

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE CROSS



Holy Week Prayer Service and Meditations
from the Chaldean Tradition

I. Solemn Ramsha

II. Meditations:

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2. Judas
3. Peter
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5. Simon of Cyrene
6. "Dismas," the Good Thief
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St. Peter Chaldean Catholic Cathedral
2016

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE CROSS

I. SOLEMN RAMSHA

Deacon: Peace be with us.

Priest: It is right at all times us to thank, adore and glorify the great and awesome, holy and blessed, lofty and incomprehensible Name of your glorious Trinity, and your grace toward our race, O Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever.

People: Amen.

We give you thanks,
O Lord of all;
we glorify you,
Jesus Christ:
you raise our bodies
into life,
you are the Savior
of our souls.

Lakhu Mara d-kulla
mawdenan,
w-lakh Ysho' Mshyha mshabhynan
d-attu Mnahmana
d-paghrayn,
w-attu Paroqa
d-nawshathan.

Deacon:

I rejoiced when I heard them
say: let us go to the house of the
Lord.

Hdhyth kadh amryn waw ly:
l-bayteh d-Marya azyan.

People: Lakhu Mara...

Deacon:

Glory to the Father and to the
Son and to the Holy Spirit, from
age to age, amen, amen.

Shuha l-Abba w-laBra wal-Ruha d-
Qudsha min 'alam wa'dhamma l-
'alam amen, w-amen.

People: Lakhu Mara...

Deacon: Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest: Lord, you alone are the Lamp of Truth who puts away the cloud of ignorance from our minds in his guiding light, and the one in whose loving scent our souls find delight and are renewed. Accept the rational oblations of our hearts, O Lord our God, at this eventide, for to you do we lift up glory, honor, thanksgiving and adoration, Lord of all forever.

People: Amen.

Halleluiah, halleluiah, halleluiah.
Glory to you, O God, halleluiah, halleluiah.
Glory to you, O God, halleluiah, halleluiah.

Lord, have mercy on us.

You are glorious, O Lord,
and to you praise is always due
forever, amen.

Glory to Christ the Lord,
and thanks to him who gave our mouths
the grace to hallow with his praise.

Glory to Christ the Lord,
and thanks to him who gave our mouths
the grace to sing hymns of his praise.

Glory to Christ the Lord,
and thanks to him who gave our mouths
the grace to glory in his praise.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit: praise to you forever, amen. 3x

Our mouth is too small to thank you, O Lord,
all the days of life we have by your grace.

Our mouth is too small to praise you, O Lord,
all the days of life we have by your grace.

Our mouth is too small to glorify you, Lord,
all the days of life we have by your grace
to the mortal race, O Merciful One;
pity us in grace, have mercy on us.

For no living thing is just before you:
turn us, Lord, from error and sin:

for you are God and glory is due to you forever, amen.

Deacon: Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest: May your grace, O Lord, descend for the aid of your adorers, your mercies overflow for the support of those who call your Name, and may you be revealed to us for the salvation of your people and the redemption of all the sheep of your flock from all dangers, hidden or manifest, Lord of all: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever. **People:** Amen.

HYMNS "BEFORE"

- Give thanks to him and bless his Name.

Give thanks, O mortals, to the Son who saved
us from slavery to death, which had strangled us in sin,
for he went down into Sheol
and the dead raised from the grave.

Who can repay the grace of God
granted to the race of all mortal men?

- My mouth will wisdom speak.

Refuge take in repentance, sinful ones,
for the time is so short: this world blooms and dies away!
There will be, for the repentant, joy,
death for the unjustified.

For if you justly judged, O Lord,
who on earth would be without any fault?

- Save your people, and the sheep of your flock.

We implore you, O Christ the King of kings,
that you may forget your servants' faults who have received
your Flesh and your Blood, and may you stand
for them on the day they rise,
that they be saved from Gehanna
and meet you in praise, with the hosts above!

[The people stand.]

EVENING PSALMODY

Deacon: Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest: It is our duty, O Lord our God, to thank, adore and glorify
you for your mercy and your providential will for us, at all times,
O Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

People: Amen.

PSALM 140

I have called to you, Lord; hasten to *help* me!

Hearken to my words and accept my prayer.

I have called to you, Lord; hasten to *help* me!

Hearken to my words and *accept* my prayer.

Let my prayer arise before you like *incense*,
the offering of my hands like an *evening* oblation.

Set, O Lord, a guard over my *mouth*
and a guard over my lips!

That my heart may not turn to an evil *deed*,
or accomplish works of wickedness.

May I not dine with evil *men*.

Let a just man teach *me* and reprove me.

But let the oil of the wicked not anoint my *head*,
for my prayer is *against* their malice.

Their judges were thrown down by a rock-like *hand*,
then they heard that *my* words were kind.

Like a plough that scatters the *ground*,
their bones were strewn at *the* mouth of Sheol.

To you, Lord God, I lift up my *eyes*:

I trust you; do not cast *my* soul away!

Guard me from the hands of the *boastful*,
who *set* traps for me.

Let the wicked fall together into their own *nets*
while I pursue *my* way unharmed.

PSALM 141

With my voice I called to the *Lord*,
with my voice *I* begged the Lord.

I lifted my pleading *before* him.

I showed *him* my distress.

When my spirit trembled, you knew my *path*.

On the way I walked they set *a* trap for me.

I looked to my right and *saw*:

there was no *one* to advise me.

I had no means of *escape*,

not one who *cared* for my soul.

I cried to you, Lord; I said: you are my *hope*,
all that I have in the *land* of the living.

Hearken then to my *pleading*
for I am *brought* very low.

Rescue me from those who *pursue* me
for they are *stronger* than I.
Bring my soul out of this *prison*
that I may give *thanks* to your Name.
Your just ones will *await* me
as you *grant* me reward.

PSALM 118: 105-112

Your word is a lamp for my *feet*
and a *light* for my paths.
I have sworn and made up my *mind*
to keep *your* just decrees.
Lord, I am deeply *afflicted*:
give me *life* by your word.
Be pleased, Lord, with the words of my *mouth*
and teach me *by* your decrees.
My soul is in your hands at all *times*,
I will not *forget* your law.
Though sinners laid traps for *me*
I did not stray *from* your commands.
Your witness is my heritage *forever*,
for it is the *joy* of my heart.
I set my heart to carry out your *statutes*
in *truth*, for ever.

**Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
From age to age, amen, amen.**

I have called to you, Lord; hasten to *help* me!
Hearken to my words and accept my prayer.

Deacon: Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest: Hear, O Lord our God, the prayer of your servants in your mercy; accept the supplication of your adorers in your compassion, and pity our sinfulness in your grace and mercies, O Healer of our bodies and Good Hope of our souls at all times O Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever.

People: Amen.

HYMNS "AFTER"

- You molded me and placed your hand on me.

In the beginning, God

Adam formed from earth on Friday, and breathed
spirit into him,

giving him speech, that he may sing him praise.

- An ignorant and unwise nation.

On a Friday, we

crucified our Lord upon Golgotha,

and that day the Lord

killed murderous Death, and raised up our race.

- Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Let us groan and beg

and for mercies plead forgiveness from

the Merciful One

who opens his door to all who turn to him.

INSTRUCTIONAL SECTION

Deacon:

Lift your voices,
all you people,
and glorify the living God.

*Arym qalkhon
w-shabbah kulleh 'amma
l-Alaha hayya.*

People:

Holy God,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One:
Have mercy on us.

*Qaddysha Alaha
Qaddysha Hayilthana,
Qaddysha La Mayotha
Ithraham 'layn.*

Deacons:

Glory to the Father, to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

*Shuha l-Aba w-laBra wal-Ruha d-
Qudsha.*

People: *Qaddysha Alaha...*

Deacons:

From age to age,
amen, amen.

*Min 'alam wa'dhamma l-'alam
amen, w-amen.*

People: *Qaddysha Alaha...*

Deacon: Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest: We plead to you O Wise Provider, O Wondrous Caretaker of his household, O Great Treasure from which all riches and blessings overflow in his compassion: turn to us, O Lord, pardon us and have mercy on us as you always do: Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

People: Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 22:1-14

Then God said to Abraham: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you." Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey, took with him his son Isaac, and two of his servants as well, and with the wood that he had cut for the holocaust, set out for the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham got sight of the place from afar. Then he said to his servants: "Both of you stay here with the donkey, while the boy and I go on over yonder. We will worship and then come back to you." Thereupon Abraham took the wood for the holocaust and laid it on his son Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two walked on together, Isaac spoke to his father Abraham. "Father!" he said. "Yes, son," he replied. Isaac continued, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the holocaust?" "Son," Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the sheep for the holocaust." Then the two continued going forward. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Second Reading: Isaiah 53

Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up like a sapling before him, like a shoot from the parched earth; there was in him no stately bearing to make us look at him, nor appearance that would attract us to him. He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity; one of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins. Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, and by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people, a grave was assigned him among the wicked and a burial place with evildoers, though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood. (But the Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity.) If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him. Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.

Priest: Enlighten our mental faculties, our Lord and our God, that we may understand and savor the sweet sound of your life-giving and divine commands. Grant, in your grace and your mercies, that we may reap benefit from them: love, hope and the salvation that befits both body and soul. Thus will we unceasingly sing a perpetual praise to you at all times O Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34

When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk. Do you not have houses in which you can eat and drink? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you. For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Deacon: Arise in preparation to hear the holy Gospel.

[The people stand.]

People: Halleluiah, halleluiah, halleluiah.

Gospel: Luke 22

And he came out, and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done." And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you

betray the Son of man with a kiss?" And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, the hour of the power of darkness."

[SERMON]

HYMN FROM EVENING PRAYER OF HOLY SATURDAY

- The whole earth trembled and shook.

When you hung on the cross, O Christ our Lord,
The creation saw you naked and the whole world shook;
The lamp of the sun turned into dark,
And the temple tore its veil,
And the dead rose up from their graves,
Giving praise to you, Resurrected Lord!

- The dead came forth from their tombs.

In our Lord's passion was true suffering,
Awe and wonder seized the angels and the sons of men:
The dead who were buried left their tombs,
Singing "glory to the Son,
Who came down and was crucified,
Who cried with his voice, Shaking heaven and earth!"

Wake, O Adam from of old:

See the Sole-Begotten Son,
Suffering like a sinful one
At the hands of sinful men!

Wake, O cheated Abel just,
Murdered by brother unjust,
see the Savior of the world
dies for the life of the world!

Wake, O innocent Noah,
God's replacement for the world,
see the Son of God Most High,
who hangs upon wood today!

Wake, O sons of blessings both,
Shem and honorable Japheth,
who covered the nakedness
of their father as he slept:

Come and see the sun above,
And the moon, the lamp of night,
Turn themselves to dark and gloom,
Lest their Lord be seen disgraced!

Wake, high priest Melchizedech,
who offered his sacrifice:
come today and see the Son
who has offered bread and wine!

Wake, O Father Abraham,
see the Son revealed to you:
he hangs upon wood today,
as did the ram shown to you.

Wake, O blessed Isaac, saved
by a ram caught in a tree,
see that true great mystery
fulfilled by your Lord today!

Wake, O Joseph, righteous one,
by his brethren spat upon,
see the Savior Jesus Christ
spit upon now by their sons!

Wake, O Moses, prophet great,
see the Lord of prophecy,
suff'ring for the prophets' sons,
as foretold by prophecy!

Wake, heroic Joshua,
who stopped the sun and the moon:
see, they wear darkness and gloom,
due to the death of the Son!

Wake, O Psalmist, David King,
come out of the grave today;

take up harp and lyre again,
and, preaching, sing us a Psalm:

“They divided his clothing,
placed their bets upon his robe,
and were like wild dogs around
the Lion who answered not.”

Wake, arise King Solomon,
sea of knowledge and wisdom,
see the Lord of all wisdom
who is mocked by ignorance!

Wake, O glorious Isaiah,
look and see the Christ and King;
bearing death, a Sacrifice,
without his mouth opening!

Wake, O Jonah, who for three days
was like a man dead in grave,
and who showed us, his own way,
resurrection in three days!

Wake, O Jeremiah, priest,
who was thrown into the mud,
see your Lord today asleep,
for whom a tomb is a bed!

Wake, O Zechariah blest,
and his son John the Baptist,
see today your Lord become
sacrifice and offering!

Wake, arise, O Patriarchs,
who died in hope of new life,
and see, upon Golgotha,
the Lord of all that is made!

Wake, arise, all you deceased,
see the dead with the living,
who preach to all the living,
the Lord of dead and living!

Wake, deceased from ages past,
see the Son who is of old,
who took your form in his love,
in whom Scripture is fulfilled!

Wake, you who are dead in sin,
see the Son who knows not sin,
who dies with the slaves of sin,
that he may kill death and sin!

Wake, deceased, the wonder see:
on the cross, the first-born Son,
by whose death has rent the earth
by whose death has death destroyed!

Conqueror, Abandoned One,
Judged by servants by his choice:
Let us conquer all our sins
In your mercies which made us!

Blest your death, and glorious
Is your rising from the dead;
Pity us; forgive our sins,
By your grace which is our hope!

To you, with your Father be
Adoration and glory,
and to the Spirit Holy,
forever, from age to age.

PETITIONS

Server 1: Let us pray. Peace be with us. Bend *your* knees. Let us pray and plead from *God* the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

Server 2: ...that he may hear the sound of our prayer, accept our pleading and have mercy on us.

1: For the Holy Catholic Church, here and in every land, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that his peace and serenity may dwell in her until the *end* of time.

1: For our fathers *the* bishops, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that they may stand at the head of their churches without guilt or fault all the days *of* their lives.

1: Especially for the health of our holy fathers, Mar ..., our High Pontiff, the Pope of Rome, Mar ..., our Catholicos-Patriarch, Mar ..., *our* Bishop, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that he may protect and uphold them at the head of their churches, and that they may shepherd and serve them, and prepare a perfect people that is zealous in good and *noble* works.

1: For priests and deacons, servants of *the* truth, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that they may serve before him with a good heart and *pure* intention.

1: For the pure and holy rank of monks and sisters in our holy *Catholic* Church, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that they may complete the good race of their sanctification, and accept the hope and promise of the land of the living *from* the Lord.

1: For this land and its inhabitants, for this city and those who dwell in it, and especially for our *assembly*, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that he may spare us in his grace of war and captivity, earthquake and famine, plague and all evil afflictions hostile *to* the body.

1: For those who have strayed from this true faith, and are captive to the snares *of* satan, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that he may convert their hardness of heart, and that they may confess the one God, the Father of Truth and his Son, our Lord *Jesus* Christ.

1: For those sick with serious diseases and tempted by *evil* spirits, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ...that he may send them an angel of mercy and healing to heal, aid and comfort them in his great grace *and* his mercies.

1: For the poor and the oppressed, for orphans and widows, for the downtrodden and weak, for the distressed in spirit throughout *this* world, we pray and plead from God the Lord of all...

People: Amen.

2: ... that the Lord may guide them in his grace, grant them comfort by his mercy, and save them from *the* unjust.

1: Pray and plead from God the Lord of all, that you may become for him a kingdom - priests, a holy people. Cry out to the Lord God almighty with your all your heart and all your soul, for he is God, the merciful, compassionate and benevolent Father, who does not wish the destruction of his creature, but rather its repentance toward him, and its life *in* his presence. * It is especially fit that we pray, thank, adore, glorify, honor, and exalt the one God, the adorable Father, the Lord of all, who has accomplished the great hope and the salvation of our souls through his Christ, that he may complete his grace, his mercy and his compassion in us *until* the end. **People:** Amen.

1: Stand in the strength of God.

People: Glory to the strength of God.

1: In pleading and supplication, we ask for an angel of *peace* and mercies...

People: ...from *you*, O Lord.

1: Day and night, all the days of our lives, for constant peace in your Church, and life without *sin*, we ask...

People: ...from *you*, O Lord.

1: For the harmony of love and perfect unity in the accord of the Holy Spirit, we ask...

People: ...from *you*, O Lord.

1: For the forgiveness of sins that cleanses our hearts and pleases your Divinity, we ask...

People: ...from *you*, O Lord.

1: For the mercies of the Lord and his pity, constantly and at all *times*, we ask...

People: ...from *you*, O Lord.

1: Let us entrust our souls mutually to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

People: To you, O Lord our God.

II. MEDITATIONS

OPENING HYMN

Jesus, my suffering Lord,
who could dare behold your face?
Who could dare see you in pain?
Such a bold, terrible sight:
crushed and broken, bitterly;
silent and meek as a lamb.

You, Almighty Creator God,
stood with great respect
as the princes and priests
judged you who created them.
Peter stood by the fire,
and denied you three times.
You, the Truth made flesh,
witnessed openly to the world.
For our weak, sinful race,
you forgot all your pain,
and forgave your betrayal.
You erased all our sins,
when we had abandoned you.

You, the suffering Son of Man,
with head crowned with thorns:
we adore you in love,
we adore in our hearts:
you, our abandoned Lord;
you, our tortured Messiah.
So we gaze upon
this picture so filled with suffering:
you disguised your greatness,
to bear up all our sins,
and to heal all our scars,
by your most holy wounds,
joining us to the Father.

I. MARY OF BETHANY



Bible Reading

[John 12: 1-11]

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus also to death, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Reflection

- The Lord of the universe has given us everything – he has created us in his Image; he has constructed a marvelous masterpiece of a world for us to gaze upon and see his fingerprint; he has sent us prophets and teachers even after we sinned against him; finally, he sent us his only Son to die for our sins.

- The Son, the perfect Image of the Father, imitates the Father in everything, and he continues to give us everything. In the end, as the Father gave us his Self in the form of the Son, the Word made Flesh, the Son also gives us his very Self in the form of Bread, taking from his creation an ordinary thing and making it into his own Presence.
- What love! Imagine a husband that is not satisfied with showing his wife his love through mere words, or with mere worldly gifts! No, his love is too intense, too deep to be captured in such small ways. He gives his wife everything he has – he gives his life; he dies for her. Thus the heavenly Bridegroom has loved his Bride, and even more greatly. He gives his Bride his very Self, his very Body, so that he may live in her and she in him. Nothing else satisfies the intensity of the Divine Love.
- What have we given back to our God, who has given us so much? Nothing satisfied the Lord until he gave us everything he had. How little do we give to him in return? How easily are we satisfied? How easy is it to say “enough?”
- We give an hour a week at Mass, and perhaps complain about the single hour if it becomes an hour and five minutes, or if it is five degrees too warm. Perhaps we refuse even this hour if it is raining or if we are tired. We are saying, with our actions, “God is worth an hour a week, but not if it is inconvenient.” How lost we would be if God thought of us in the same way!
- We give him his hour a week. Then perhaps, if we grow, we give him another few minutes of prayer every day. Then that becomes “enough.” We may give even of our money, to the poor or to the Church, and the few dollars becomes “enough for God.” A few minutes and a few cents are “enough” for the God who has given us every moment of our lives and every penny.
- Nothing is enough. Nothing was enough for God. Nothing was enough for Christ. Everything is what he gave us – everything including himself. And we are bothered if someone

suggests we go to Mass more than just on Sundays, or pray more than just a few minutes a day, or give more than a few dollars a week.

- Look at Mary of Bethany: she may have had little or much, but she gave all she had. Costly perfume – three hundred days’ wages worth. A pound of it. Poured out without hesitation and without regret, upon the feet of Jesus. The very best of what she had, given to the Lord for his use.
- There are two questions which arise, then: First, do we even have anything so precious to give to our Lord? Are our souls so valuable? Do they have such a beautiful scent? Or do they stink with sin? Then perhaps we should let the Lord take away the stench and make us clean with his grace, so that we can give our souls back to him with a perfumed scent.
- Secondly, after he has taken our souls and made them lovely in his grace, how much do we give them back to him? Do we pour out every ounce, or do we hold back? Mary of Bethany did not hold back when she gave to Christ. Christ did not hold back when he gave to us.

Hymn – OUR FATHER, WE HAVE WANDERED

Our Father, we have wandered and hidden from your face;
in foolishness have squandered your legacy of grace.
But now in exile dwelling, we rise in fear and shame,
as distant but compelling, we hear you call our name.

And now at length discerning the evil that we do,
behold us, Lord, returning with hope and trust, to you.
In haste you come to meet us and home rejoicing bring,
in gladness there to greet us, with calf and robe and ring.

O Lord of all the living, both banished and restored,
compassionate, forgiving, and ever-caring Lord,
grant now that our transgressing, our faithlessness may cease,
stretch out your hand in blessing, in pardon and in peace.

II. JUDAS



Bible Reading

[Luke 22: 1-6, 14-23, 47-53]

Now the feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death; for they feared the people.

Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve; he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he accepted, and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd...

And when the hour came, Jesus sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of man goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And

they began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this...

[In the garden,] while Jesus was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?" And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, the hour of the power of darkness."

Reflection

- The Lord and Redeemer being sold for silver – how shameful for Judas! How unreasonable and ridiculous, to betray the Lord for money! And after such intimacy with him, such deep love shown to him! Of what little value is silver compared to such a friendship with the Lord?
- But we should note that, "they began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this." The apostles realized that any one of them could have been the one to betray Christ, to sell him for money. Each one of them was weak and sinful. They doubted even themselves.
- We too are as weak and sinful as the apostles were at that moment. Any one of us could betray Christ to his death, and in fact we have, because he died for our sins. We have sold him to his death, and we continue to do the same every time we sin. Every one of our sins is a silver piece that is offered for us to betray our Lord, to give him over to death.

- Pleasure, money, honor, and fame are worthless things offered to us, which we take in exchange for our friendship with God whenever we commit a sin.
- Yes, it was shameful for Judas to sell his Lord, but it is no less shameful for us! We have also sold our Lord for sin.
- The following hymn is about Judas, but it is not meant to instill our rage against him. It is meant to help us realize what we have done in participating in the Lord's death. As we read the events of Christ's life in this context, in the context of what we have done to him, let us allow our hearts to be softened by the grace of Christ.
- Each verse of the hymn could be read with our name in the place of Judas's.

Hymn

On this night, our Lord
 Gave his Flesh and Blood
 In the upper room,
 In great love for us.
 He wished to expose
 The one who would be
 The one to betray
 Him to be condemned.

The disciples felt
 Sorrow and distress
 As each said to him:
 "Is it I, O Lord?"
 The Lord said to them,
 "He who dips his hand
 In the dish and eats,
 He will betray me."

Judas, you betrayed
 Him who was conceived
 In the Virgin's womb,
 As Gabriel said!

Judas, you betrayed
Him who was adored
By the Magi when
They came, bearing gifts!

Judas, you betrayed
Him who was baptized
In river Jordan,
By John the Baptist!

Judas, you betrayed
Him who made water wine
Which you drank yourself,
At Cana's wedding!

Judas, you betrayed
Him who was extolled
By children who yelled
"hosanna on high!"

Judas, you betrayed
Him who washed your feet
With his sacred hands
On this very night!

Judas, you betrayed
Him who gave his Flesh
And his precious Blood
In his Passover!

Let us all repent
Of our sinful ways,
And sing praise to Christ,
Our merciful King!

Halleluiah,
halleluiah!

Glory to you, Lord,
Our Life and our Hope!

III. PETER



Bible Reading

[Mark 14: 22-42, 66-72]

And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said vehemently, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."...

And [as Jesus was being struck by the guards], while Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the maids of the high priest came; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. And after a little while again the bystanders said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And immediately the cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Reflection

- As we share the blame with Judas for betraying the Lord with our sins, so do we share the bitter weeping of Peter for denying him.
- We are called to preach his Name to all the world, and to proclaim on rooftops what we have heard in secret. Do we follow his command? Or are we ashamed of the Gospel?
- Are we willing to face shame or embarrassment for being associated with Christ? Or do we deny him before others, even with our silence?
- Even worse, do we act as he taught us to act, or even by our actions do we deny that we are followers of Christ? Do we tell the world that "we do not know him?"
- By our lifestyle we deny him in this way even after all he did for us on this day, as Peter denied him even as it was happening.
- How powerful an experience it must have been to have Jesus bring you with him as he went into the garden to pray and weep! What an honor! And yet Peter and the other two repeatedly fell asleep.
- What about now? Is it not an equal honor to be called by the Holy Spirit to be in this Church, with the same Christ present in the Eucharist? And how awake are we?

IV. PONTIUS PILATE



Bible Reading

[John 18: 28-19: 16]

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was early. They themselves did not enter the praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered him, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." This was to fulfill the word which Jesus had spoken to show by what death he was to die.

Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again, and told them, "I find no crime in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover; will you have me release

for you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barab'bas!" Now Barab'bas was a robber.

Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple robe; they came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again, and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard these words, he was the more afraid; he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin." Upon this Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gab'batha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

Reflection

- Pontius Pilate, a government official, was a successful man in the eyes of the world. His personality is revealed most, however, in his question to Jesus: "What is truth?"
- To "climb" in worldly success is not in itself a bad thing. To have money and power and use them for God's glory is not only good but expected of every Christian who has them.
- But when the "climb" involves dishonesty of any kind, then the soul begins to degenerate, to rot. The noble goals it had at the beginning are forgotten, and the only end becomes the continuous accumulation of wealth and power. The truth is sacrificed and lost.
- How far has Pilate gone, if he has to ask the question "What is truth?"! How deeply has he fallen! It probably began with a single lie, or a single misleading comment. Then, day after day, year after year, the lies mounted and dishonesty became a mightier and mightier habit.
- How far have we fallen? How deep is our dishonesty? If it is at the beginning, our hope is great indeed. God's grace is abundant. We can end it now, before it consumes us.
- But what if we are closer to Pilate than we would admit? What if our dishonesty is so consuming that it has destroyed us entirely? What if we do not even know what the truth is anymore? Then we have, by this dishonesty, contributed to the death of our Lord, despite every warning and every opportunity to turn back.
- It is not too late. "Unless you return and become like children, you will not see the Kingdom of God." Our Lord gives us the grace, the power, to return to our original innocence, our original honesty, and to know that He is the Truth.

Hymn – AH, HOLY JESUS

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended,
that man to judge thee hath in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected, O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hast undone thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee!

Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered;
the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered;
for man's atonement, while he nothing heedeth, God intercedeth.

For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation,
thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation;
thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion, for my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee,
I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,
think on thy pity and thy love unswerving, not my deserving.

V. SIMON OF CYRENE



Bible Reading

[Luke 23: 26-31]

And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyre'ne, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Reflection

- Simon was a bystander. He was minding his own business when he was pressed into service to carry someone else's cross.
- But what an honor it was! To carry the cross of the Savior of the world! To have such a meaningful role in the salvation of the human race!
- It is quite possible that Simon was bothered and irritated when he was first told to help Jesus. But with an open heart and the grace that was being poured out upon the world at that moment, we can expect that he would have had some

realization, by the end, of what he just did, and whom he had just helped.

- But what about us who believe in Christ as our God and Creator? Would we be so open-minded?
- Would we let our bitterness subside and allow ourselves to realize that we just helped our Lord?
- Simon carried the cross of Christ – a cross suited to our Lord, hand-crafted with him in mind, not Simon. Yet he carried it.
- We are asked to carry our own cross, not that of Christ. Our cross, no matter what it is, must be so much lighter than the one that Simon carried, and yet we grumble against God because of it.
- God gives us crosses to carry – difficulties in life, in work, in family, in our own souls – for our own salvation. God prepares us a cross that is perfectly suited to our soul, a weight precisely balanced to make us stronger when we carry it, but not so heavy as to break our backs. God measures it perfectly, and we believe in him and say that we trust him.
- And yet we grumble and complain, telling God that it is too heavy for us, too irritating, too painful, too annoying, as if we knew better than He!
- If only we were worthy to help Christ carry his cross! Rather, the contrary is true. We cannot lift even our own without his help.

Hymn – GOD OF MERCY AND COMPASSION

God of mercy and compassion,
Look with pity upon me,
Father, let me call Thee Father,
'Tis Thy child returns to Thee.

Refrain: Jesus, Lord, I ask for mercy;
Let me not implore in vain;
All my sins, I now detest them,
Never will I sin again.

2. By my sins I have deserved
Death and endless misery,
Hell with all its pains and torments,
And for all eternity.

Refrain

3. By my sins I have abandoned
Right and claim to heav'n above.
Where the saints rejoice forever
In a boundless sea of love.

Refrain

4. See our Savior, bleeding, dying,
On the cross of Calvary;
To that cross my sins have nail'd Him,
Yet He bleeds and dies for me.

Refrain

VI. "DISMAS," THE GOOD THIEF



Bible Reading

[Luke 23: 32-43]

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Reflection

- The root of all sin is pride, the attitude that we are somehow greater than what God made us to be, and even greater than God himself. Any sin, from the smallest to the greatest, is an offence against the law of God, and it implies that we think we know better than he does.

- But despite our pride, God does not abandon us to the punishment we justly deserve. He offers us constantly the salvation of his Son. He offers this to us at every moment, no matter what we have done in our past, no matter how heavy or wicked or disgusting our sins.
- Despair is the sin of giving up on the possibility of salvation. When we despair, for example after thinking about all the sins we have committed in our life and their gravity, or after trying so hard to break a bad habit and falling again into it, we give in to the temptation to abandon the hope of salvation, because our sins are so great.
- This too is pride. There is no sin in the world, and no amount of sin, that is too great for God to forgive in his mercy. Despair is saying “my sins are so great that they are greater even than God.” It seems ridiculous to say it, and it is ridiculous to believe.
- Not only is God so great that he can forgive any sin in a moment, he is so loving that he chases after us, sending grace after grace, if only to let us turn back to him so that he can forgive us, embrace us with his loving arms, and carry us back to our home in his heart.
- The criminal who was crucified next to Christ probably lived a life full of wickedness, and had only a few moments left before his death and judgment.
- But in these few moments he turned to his Lord and was saved by the powerful command of Christ.
- Whatever are our sins, Christ is waiting nearby to forgive us and to offer us his salvation.
- In fact, Christ was so concerned with forgiveness being offered to mankind that he gave the power to forgive sins to his apostles, and he works through them until today, in the priests of the Church. He continues to wait today for each one of us, in the heart of the priest who sits in the confessional.

Hymn – *Parce Domine, parce populo tuo: ne in aeternum irascaris nobis.* [repeat 5 times]

Spare thy people, Lord, spare thy people; see us here before thee; be not angry, Lord, with thy people forever.

VII. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA



Bible Reading

[Luke 23: 44-56]

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Reflection

- The Blood of Christ having been spilled upon the ground of the hill called Golgotha, the ground having shook, the sun having hidden itself in sorrow, all that is left is a corpse nailed to a piece of wood and a dreadful silence. The moment that changed the world.
- Imagine being there in that stillness, watching the crowd slowly disperse after the death of the Messiah. The stillness of a hospital room after the death of a loved one is enough to silence anyone, but here the stillness is different. The body is not sterilized and stretched out on a white bed. It is mutilated and sickening to behold, hanging barely by what strands are left of its construction by splinters and rusted metal nails. But to the wise, to those who have the grace to know, this dead body is united perfectly, even now, to Divinity itself.
- We do not know if this Joseph, a Jewish leader, had any clear idea that Christ was the Messiah he was waiting for. Most likely, after watching him die, he had given up that hope, as did many others, including some of the apostles. But even in this darkness and this doubt, he remembered the word of the Lord: "Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day." No work, no burial on Saturday. The body must come down now. Using his connections, he arranged for the body to be taken down.
- Poetic flare and historical hindsight make it a remarkable scene. Movie makers and sculptors draw out the tenderness of Mary's touch and tears, the gentleness of John the Beloved, the awe of Joseph of Arimathea, in approaching the Body of their Lord. But if there was ever a time when it was true to say, "blessed are they who believe but do not see," this was it. The natural eye was blinded by black tragedy. Only the eye of faith could see beauty here, or providence, or meaning.
- Joseph dutifully wrapped the body in a linen cloth and placed it in a tomb. He was a good and righteous man, and he did this good deed out of his goodness and out of respect for the Law of Moses.

- But we have the eyes of faith, and can see more deeply what is happening. The Corpse of the Son of God being taken down after accomplishing the salvation of the world was not an ordinary piece of matter, like any other grouping of molecules anywhere else in the world, and at any other time. This is the Divine Body, drained of its Blood and separated from it; one reverently being taken down from the cross, the other spilled at its foot. How awesome is this place. How powerful. How real.
- There is a similar silence in the Church at night, after all have left. The lights are turned off as the sun was darkened, and the Body of the Lord is reserved in the tabernacle. No natural or skeptical eye could have seen the significance of Christ's Body being taken down and wrapped in linen. No eye without faith could have known what was happening, and what it was that was being placed in the tomb. But the eye of faith can see the truth, the reality: the Body of Christ that was taken down from that cross is now before us in the tabernacle of the church, except now united both to the Blood and to the Soul of Christ, perfect and complete, mystically present under the appearance of bread.
- How awesome must it have been to take Christ's Body and wrap it in linen for burial! How reverent must Joseph have been, how trembling his hands! And how should we be when we approach the Eucharist at Communion?

Hymn – *Qaddysh*

*Qaddysh, qaddysh, qaddysh, Pa'ra dakhya wa-dla muma.
 Srapay nuhra w-'yray rawma, mzayhyn l-hana diwoha rhyma.
 Hnan hattaye malyay kuthma, aykan nispaq l-paghra wa-dma.
 Brykh att Marya min kul puma, lakh tishbulhta 'am rumrama.*

Holy, holy, holy is the pure and unblemished Lamb!
 Seraphim of light and angels above exalt this beloved Sacrifice.
 How can we sinners, filled with impurity, be worthy of the Body and Blood? Blessed are you, O Lord, from every mouth: to you Glory and exaltation!

VIII. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



Bible Reading

[John 19: 17-37]

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the scripture, "They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did this.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness -- his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth -- that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him shall be broken." And again another scripture says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Reflection

- It is impossible to comprehend the tender love between a son and his mother, and all the more so in the case of Christ and his mother. From each side, the love was complete and unmingled with any exterior thing. Christ has no human father, only his mother. Mary has neither a husband nor any other children, only Christ. He is everything to her, and her every breath is a breath for him. Mary of Bethany gave the best she could – a jar of costly perfume for his feet – and Christ accepted it. But Mary his mother gave him much more. She gave him his earthly life, his body and blood. And, as Christ could not stop giving until he gave all, so Mary gave her whole life to her Son, knowing who he was.
- Yes, she had given him his human life, but she gave only what she had received from his Divinity. Yes, she had given him his body and blood a little over three decades before, but she had been in his Divine Mind when he created the universe, and now, on the cross, he returns what she gave him. He offers his body and blood to his Father for his mother, the perfect symbol of the Church triumphant.

- Every soul was on Christ's mind as he hung on the cross and accomplished the salvation of the world, but he directed his attention, in the last moment, to a particular one. His hands, which had created the world, were fastened by nails to the cross and were unable to move. He who is the Word through which all was created and through which everything continues in being, was unable to lift a finger to help his mother. And yet she was his highest concern.
- "Woman, behold your son." The Second Eve, the new mother of the human race, our mother. For we are that beloved disciple of Christ, and he entrusts us to his mother as to our own. He indeed gave us everything he had.
- "Behold your mother." The disciple who had been so dear to the Lord's heart must still have shuddered in awe. The Lord trusted him enough to let him take care of his dearest creature.

Hymn – *STABAT MATER*

At the cross her station keeping,
 stood the mournful mother weeping,
 close to Jesus at the last,

Through her soul, of joy bereavèd,
 bowed with anguish, deeply grievèd,
 now at length the sword hath passed.

O, that blessed one, grief-laden,
 blessed Mother, blessed Maiden,
 Mother of the holy One;

O that silent, ceaseless mourning,
 O those dim eyes, never turning
 from that wondrous, suffering Son.

Who, on Christ's dear mother gazing,
 in her trouble so amazing,
 born of woman, would not weep?

Who, on Christ's dear Mother thinking,
such a cup of sorrow drinking,
would not share her sorrows deep?

For his people's sins, in anguish,
there she saw the victim languish,
bleed in torments, bleed and die.

Saw the Lord's anointed taken,
saw her Child in death forsaken,
heard his last expiring cry.

In the passion of my Maker,
be my sinful soul partaker,
may I bear with her my part;

of his passion bear the token,
in a spirit bowed and broken
bear his death within my heart.

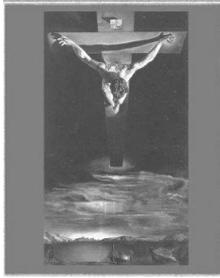
May his wounds both wound and heal me,
he enkindle, cleanse, and heal me,
be his cross my hope and stay.

May he, when the mountains quiver,
from that flame which burns for ever
shield me on the judgment day.

Jesus, may thy cross defend me,
and thy saving death befriend me,
cherished by thy deathless grace:

when to dust my dust returneth,
grant a soul that to thee yearneth
in thy paradise a place.

IX. JESUS



Bible Reading

[Matthew 27: 45-54]

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach-tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Eli'jah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to save him."

And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Reflection

- At the beginning of the faith, the father of faith, Abraham, brought his son Isaac to sacrifice him for the Lord. On the way, Isaac, noticing wood and fire, asked his father, "but where is the lamb?" Abraham answered, "God will provide the lamb for the sacrifice."

- Isaac's question was answered, not by his father, but by the greatest of the prophets preparing for Christ: John the Baptist. It is he who said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." God has indeed provided the Lamb for the sacrifice. He has become the Lamb himself.
- And here we see him sacrificed, freely, without force. He is the Lamb of sacrifice and also the Priest who offers his own blood upon the altar that is his cross.
- Finally, our faith tells us that he is also the God who accepts the sacrifice. Lamb, Priest and God, Christ on every side, at every angle of the scene. Every voice we have heard tonight speaks of him. Every eye gazes at his body, hanging on the cross. Every moment in history leads up to this one moment that changed the world, and every moment since then has been a consequence of it.
- It was not enough for God to send a prophet to teach; he had to come and teach us himself. It was not enough for God to send a king to rule on his behalf; he had to bring his own Kingdom into our hearts. It was not enough for God to love us from heaven; he had to come to earth and suffer everything we suffer, to become like us "in all things but sin."
- There is now no corner so dark that it is without God. Every inch of the universe is permeated with his presence, and every piece of our psyche is filled with his being, because he has felt it all himself, down to the darkest emotion of all.
- "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" No earthquake is powerful enough to express what Christ expressed by these words. The Son of God became man truly, really. This is not a movie. This is not television. This is not a dream. This is real. God became one of us. He walked on this earth as we walk. He ate and drank as we eat and drink. He wept as we wept. He felt abandoned, even as we sometimes do.
- What moment can compare with this one? What more can darkness do? What more does the devil want? God is

abandoned by God. There is nothing left for Satan to do to goodness, or to the human race. Every attack, every bit of pain, every pinch of sadness was concentrated and poured out, and absorbed by Christ. "Upon him was laid the chastisement that makes us whole, and by his wounds we are healed."

- The veil between God and man was destroyed, ripped open from top to bottom, because God ripped it open. Christ took away the separation between us, caused by sin, by taking the punishment for sin upon himself. Here, when it seems most vividly that the evil one has won, when darkness is all that is left, when God has abandoned even his most beloved, here is hope at its fullest. Here God and man are united at last.
- After the earthquake, after the body was taken down, after Mary kissed her son goodbye and watched his corpse be put into the tomb, there was darkness. But not a hopeless darkness.

Hymn: O JUST FATHER

O Just Father, behold your Son,
here sacrificed, you to appease.
Accept this Lamb who died for me,
and forgive the sins I have done before you.
Behold his Blood, poured out for me
on Golgotha, to wash my sins.
He intercedes: hear my pleading
done in his Name, sealed in his Blood.

How many sins I have done before you!
How many mercies you granted me!
And how heavy are all my sins;
but your mercy outweighs mountains.
See not my sins; see the Offering
which was brought forth by Christ my Lord:

how much greater his Sacrifice
than all the sins that I have done?

Because I sinned, my Lord endured
scourgings and wore a crown of thorn.
They nailed his feet, they nailed his hands
upon the cross, with no mercy.
Because I sinned, they stabbed a spear
into his side – opening a Spring:
his sufferings have you appeased,
and have saved me – in them I live.

Praise the Father who gave his Son,
in his great love, our salvation,
and adoration to the Word,
who has redeemed us by his Blood.
To the Spirit, all thanksgiving,
who perfects in us our salvation.
Blessed be God who had mercy
on us, from age to age, amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

May the prayer of your miserable servants be accepted, O Lord our God, before the judgment-seat of your Divinity, and may this, our assembly, be pleasing to your Majesty, that it may receive, from you through grace, the health of the body, the protection of the soul, an abundance of sustenance, the absolution of debts, the forgiveness of sins, constant peace, O Lord, and enduring tranquility, and the unity of love which will not pass away or dissolve from among us, for all the time the world remains: now, at all times, and forever and ever.