arrangement of this in the July 2009 issue of Acoustic Guitar.*

## 1. Major key version

Oh, when the saints go marching in, when the saints go marching in,  
I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

And when the sun refuse to shine, and when the sun refuse to shine,  
I still want to be in that number when the sun refuse to shine.

Oh, when the saints go marching in, when the saints go marching in,  
I'm gonna to sing as loud as thunder when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in, when the saints go marching in,  
I still want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

## 2. Minor key version

Oh, when the saints go marching in; oh, when the saints go marching in,  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when the sun refuse to shine, when the sun refuse to shine,  
Oh Lord, I want to be in that number when the sun refuse to shine.

Oh, when the saints go marching in; oh, when the saints go marching in,  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when they crown Him Lord of all; oh, when they crown Him Lord of all,  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when they crown Him Lord of all.

Oh, when they gather around the throne; oh, when they gather around the throne,  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when they gather around the throne.

## 3. Perhaps the 1896 verses

We are trav'ling in the footsteps of those who've gone before,  
And we'll all be reunited on a new and sunlit shore.

Oh, when the saints go marching in [2x]  
Lord, how I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

And when the sun refuse to shine [2x]  
Lord, how I want to be in that number when the sun refuse to shine.

And when the moon turns red with blood [2x]  
Lord, how I want to be in that number when the moon turns red with blood.

Oh, when the trumpet sounds its call [2x]  
Lord, how I want to be in that number when the trumpet sounds its call.

Some say this world of trouble is the only one we need,  
But I'm waiting for that morning when the new world is revealed.

## 4. The ingeb.org verses

I am just a lonesome traveler through this big wide world of sin;  
Want to join in that grand procession when the Saints go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in [2x]  
Lord I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.

All my folks have gone before me, all my friends and my kin;  
But I'll meet them up yonder when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in [2x]  
I will meet them all up in heaven when the saints go marching in.

Come and join me in my journey, 'cause it's time that we begin;  
And we'll be there for that judgment when the saints go marching in.

Oh, when the saints go marching in [2x]  
We will be in line for that judgment when the saints go marching in.

And when the stars begin to shine [2x]  
Then, Lord, let me be in that number when the stars begin to shine.

When Gabriel blows in his horn [2x]  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when Gabriel blows in his horn.

And when the sun refuse to shine [2x]  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when the sun refuse to shine.

And when the moon has turned to blood [2x]  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when the moon has turned to blood.

And when they gather round the throne [2x]  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number when they gather round the throne.

And on that Hallelujah Day [2x]  
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number on that Hallelujah Day.

## **5. The Weavers' version**

(Intro and bridge by the Weavers, 1951)

We are trav'ling in the footsteps of those who've gone before  
But we'll all be reunited (But if we stand reunited)  
On a new and sunlit shore (Then a new world is in store)

D - - - / G - - - / D - - - / A - - - /  
D - - - / G - - - / D - A - / D - - - //

O, when the Saints go marching in [2x]  
O, Lord I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.  
D - - - / / / A7 - - - / D - - - / G - - - / D - A - / D - - - //

And when the sun refuse (begins) to shine [2x]  
O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

When the moon turns red with blood [2x]  
O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

On that hallelujah day [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

O when the trumpet sounds the call [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

## **6. Other verses**

Some say this world of trouble is the only one we need

But I'm waiting for that morning when the new world is revealed

When the revelation (revolution) comes [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

When the rich go out and work [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

When the air is pure and clean [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

When we all have food to eat [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

When our leaders learn to cry [2x]

O, Lord, I want to be in that number when the Saints go marching in.

Oh, yes, I had a dear old mother & if you should see her before I do,  
Won't you tell her that you saw me coming?

I was strutting straight on through.

Oh, when the stars begin to fall [2x]

Oh Lord I want to be in that number when the stars begin to fall.

When the moon turns into blood [2x]

When we crown Him King of Kings [2x]

While the happy ages roll [2x]

Oh, when old Gabriel blows his horn [2x]

Oh, when those gates are opened wide [2x]

Oh, when the angel writes those names [2x]