

## **Prayer, Fasting and Mercy by St. Peter Chrysologus, Early Church Father**

One of the greatest preachers of the early church explains the key penitential practices of Lent-prayer, fasting, and almsgiving or mercy. Saint Peter Chrysologus declares that Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. He shows how prayer, mercy and fasting are one, and they give life to each other. This reading is used by the Roman Catholic Church for the Office of Readings for Tuesday of the 3rd week of Lent and it excerpted from Sermo 43: PL 52, 320, 322. St. Peter Chrysologus was the bishop of Ravenna, Italy in the middle of the 5th century. His sermons were so inspiring that he was given the title "Chrysologus" (greek for "Golden-worded) and was eventually declared a "Doctor of the Church." For an overview of the Early Church Fathers, [click here](#).

There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself.

When you fast, see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery.

Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice mercy: show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you.

Therefore, let prayer, mercy and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defence, a threefold united prayer in our favor.

Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others. Let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the psalmist said in prophecy: A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised and humbled heart.

Offer your soul to God, make him an oblation of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. Whoever fails to give this to God will not be excused, for if you are to give him yourself you are never without the means of giving.

To make these acceptable, mercy must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues, if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit.

When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others.

## **The Way of the Cross by St Alphonsus Liguori**

### **Preparatory Prayer**

My Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast made this journey to die for me with love unutterable, and I have so many times unworthily abandoned Thee; but now I love Thee with my whole heart, and because I love Thee, I repent sincerely for ever having offended Thee. Pardon me, my God, and permit me to accompany Thee on this journey. Thou goest to die for love of me; I wish also, my beloved Redeemer, to die for love of Thee. My Jesus, I will live and die always united to Thee.

### **The First Station**

Jesus is Condemned to Death

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how Jesus, after having been scourged and crowned with thorns, was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the Cross.

My adorable Jesus, it was not Pilate, no, it was my sins that condemned Thee to die. I beseech Thee, by the merits of this sorrowful journey, to assist my soul in its journey towards eternity. I love Thee, my beloved Jesus; I repent with my whole heart for having offended Thee. Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

Dear Jesus, Thou dost go to die

For very love of me:

Ah! let me bear Thee company;

I wish to die with Thee.

### **The Second Station**

Jesus Carries His Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how Jesus, in making this journey with the Cross on His shoulders thought of us, and for us offered to His Father the death He was about to undergo.

My most beloved Jesus, I embrace all the tribulations Thou hast destined for me until death. I beseech Thee, by the merits of the pain Thou didst suffer in carrying Thy Cross, to give me the necessary help to carry mine with perfect patience and resignation. I love Thee, Jesus my love; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Third Station**

Jesus Falls the First Time

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider this first fall of Jesus under His Cross. His flesh was torn by the scourges, His head crowned with thorns, and He had lost a great quantity of blood. He was so weakened that he could scarcely walk, and yet he had to carry this great load upon His shoulders. The soldiers struck Him rudely, and thus He fell several times in His journey.

My beloved Jesus, it is not the weight of the Cross, but my sins, which have made Thee suffer so much pain. Ah, by the merits of this first fall, deliver me from the misfortune of falling into mortal sin. I love Thee, O my Jesus, with my whole heart; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

#### **The Fourth Station**

Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider the meeting of the Son and the Mother, which took place on this journey. Jesus and Mary looked at each other, and their looks became as so many arrows to wound those hearts which loved each other so tenderly.

My most loving Jesus, by the sorrow Thou didst experience in this meeting, grant me the grace of a truly devoted love for Thy most holy Mother. And thou, my Queen, who wast overwhelmed with sorrow, obtain for me by thy intercession a continual and tender remembrance of the Passion of thy Son. I love Thee, Jesus my love; I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

#### **The Fifth Station**

Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how the Jews, seeing that at each step Jesus from weakness was on the point of expiring, and fearing that He would die on the way, when they wished Him to die the ignominious death of the Cross, constrained Simon the Cyrenian to carry the Cross behind our Lord.

My most sweet Jesus, I will not refuse the Cross, as the Cyrenian did; I accept it; I embrace it. I accept in particular the death Thou hast destined for me; with all the pains that may accompany it; I unite it to Thy death, I offer it to Thee. Thou hast died for love of me; I will die for love of Thee, and to please Thee. Help me by Thy grace. I love Thee, Jesus my love; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

#### **The Sixth Station**

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how the holy woman named Veronica, seeing Jesus so afflicted, and His face bathed in sweat and blood, presented Him with a towel, with which He wiped His adorable face, leaving on it the impression of His holy countenance.

My most beloved Jesus, Thy face was beautiful before, but in this journey it has lost all its beauty, and wounds and blood have disfigured it. Alas, my soul also was once beautiful, when it received Thy grace in Baptism; but I have disfigured it since by my sins; Thou alone, my Redeemer, canst restore it to its former beauty. Do this by Thy Passion, O Jesus. I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Seventh Station**

Jesus Falls the Second Time

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider the second fall of Jesus under the Cross -- a fall which renews the pain of all the wounds of the head and members of our afflicted Lord.

My most gentle Jesus, how many times Thou hast pardoned me, and how many times have I fallen again, and begun again to offend Thee! Oh, by the merits of this new fall, give me the necessary help to persevere in Thy grace until death. Grant that in all temptations which assail me I may always commend myself to Thee. I love Thee, Jesus my love; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Eighth Station**

The Women of Jerusalem Weep over Jesus

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how those women wept with compassion at seeing Jesus in such a pitiable state, streaming with blood, as He walked along. But Jesus said to them: Weep not for Me, but for your children.

My Jesus, laden with sorrows, I weep for the offences I have committed against Thee, because of the pains they have deserved, and still more because of the displeasure they have caused Thee, who hast loved me so much. It is Thy love, more than the fear of hell, which causes me to weep for my sins. My Jesus, I love Thee more than myself; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Ninth Station**

Jesus Falls the Third Time

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider the third fall of Jesus Christ. His weakness was extreme, and the cruelty of His executioners was excessive, who tried to hasten His steps when He had scarcely strength to move.

Ah, my outraged Jesus, by the merits of the weakness Thou didst suffer in going to Calvary, give me strength sufficient to conquer all human respect, and all my wicked passions, which have led me to despise Thy friendship. I love Thee, Jesus my love, with my whole heart; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Tenth Station**

Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider the violence with which the executioners stripped Jesus. His inner garments adhered to His torn flesh, and they dragged them off so roughly that the skin came with them. Compassionate your Savior thus cruelly treated, and say to Him:

My innocent Jesus, by the merits of the torment Thou hast felt, help me to strip myself of all affection to things of earth, in order that I may place all my love in Thee, who art so worthy of my love. I love Thee, O Jesus, with my whole heart; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Eleventh Station**

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how Jesus, after being thrown on the Cross extended His hands, and offered to His Eternal Father the sacrifice of His death for our salvation. These barbarians fastened Him with nails, and then, raising the Cross, allowed Him to die with anguish on this infamous gibbet.

My Jesus! loaded with contempt, nail my heart to Thy feet, that it may ever remain there, to love Thee, and never quit Thee again. I love Thee more than myself; I repent of having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Twelfth Station**

Jesus is Raised upon the Cross, and Dies

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how thy Jesus, after three hours' Agony on the Cross, consumed at length with anguish, abandons Himself to the weight of His body, bows His head, and dies.

O my dying Jesus, I kiss devoutly the Cross on which Thou didst die for love of me. I have merited by my sins to die a miserable death; but Thy death is my hope. Ah, by the merits of Thy death, give me grace to die, embracing Thy feet, and burning with love for Thee. I yield my soul into Thy hands. I love Thee with my whole heart; I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

### **The Thirteenth Station**

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how, after the death of our Lord, two of His disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, took Him down from the Cross, and placed Him in the arms of His afflicted Mother, who received Him with unutterable tenderness, and pressed Him to her bosom.

O Mother of sorrow, for the love of this Son, accept me for thy servant, and pray to Him for me. And Thou, my Redeemer, since Thou hast died for me, permit me to love Thee; for I wish but Thee, and nothing more. I love Thee,

my Jesus, and I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

#### **The Fourteenth Station**

Jesus is Laid in the Sepulchre

V. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

R. Because by Thy holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Consider how the disciples carried the body of Jesus to bury it, accompanied by His holy Mother, who arranged it in the sepulchre with her own hands. They then closed the tomb, and all withdrew.

Oh, my buried Jesus, I kiss the stone that encloses Thee. But Thou didst rise again the third day. I beseech Thee, by Thy resurrection, make me rise glorious with Thee at the last day, to be always united with Thee in heaven, to praise Thee and love Thee forever. I love Thee, and I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.

**John Donne**

**74. "Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you"**

BATTER my heart, three person'd God; for, you  
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend  
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.  
I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,       5  
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.  
Yet dearely'I love you,'and would be loved faine,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy:       10  
Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe;  
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I  
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

## **The Transfiguration: Law Through Moses, Grace & Truth Through Jesus Christ**

### **St. Leo the Great, Pope and Early Church Father**

This is an excerpt from a homily by St. Leo the Great (Sermo 51, 3-4, 8: PL 54, 310-311, 313) explaining the meaning of the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor. Saint Leo contrasts the law, symbolized by Moses, with the grace of the gospel brought by Jesus Christ, providing a great Lenten reading used in the Roman office of readings for the 2nd second Sunday in Lent, given that the gospel of the day is the Transfiguration.

The Lord reveals his glory in the presence of chosen witnesses. His body is like that of the rest of mankind, but he makes it shine with such splendor that his face becomes like the sun in glory, and his garments as white as snow.

The great reason for this transfiguration was to remove the scandal of the cross from the hearts of his disciples, and to prevent the humiliation of his voluntary suffering from disturbing the faith of those who had witnessed the surpassing glory that lay concealed.

With no less forethought he was also providing a firm foundation for the hope of holy Church. The whole body of Christ was to understand the kind of transformation that it would receive as his gift. The members of that body were to look forward to a share in that glory which first blazed out in Christ their head.

The Lord had himself spoken of this when he foretold the splendor of his coming: Then the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Saint Paul the apostle bore witness to this same truth when he said: I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared to the future glory that is to be revealed in us. In another place he says: You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

This marvel of the transfiguration contains another lesson for the apostles, to strengthen them and lead them into the fullness of knowledge. Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets, appeared with the Lord in conversation with him. This was in order to fulfil exactly, through the presence of these five men, the text which says: Before two or three witnesses every word is ratified. What word could be more firmly established, more securely based, than the word which is proclaimed by the trumpets of both old and new testaments, sounding in harmony, and by the utterances of ancient prophecy and the teaching of the Gospel, in full agreement with each other?

The writings of the two testaments support each other. The radiance of the transfiguration reveals clearly and unmistakably the one who had been promised by signs foretelling him under the veils of mystery. As Saint John says: The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. In him the promise made through the shadows of prophecy stands revealed, along with the full meaning of the precepts of the law. He is the one who teaches the truth of the prophecy through his presence, and makes obedience to the commandments possible through grace.

In the preaching of the holy Gospel all should receive a strengthening of their faith. No one should be ashamed of the cross of Christ, through which the world has been redeemed.

No one should fear to suffer for the sake of justice; no one should lose confidence in the reward that has been promised. The way to rest is through toil, the way to life is through death. Christ has taken on himself the whole



weakness of our lowly human nature. If then we are steadfast in our faith in him and in our love for him, we win the victory that he has won, we receive what he has promised.

When it comes to obeying the commandments or enduring adversity, the words uttered by the Father should always echo in our ears: This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him.

St. Leo the Great was pope during the middle of the fifth century, a troubled time when barbarian armies were ravaging the once mighty Roman empire. He is perhaps most famous for persuading Attila the Hun to abandon his plans to sack the city of Rome. Leo, one of the Early Church Fathers, was such an extraordinary teacher that he is one of the few Popes of history to have been dubbed "the Great." For an overview of the Early Church Fathers by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, [click here](#).

### **O Deus, ego amo te**

**Prayer of St Francis Xavier, early Jesuit missionary  
translated by Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.**

O GOD, I love thee, I love thee-  
Not out of hope of heaven for me  
Nor fearing not to love and be  
In the everlasting burning.  
Thou, thou, my Jesus, after me  
Didst reach thine arms out dying,  
For my sake sufferedst nails, and lance,  
Mocked and marred countenance,  
Sorrows passing number,  
Sweat and care and cumber,  
Yea and death, and this for me,  
And thou couldst see me sinning:  
Then I, why should not I love thee,  
Jesu, so much in love with me?  
Not for heaven's sake;  
not to be out of hell by loving thee;  
Not for any gains I see;  
But just the way that thou didst me  
I do love and I will love thee:  
What must I love thee, Lord, for then?  
For being my king and God. Amen.

## **The Lamb that was Slain**

### **Melito of Sardis, Bishop and Early Church Father**

This wonderful Holy Week meditation is used in the Office of Readings of the Roman Catholic Church for Holy Thursday. It comes from an Easter homily "On the Passover" (Mp/ 65-71; SC 123, 95-101) from one of the greatest 2nd century Church Fathers, St. Melito of Sardis.

There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: that mystery is Christ, and to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself; he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow.

He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the hand of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own Spirit, and the members of our body with his own blood.

He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One who smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.

It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed him. In Abel he was slain, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, dishonored in the prophets.

It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb, the lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of his was broken; in the earth his body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.

## **The Blood and Water from His Side**

### **St. John Chrysostom, Early Church Father and Doctor of the Church**

If we wish to understand the power of Christ's blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. "Sacrifice a lamb without blemish", commanded Moses, "and sprinkle its blood on your doors". If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord's blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so how much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master's side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood, of the holy eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord's side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

"There flowed from his side water and blood". Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, "the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit", and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the Eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: "Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!" As God then took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.

St. John Chrysostom was a monk who was ordained a priest and ultimately, against his will, selected as Patriarch Archbishop of Constantinople. His call to repentance and moral reform won him the enmity of the nominally Christian Empress who got him deposed on trumped-up charges and exiled. But his preaching inspired the hearts of the people of Constantinople and won him the title "Chrysostom" meaning golden-mouthed. St. John Chrysostom, who died under the harsh conditions of his exile in 407, will always be remembered as one of the greatest of the Early Church Fathers and one of the greatest preachers of all time. His beautiful but always practical bible teaching has earned him the title "Doctor of the Church."

## Stations of the Cross for Lent

Opening Prayer :

Mary, my Mother, you were the first to live the Way of the Cross. You felt every pain and every humiliation. You were unafraid of the ridicule heaped upon you by the crowds. Your eyes were ever on Jesus.

The First Station: Jesus Is Condemned To Death

My Jesus, the world still has You on trial. It keeps asking who You are and why You make the demands You make. It asks over and over the question, If You are God's Son, why do You permit the world to be in the state it is in? Why are You so silent?

Though the arrogance of the world angers me, I must admit that silently, in the depths of my soul, I too have these questions. Your humility frustrates me and makes me uncomfortable. Your strength before Pilate as You drank deeply from the power of the Father, gives me the answer to my question - The Father's Will. The Father permits many sufferings in my life but it is all for my good. If only I too could be silent in the face of worldly prudence - steadfast in the faith when all seems lost - calm when accused unjustly - free from tyranny of human respect - ready to do the Father's Will no matter how difficult.

Silent Jesus, give us all the graces we need to stand tall in the face of the ridicule of the world. Give the poor the strength not to succumb to their privation but to be ever aware of their dignity as sons of God. Grant that we might not bend to the crippling disease of worldly glory but be willing to be deprived of all things rather than lose Your friendship. My Jesus, though we are accused daily of being fools, let the vision of Quiet Dignity standing before Monstrous Injustice, give us all the courage to be Your followers. Amen

The Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

How could any human impose such a burden upon Your torn and bleeding body, Lord Jesus? Each movement of the cross drove the thorns deeper into Your Head. How did You keep the hatred from welling up in Your Heart? How did the injustice of it all not ruffle your peace? The Father's Will was hard on You - Why do I complain when it is hard on me?

I see injustice and am frustrated and when my plans to alleviate it seems futile, I despair. When I see those burdened with poverty suffer ever more and cross is added to cross my heart is far from serene. I utterly fail to see the dignity of the cross as it is carried with love. I would so much rather be without it.

My worldly concept is that suffering, like food, should be shared equally. How ridiculous I am, dear Lord. Just as we do not all need the same amount of material food, neither do we need the same amount of spiritual food and that is what the cross is in my life, isn't it - spiritual food proportional to my needs. Amen

### The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time

My Jesus, it seems to me, that as God, You would have carried Your cross without faltering, but You did not. You fell beneath its weight to show me You understand when I fall. Is it pride that makes me want to shine even in pain? You were not ashamed to fall- to admit the cross was heavy. There are those in world whom my pride will not tolerate as I expect everyone to be strong, yet I am weak. I am ashamed to admit failure in anything.

If the Father permits failure in my life just as He permitted You to fall, then I must know there is good in that failure which my mind will never comprehend. I must not concentrate on the eyes of others as they rest upon me in my falls. Rather, I must reach up to touch that invisible hand and drink in that invisible strength ever at my side.

Weak Jesus, help all men who try so hard to be good but whose nature is constantly opposed to them walking straight and tall down the narrow road of life. Raise their heads to see the glory that is to come rather than the misery of the present moment.

Your love for me gave You strength to rise from Your fall. Look upon all those whom the world considers unprofitable servants and give them the courage to be more concerned as to how they stand before You, rather than their fellowmen. Amen

### The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

My Jesus, it was a great sorrow to realize Your pain caused Mary so much grief. As Redeemer, You wanted her to share in Your pain for mankind. When You glanced at each other in unutterable suffering, what gave you both the courage to carry on without the least alleviation - without anger at such injustice?

It seems as if you desired to suffer every possible pain to give me an example of how to suffer when my time comes. What a humiliation for You when Your mother saw you in such a pitiable state - weak - helpless - at the mercy of sinful men - holiness exposed to evil in all hideousness.

Did every moment of that short encounter seem like an eternity? As I see so much suffering in the world, there are times I think it is all hopeless. There is an element of lethargy in my prayers for mankind that says "I'll pray, but what good will it do? The sick grow sicker and the hungry starve. " I think of that glance between You and Mary - the glance that said, "Let us give this misery to the Father for the salvation of souls. The Father's power takes our pain and frustration and renews souls, saves them for a new life - a life of eternal joy, eternal happiness. It is worth it all." Give perseverance to the sick so they can carry the cross of frustration and agony with love and resignation for the salvation of others. Amen

### The Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

My Jesus, Your tormentors enlisted a Simon of Cyrene to help You carry Your cross. Your humility is beyond my comprehension. Your power upheld the whole universe and yet You permit one of Your creatures to help You carry a cross. I imagine Simon was reluctant to take part in Your shame. He had no idea that all who watched and jeered at him would pass into oblivion while his name would go down in history and eternity as the one who helped his

God in need. Is it not so with me, dear Jesus? Even when I reluctantly carry my cross as Simon did, it benefits my soul.

If I keep my eyes on You and watch how You suffered, I will be able to bear my cross with greater fortitude. Were you trying to tell all those who suffer from prejudice to have courage? Was Simon a symbol of all those who are hated because of race, color and creed?

Simon wondered as he took those beams upon his shoulders, why he was chosen for such a heavy burden and now he knows. Help me Jesus, to trust your loving Providence as you permit suffering to weave itself in and out of my life. Make me understand that You looked at it and held it fondly before You passed it on to me. You watch me and give me strength just as You did Simon. When I enter Your Kingdom, I shall know as he knows, what marvels Your Cross has wrought in my soul. Amen

The Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

My Jesus, where were all the hundreds of peoples whose bodies and souls were healed by you? Where were they when You needed someone to give You the least sign of comfort? Ingratitude must have borne down upon Your heart and made the cross nearly impossible to carry. There are times I too feel all my efforts for Your Kingdom are futile and end in nothingness. Did your eyes roam through the crowd for the comfort of just one individual - one sign of pity - one sign of grief?

My heart thrills with a sad joy when I think of one woman, breaking away from fear and human respect and offering You her thin veil to wipe Your bleeding Face. Your loving heart, ever watching for the least sign of love, imprinted the Image of your torn Face upon it! How can You forget Yourself so completely and reward such a small act of kindness?

I must admit, I have been among those who were afraid to know You rather than like Veronica. She did not care if the whole world knew she loved You. Heartbroken Jesus, give me that quality of the soul so necessary to witness to spread Your Word - to tell all people of Your love for them. Send many into Your Vineyard so the people of all nations may receive the Good News. Imprint Your Divine Image upon my soul and let the thin veil of my human nature bear a perfect resemblance to your loving Spirit. Amen

The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls A Second Time

My Jesus, one of the beautiful qualities the people admired in You was Your strength in time of ridicule - Your ability to rise above the occasion. But now, You fall a second time - apparently conquered by the pain of the Cross. People who judged You by appearances made a terrible mistake. What looked like weakness was unparalleled strength!

I often judge by appearances and how wrong I am most of the time. The world judges entirely by this fraudulent method of discerning. It looks down upon those who apparently have given their best and are now in need. It judges the poor as failures, the sick as useless and the aged as a burden. How wrong that kind of judgment is in the light of your second fall! Your greatest moment was Your weakest one. Your greatest triumph was in failure. Your greatest act of love was in desolation. Your greatest show of power was in that utter lack of strength that threw You to the ground.

Weak and powerful Jesus, give me the grace to see beyond what is visible and be more aware of Your Wisdom in the midst of weakness. Give the aged, sick, handicapped, retarded, deaf and blind the fruit of joy so they may ever be aware of the Father's gift and the vast difference between what the world sees and what the Father sees that they may glory in their weakness so the power of God may be manifest. Amen

#### The Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks to the Holy Women

My Jesus, I am amazed at Your compassion for others in Your time of need. When I suffer, I have a tendency to think only of myself but You forgot Yourself completely. When You saw the holy women weeping over Your torments, You consoled them and taught them to look deeper into Your Passion. You wanted them to understand that the real evil to cry over was the rejection You suffered from the Chosen people - a people set apart from every other nation, who refused to accept God's Son. The Act of Redemption would go on and no one would ever be able to take away Your dignity as Son of God, but the evil, greed, jealousy and ambition in the hearts of those who should have recognized You was the issue to grieve over. To be so close to God made man and miss Him completely was the real crime. My Jesus, I fear I do the same when I strain gnats and then swallow camels - when I take out the splinter in my brother's eye and forget the beam in my own. It is such a gift - this gift of faith. It is such a sublime grace to possess Your own Spirit. Why haven't I advanced in holiness of life? I miss the many disguises you take upon Yourself and see only people, circumstances and human events, not the loving hand of the Father guiding all things. Help all those who are discouraged, sick, lonely and old to recognize Your Presence in their midst. Amen

#### The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time

My Jesus, even with the help of Simon You fell a third time. Were You telling me that there may be times in my life that I will fall again and again despite the help of friends and loved ones? There are times when the crosses You permit in my life are more than I can bear. It is as if all the sufferings of a life time are suddenly compressed into the present moment and it is more than I can stand. Though it grieves my heart to see You so weak and helpless, it is a comfort to my soul to know that you understand my sufferings from Your own experience. Your love for me made You want to experience every kind of pain just so I could have someone to look to for example and courage. When I cry out from the depths of my soul, "This suffering is more than I can bear," do You whisper, "Yes, I understand"? When I am discouraged after many falls, do you say in my innermost being, "Keep going, I know how hard it is to rise"?

There are many people who are sorely tried in body and soul with alcohol and drug weaknesses who try and try and fall again and again. Through the humiliation of this third fall, give them the courage and perseverance to take up their cross and follow you. Amen

#### The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

It seems that every step to Calvary brought You fresh humiliation, my Jesus. How Your sensitive nature recoiled at being stripped before a crowd of people. You desired to leave this life as You entered it - completely detached from all the comforts of this world. You want me to know without a doubt that you loved me with an unselfish love. Your love for me caused You nothing but pain and sorrow. You gave everything and received nothing in return. Why do I find it so hard to be detached?

In your loving mind, dear Jesus, did You look up to the Father as You stood there on that windy hill, shivering from cold and shame and trembling from fear, and ask Him to have mercy on those who would violate their purity and make love a mockery? Did you ask forgiveness for those whose greed would make them lie, cheat and steal for a few pieces of cold silver?

Forgive us all, dear Jesus. Look upon the world with pity, for mankind has lost its way and the principles of this world make lust a fun game and luxury a necessity. Detachment has become merely another hardship of the poor and obedience the fault of the weak. Have mercy on us and grant the people of this day the courage to see and know themselves and the light to change, Amen

#### The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

It is hard to imagine a God being nailed to a cross by His own creatures. It is even more difficult for my mind to understand a love that permitted such a thing to happen! As those men drove heavy nails into Your hands and feet, dear Jesus, did You offer the pain as reparation for some particular human weakness and sin? Was the nail in Your right hand for those who spend their lives in dissipation and boredom?

Was the nail in Your left and in reparation for all consecrated souls who live lukewarm lives? Were You stretching out Your arms to show us how much You love us? As the feet that walked the hot, dusty roads were nailed fast, did they cramp up in a deadly grip of pain to make reparation for all those who so nimbly run the broad road of sin and self-indulgence?

It seems, dear Jesus, Your love has held You bound hand and foot as Your heart pleads for a return of love. You seem to shout from the top of the hill "I love you - come to me - see, I am held fast - I cannot hurt you - only you can hurt Me." How very hard is the heart that can see such love and turn away. Is it not true I too have turned away when I did not accept the Father's Will with love? Teach me to keep my arms ever open to love, to forgive and to render service - willing to be hurt rather than hurt, satisfied to love and not be loved in return. Amen

#### The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

God is dead! No wonder the earth quaked, the sun hid itself, the dead rose and Mary stood by in horror. Your human body gave up it's soul in death but Your Divinity, dear Jesus, continued to manifest its power. All creation rebelled as the Word made Flesh departed from this world. Man alone was too proud to see and too stubborn to acknowledge truth.

Redemption was accomplished! Man would never have an excuse to forget how much You loved him. The thief on Your right saw something he could not explain - he saw a man on a tree and knew He was God. His need made him see his own guilt and Your innocence. The Promise of eternal life made the remaining hours of his torture. endurable.

A common thief responded to Your love with deep Faith, Hope, and Love. He saw more than his eyes envisioned - he felt a Presence he could not explain and would not argue with. He was in need and accepted the way God designed to help him.



Forgive our pride, dear Jesus as we spend hours speculating, days arguing and often a lifetime in rejecting Your death, which is a sublime mystery. Have pity on those whose intelligence leads them to pride because they never feel the need to reach out to the Man of Sorrows for consolation. Amen

#### The Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

My Jesus, it was with deep grief that Mary finally took You into her arms and saw all the wounds sin had inflicted upon You. Mary Magdalene looked upon Your dead Body with horror. Nicodemus, the man so full of human respect, who came to You by night, suddenly received the courage to help Joseph take you down from the Cross. You are once more surrounded by only a few followers. When loneliness and failure cross my path, let me think of this lonely moment and this total failure - failure in the eyes of men. How wrong they were - how mistaken their concept of success! The greatest act of love was given in desolation and the most successful mission accomplished and finished when all seemed lost. Is this not true in my life, dear Jesus? I judge my failures harshly. I demand perfection instead of holiness. My idea of success is for all to end well - according to my liking. Give to all men the grace to see that doing Your Will is more important than success. If failure is permitted for my greater good then teach me how to use it to my advantage. Let me say as You once said, that to do the Will of the Father is my food. Let not the standards of this world take possession of me or destroy the good You have set for me - to be Holy and to accomplish the Father's Will with great love. Let me accept praise or blame, success or failure with equal serenity. Amen

#### The Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Sepulcher

My Jesus, You were laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. You were born with nothing of this world's goods and You died detached from everything. When You came into the world, men slept and angels sang and now as You leave it, Creation is silent and only a few weep. Both events were clothed in obscurity. The majority of men live in such a way. Most of us live and die knowing and known by only a few. Were You trying to tell us, dear Jesus, how very important our lives are just because we are accomplishing the Father's Will? Will we ever learn the lesson of humility that makes us content with who we are, where we are and what we are?

Will our Faith ever be strong enough to see power in weakness and good in the sufferings of our lives? Will our Hope be trusting enough to rely on Your Providence even when we have nowhere to lay our head? Will our Love ever be strong enough not to take scandal in the cross?

My Jesus, hide my soul in Your heart as You lie in the Sepulcher alone. Let my heart be as a fire to keep you warm. Let my desire to know and love You be like a torch to light up the darkness. Let my soul sing softly a hymn of repentant love as the hours pass and Your Resurrection is at hand. Let me rejoice, dear Jesus, with all the Angels in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for so great a love- so great a God- so great a day! Amen

Prayer :

My Jesus, I have traveled Your Way of the cross.

It seems so real and I feel so ashamed. I complain of my sufferings and find obedience to the Father's Will difficult. My Mind bogged down by the poverty, sickness, starvation, greed and hatred

My Jesus, I have traveled Your Way of the cross.

It seems so real and I feel so ashamed. I complain of my

sufferings and find obedience to the Father's Will difficult. My Mind bogged down by the poverty, sickness, starvation, greed and hatred in the world.

There are many innocent people who suffer so unjustly. There are those born with physical and mental defects. Do we understand that You continue to carry Your cross in the minds and bodies of each human being?

Help me to see the Father's Will in every incident of my daily life. This is what You did - you saw the Father's Will in Your persecutors, Your enemies and your pain.

You saw a beauty in the Cross and embraced it as a desired treasure.

My worldly mind is dulled by injustice and suffering and I lose sight of the glory that is to come. Help me to trust the Father and to realize that there is something great behind the most insignificant suffering. There is Someone lifting my cross to fit my shoulders - there is Divine Wisdom in all the petty annoyances that irk my soul every day.

Teach me the lessons contained in my Cross, the wisdom of its necessity, the beauty of its variety and the fortitude that accompanies even the smallest cross.

Mary, My Mother, obtain for me the grace to be Jesus to my neighbor and to see my neighbor in Jesus.

Amen.

O sacred head, surrounded

O sacred head, surrounded  
by crown of piercing thorn!  
O bleeding head, so wounded,  
reviled and put to scorn!  
Our sins have marred the glory  
of thy most holy face,  
yet angel hosts adore thee  
and tremble as they gaze

I see thy strength and vigor  
all fading in the strife,  
and death with cruel rigor,  
bereaving thee of life;  
O agony and dying!  
O love to sinners free!  
Jesus, all grace supplying,  
O turn thy face on me.

In this thy bitter passion,  
Good Shepherd, think of me  
with thy most sweet compassion,  
unworthy though I be:  
beneath thy cross abiding  
for ever would I rest,  
in thy dear love confiding,  
and with thy presence blest.

## His Death is our Hope

by St. Augustine of Hippo, Early Church Father and Doctor of the Church

Saint Augustine, Early Church Father, Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio This excerpt from a homily by St. Augustine reflects on the glory of the cross of Christ and the lesson in patience and love contained in the account of Jesus' suffering and death. It is taken from the Roman Church's Office of Readings for Monday of Holy Week with the accompanying biblical reading being Hebrews 10: 19-39. (from Augustine's *Sermo Guelferbytanus* 3: PLS 2, 545f).

The passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the hope of glory and a lesson in patience.

What may not the hearts of believers promise themselves as the gift of God's grace, when for their sake God's only Son, co-eternal with the Father, was not content only to be born as man from human stock but even died at the hands of the men he had created?

It is a great thing that we are promised by the Lord, but far greater is what has already been done for us, and which we now commemorate. Where were the sinners, what were they, when Christ died for them? When Christ has already given us the gift of his death, who is to doubt that he will give the saints the gift of his own life? Why does our human frailty hesitate to believe that mankind will one day live with God?

Who is Christ if not the Word of God: in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God? This Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us. He had no power of himself to die for us: he had to take from us our mortal flesh. This was the way in which, though immortal, he was able to die; the way in which he chose to give life to mortal men: he would first share with us, and then enable us to share with him. Of ourselves we had no power to live, nor did he of himself have the power to die.

In other words, he performed the most wonderful exchange with us. Through us, he died; through him, we shall live.

The death of the Lord our God should not be a cause of shame for us; rather, it should be our greatest hope, our greatest glory. In taking upon himself the death that he found in us, he has most faithfully promised to give us life in him, such as we cannot have of ourselves.

He loved us so much that, sinless himself, he suffered for us sinners the punishment we deserved for our sins. How then can he fail to give us the reward we deserve for our righteousness, for he is the source of righteousness? How can he, whose promises are true, fail to reward the saints when he bore the punishment of sinners, though without sin himself?

Brethren, let us then fearlessly acknowledge, and even openly proclaim, that Christ was crucified for us; let us confess it, not in fear but in joy, not in shame but in glory.

The apostle Paul saw Christ, and extolled his claim to glory. He had many great and inspired things to say about Christ, but he did not say that he boasted in Christ's wonderful works: in creating the world, since he was God with the Father, or in ruling the world, though he was also a man like us. Rather, he said: Let me not boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Christ, the Model of Brotherly Love

### Saint Aelred, Abbot

This Lenten reading is an excerpt from the Mirror of Love by Saint Aelred of Rievaulx, abbot (Lib 3, 5: PL 195, 382). It is used in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings for Friday of the 1st week in Lent with the accompanying biblical reading of Exodus 12: 21-36.

Jesus Nailed to Cross, Station 11, Forgiveness

The perfection of brotherly love lies in the love of one's enemies. We can find no greater inspiration for this than grateful remembrance of the wonderful patience of Christ. He who is more fair than all the sons of men offered his fair face to be spat upon by sinful men; he allowed those eyes that rule the universe to be blindfolded by wicked men; he bared his back to the scourges; he submitted that head which strikes terror in principalities and powers to the sharpness of the thorns; he gave himself up to be mocked and reviled, and at the end endured the cross, the nails, the lance, the gall, the vinegar, remaining always gentle, meek and full of peace.

In short, he was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb before the shearers he kept silent, and did not open his mouth.

Who could listen to that wonderful prayer, so full of warmth, of love, of unshakeable serenity - Father, forgive them - and hesitate to embrace his enemies with overflowing love? Father, he says, forgive them. Is any gentleness, any love, lacking in this prayer?

Yet he put into it something more. It was not enough to pray for them: he wanted also to make excuses for them. Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. They are great sinners, yes, but they have little judgment; therefore, Father, forgive them. They are nailing me to the cross, but they do not know who it is that they are nailing to the cross: if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory; therefore, Father, forgive them. They think it is a lawbreaker, an impostor claiming to be God, a seducer of the people. I have hidden my face from them, and they do not recognise my glory; therefore, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

If someone wishes to love himself he must not allow himself to be corrupted by indulging his sinful nature. If he wishes to resist the promptings of his sinful nature he must enlarge the whole horizon of his love to contemplate the loving gentleness of the humanity of the Lord. Further, if he wishes to savor the joy of brotherly love with greater perfection and delight, he must extend even to his enemies the embrace of true love.

But if he wishes to prevent this fire of divine love from growing cold because of injuries received, let him keep the eyes of his soul always fixed on the serene patience of his beloved Lord and Savior.

## **When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;  
Then I am dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

To Christ, who won for sinners grace  
By bitter grief and anguish sore,  
Be praise from all the ransomed race  
Forever and forevermore.

## Take up Your Cross

- 1 'Take up your cross', the Saviour said,  
'If you would my disciple be;  
Deny yourself, forsake the world,  
And humbly follow after me.'
- 2 Take up your cross - let not its weight  
Fill your weak spirit with alarm;  
His strength shall bear your spirit up,  
And brace your heart, and nerve your arm.
- 3 Take up your cross, nor heed the shame  
Nor let your foolish pride rebel;  
Your Lord for you the cross endured  
To save your soul from death and hell.
- 4 Take up your cross, then, in his strength,  
And calmly every danger brave;  
He'll guide us to a better home,  
And lead to victory o'er the grave.
- 5 Take up your cross and follow Christ  
Nor think till death to lay it down;  
For only they who bear the cross  
May hope to win the glorious crown.
- 6 To you, great Lord, the One in Three,  
All praise for evermore ascend;  
And grant us in our rest to see  
The heavenly life that knows no end.

## Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are not given to us only to remind us of the historical Passion of Christ, but to show us what is happening now, and happening to each one of us. Christ did not become man only to lead His own short life on earth- unimaginable mercy though that would have been-- but to live each of our lives.

Most of Christ's earthly life was hidden. He was hidden in His Mother's womb, He was hidden in Egypt and in Nazareth. During His public life He was hidden often, when He fled into "a mountain to pray." During the forty days of His risen life, again and again He disappeared and hid Himself from men. Today He is hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, in Heaven, and in His Mystical Body on earth.

But in His Passion He was exposed, made public property to the whole of mankind. The last time He went up into a mountain to pray, it was to pray out loud in a voice that would echo down the ages, ringing in the ears of mankind for ever. He was stripped naked before the whole world for ever, not only in body but in mind and soul; to reveal not only the height and depth and the breadth of His love for men but its intimacy, its sensitivity, its humanity.

## The Way of the Cross Caryl Houselander

### First Station

Jesus is Condemned to Death

He is a man of sorrows.

He is covered in bruises and stripes.

He is made a laughing stock.

He is crowned with a crown of thorns.

A reed is put into His hand for a scepter a tattered soldier's cloak is thrown over His naked shoulders.

His eyes are blindfolded.

His face is covered with spittings

He is bound like a dangerous criminal

His own people have chosen a murderer before him.

His friends have forsaken Him.

The kiss of treason burns on His cheek.

"Father, forgive them: they do not know what it is they are doing"

### Second Station

Jesus Receives His Cross

Lying in the wooden manger in the stable of Bethlehem,

Christ welcomed the cross for which He had come into the world. At that moment of His birth He accepted all the hardship, the pain and suffering of mankind- the cold, the darkness, hunger and thirst; the pain of mind and body, the needs and the dependence of all men. He accepted death - indeed He became man in order to die for men.

Unseen, unknown, Christ received His cross in Bethlehem.

### Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time



Because Christ identifies Himself with us, because He suffers the humiliation of the first fall in us, His love transforms it.

The very wound can heal us.

The first fall is the first real self-knowledge. Now we know our weakness, we know our helplessness before the difficulties of life, our total inability to shoulder our responsibilities. We know that we cannot get up by ourselves, we cannot shoulder the burden for the second time by ourselves, we cannot face our own self-contempt or the derision of others, by ourselves. We realize now that we are wholly dependent on Christ, dependent on Him to act in us, to lift Himself up in us and to lift us up in Him. His weakness is our strength.

No longer do we seek to carry the burden with our own hands, but with His.

No longer do we try to walk in His footsteps, we tread the way with His feet.

#### Fourth Station

##### Jesus Meets His Mother

Seeing the first fall on the Via Crucis, His Mother sees the first fall on the path in Nazareth. Now as then she is silent; she holds back her hands as she did then. His will is her will. It was for this hour that she gave Him to the world, for this that He grew from the infant to the child, from the child to the man.

"Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?"

What is His Father's business but the business of love, the Father's love for mankind? "The Father so loved the world, that he gave up his only son to save the world."

The cause of Christ's suffering was His love for the world; the suffering He gave to His Mother was the gift of His own love. The increase of Christ's own grief because He must afflict her was an increase of Christ-love in the whole world- the suffering which is a communion of love.

#### Fifth Station

##### Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross

We are here on earth to help to carry the cross of Christ, the Christ hidden in other men and women, and to have literally a strong arm to give, we may help to do hard work; we may have material goods to give; we may have time, which we desperately want for ourselves but which we must sacrifice for Christ in others.

We may have only suffering.

Suffering is the most precious coin of all. Suffering of body, suffering of mind, paid down willingly for Christ in others, enables Him to carry His redeeming cross through the world to the end of time.

Suffering contains in itself all that Simon gave:

our mind and body, frustration and identification with someone else.

#### Sixth Station

##### Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Now that face of infinite majesty and compelling beauty is unrecognizable. ...

It is all this, from which His close friends have fled, which drives this woman to Him

It is the ugliness and the helplessness, which frightened those whom He called His "own" away, that draws her to Him;

it is her compassion that gives her the courage to come close to Him....

She sees the majesty that was hidden, for now she has wiped away what she can of the blood and sweat and tears, she sees that they hid a face that is serene in its suffering, calm, majestic, infinitely tender.

#### Seventh Station

##### Jesus Falls the Second Time

Christ is down in the dust. This second fall is harder than the first; He is nearer the end of His tether now, more dependent than before on others to help Him to get up and go on. It may have been something trifling, almost absurd, that threw Him down. Perhaps something as small as a pebble on the road; yes, that would have been enough to send Him hurtling down, with that terrible burden on His back, and His own exhaustion as He nears the end of His bitter journey.

It is the same today, the same for those "other Christs" who have gone a long way on the road and who fall, not for the first time now, under the heavy cross of circumstance--those who have carried this cross for a long time, who have become exhausted by the unequal struggle and fall, who with Him are down in the dust. It is for them that Christ falls for the second time and lies under the crushing weight of His cross, waiting for those who will come forward to lend their hands to lift it from His back and enable Him to go to the end of His way of suffering and love.

If something as trifling as a pebble in the road or a false step could throw Christ down on the road, so may a tiny provocation, a sudden temptation, a mocking word--a fragment that adds to the struggle-- bring the man staggering under the cross down: the servant is not greater than his master.

#### Eighth Station

##### Jesus Speaks to the Women of Jerusalem

But above all else it is compassion that Christ has always wanted from men and women, has always for; He has wanted them to be with Him, to comfort Him just by entering into His suffering with Him- not to take away His suffering but to enter into it with Him, because it is His and it is the expression of His love for them!

There are those in every age in whom the suffering of Christ is manifest, almost visible, the beauty of His love shining through the ugliness of their circumstances. It is not for Christ in them that we must weep. It is for Christ whose beauty is hidden, Christ in the outcast, in the man who is wrestling with temptation, who is unrecognized, un comforted; Christ in whom we pass by without seeing , without knowing, whom we allow to stagger on, on His way, loaded with His too heavy cross, unhelped, unwept, un comforted.

#### Ninth Station

##### Jesus Falls the Third Time

As they approach the foot of the Mount Calvary the suspense reaches its climax:

If he is going to work a miracle, he must do it now.

If he is going to show that, after all, if he IS what he claims to be, the Son of God, the moment has come for him to prove it.

It is not only those who fear and hate Him who are in suspense; the whole multitude watches Him, holding its breath, waiting to see what Jesus of Nazareth is going to do now.

They wait, straining forward,  
struggling to come near to Him,  
breathless with suspense,  
some through fear,

some through hope;

all tense, expectant, awaiting!

And what does He do? For the third and the last time, Jesus falls under the cross!

This is the worst fall of all. It comes at the worst moment of all. It tears open all the wounds in His body; the shock dispels the last ounce of strength that He had mustered to go on. It shatters the last hope the last remnant of faith, in nearly everyone in the crowd. It is triumph for His enemies, heartbreak for His friends.

He chooses to indwell those who seem to fail,

those who fall again and again, those who seem to be overcome even when the end is in sight.

In them, if they will it, He abides; in them He overcomes weakness and failure,

in them He triumphs; and in

His power they can persevere to the end,

abject before men but glorious with Christ's glory before God.

#### Tenth Station

##### Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

But before He is nailed to the Cross, Jesus gives us yet another overwhelming showing of His love, yet another proof of His identification with men in their bitterest humiliation: Jesus is stripped of His garments.

He stood there identified with the convert, either from sin of unbelief, who must tear off the long established habits of sin and weakness as if he were tearing off his skin.

#### Prayer

Give me the courage and the dignity and splendour of Your love,

to live openly, without pretence, even when there is that in my life which shames me.

Give me the one glory of those who are disgraced and ashamed before the world:

to be stripped with You, Jesus Christ my redeemer, upon Calvary.

Amen

#### Eleventh Station

##### Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

As the three nails were driven home into the wood, fastening Him to it irrevocably Christ gave Himself to all those men and women who in the years to come would nail themselves to

His cross by the three vows of religion:

poverty, chastity and obedience;

{We take: conversion of life, stability and obedience, in our Monastic tradition.}

those wise ones who know the weakness of human nature, who know how easily the will can falter when the sweetness of the first consolation of prayer is over; how hard and bleak the winter of the spirit when its springtide and its summer and harvesting seem passed for ever; how hard to go on faithfully clinging to the Christ life with only one's own weak will to drive one.

Christ, receiving the nails, gave Himself to those men and women who would nail themselves by the binding vows to Himself upon the cross, who would have the ability to remain true to their chosen life because their hands and feet are put into His hands and feet, and they are held onto the cross by the nails that held Him.

#### Twelfth Station

## Jesus Dies on the Cross

Prayer:

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"  
And into Your hands, Jesus Christ my most merciful redeemer,  
Infinite Love,  
I commend myself in the hour of death-  
my body and soul,  
my heart and my mind and my will,  
All that I have done and all that I am.

Into Your hands,  
the beautiful hands of a carpenter  
with their line and sinew and muscle,  
strong and sensitive hands  
nailed to the cross,  
I commend those whom I love.  
Hands that can heal the sick,  
can give sight to the blind;  
hands that raise the dead  
and restore them to life with a touch,  
receive those whom I love,  
receive them and bless them from the cross;  
receive them, comfort them, lead and uphold them;  
unity them to Yourself  
and re-unite them to me  
for ever more in Your Kingdom,  
Jesus, merciful Lord.  
Amen

## Thirteenth Station

Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

And there from the summit of Calvary,  
at the foot of the cross with her dead child in her arms,  
Mary saw how in all the centuries to come Christ would be born again  
day after day, hour after hour, in the sacred Host.  
She heard the multitudinous whisper of the  
words of consecration coming to her on Calvary  
from every part of the world, from every place on earth:  
from the great cathedrals of the world;  
from the little village huts that are makeshift for churches;  
from the churches themselves, weather they were beautiful or cheap and tawdry;  
from the chapels and wards of hospitals;  
from prisons and from concentration camps; from the frozen forests of Siberia

- from dawn till dusk, and from dusk till dawn,  
the words of consecration on the breath of men,  
and Jesus lifted up,  
as He had been lifted up on the cross,  
in the Sacred Host.

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

It is always from the deaths of the spirit that Christ's resurrection comes.

When we know ourselves as sinners and are sorry,  
our resurrection is at hand.

When we are iron-bound in the winter frost of aridity,  
the springtime of resurrection is very near.

When it seems that we have failed,  
that everything is over,  
and we are in the darkness of the tomb with Christ,  
then the angels will come and roll away the great heavy stone,  
and resurrection with Christ will come.

## **Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended**

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, hath 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 our atonement, while we nothing heedeth,  
God intercedeth.

For me, kind Jesus, was thy 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.

## Scriptural Rosary – Sorrowful Mysteries

The prayer of the Rosary is divided up into four different sets of Mysteries (each set has 5 Mysteries). A truly powerful way to pray the Rosary, the Scriptural Rosary provides inspiration before every prayer in the Rosary, bringing the Mysteries of the Rosary to true life. Complete instructions for praying the Rosary are available [here](#).

### The First Sorrowful Mystery – The Agony in the Garden

Our Father

1. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. / And he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (Mt 26:36-37) Hail Mary
2. Then he said to them, / “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; / remain here, and watch with me.” (Mt 26:38)Hail Mary
3. And he withdrew from them / about a stone’s throw, / and knelt down and prayed. (Lk 22:41)Hail Mary
4. “Father, if you are willing, / remove this chalice from me; / nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done.” (Lk 22:42)Hail Mary
5. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, / strengthening him. (Lk 22:43)Hail Mary
6. And being in agony / he prayed more earnestly. (Lk 22:44)Hail Mary
7. And his sweat became like great drops of blood / falling down upon the ground. (Lk 22:44)Hail Mary
8. And he came back to his disciples and found them sleeping; / and he said to Peter, / “So, could you not watch with me one hour?” (Mt 26:40)Hail Mary
9. “Watch and pray / that you may not enter into temptation.” (Mt 26:41)Hail Mary
10. “The spirit indeed is willing, / but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 26:41)Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father ~

Fatima Prayer ~ (Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.)

### The Second Sorrowful Mystery – The Scourging At The Pillar

Our Father

1. And as soon as it was morning / the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, / and the whole council held a consultation; / and they bound Jesus and led him away / and delivered him to Pilate./ And Pilate asked him, / “Are you the king of the Jews?” (Mk 15:1-2)Hail Mary
2. Jesus answered, / “My kingdom 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.” (Jn 18:36)Hail Mary
3. 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.” (Jn 18:37)Hail Mary
4. 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.”(Jn 18:38)Hail Mary
5. “I will therefore chastise him and release him.” / Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. (Lk 23:16, Jn 19:1)Hail Mary
6. He was despised and rejected by men;/ a man of sorrows, / and acquainted with grief; / and as one from whom men hide their faces / he was despised, / and we esteemed him not. (Is 53:3)Hail Mary

7. He was oppressed, / and he was afflicted, / yet he opened not his mouth; / like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, / and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, / so he opened not his mouth. (Is 53:7)Hail Mary
8. But he was wounded for our transgressions, / he was bruised for our iniquities. (Is 53:5)Hail Mary
9. Surely he has borne our griefs / and carried our sorrows Yet we esteemed him stricken, / struck down by God, and afflicted. (Is 53:4)Hail Mary
10. Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, / and with his stripes we are healed.. (Is 53:5)Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father ~

Fatima Prayer ~ (Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.)

The Third Sorrowful Mystery – The Crowning with Thorns

Our Father

1. And the soldiers led him away [to the Praetorium]. / And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him. (Mk 15:16-17, Mt 27:28)Hail Mary
2. And plaiting a crown of thorns / they put it on his head, / and put a reed in his right hand. (Mt 27:29)Hail Mary
3. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, / “Hail, king of the Jews!” (Mt 27:29)Hail Mary
4. And they spat upon him / and took the reed and struck him on the head. (Mt 27:30)Hail Mary
5. [Then Pilate] took water / and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, / “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood; / see to it yourselves.” (Mt 27:24)Hail Mary
6. So Jesus came out, / wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. (Jn 19:5)Hail Mary
7. [Pilate] said to the Jews, / “Here is your King!” / They cried out, / “Away with him, away with him, / Crucify him!” (Jn 19:15)Hail Mary
8. And Pilate said to them, / “Why, what evil has he done?” / But they shouted all the more, / “Crucify him.” (Mk15:14)Hail Mary
9. “Shall I crucify your king?” / The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” (Jn 19:15)Hail Mary
10. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, / released for them Barabbas; / and having scouraged Jesus, / he delivered him to be crucified. (Mk 15:15)Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father ~

Fatima Prayer ~ (Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.)

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery – The Carrying of the Cross

Our Father

1. “If any man would come after me, / let him deny himself.” (Lk 9:23)Hail Mary
2. “And take up his cross daily / and follow me.” (Lk 9:23)Hail Mary
3. So they took Jesus, / and he went out, / carrying his own cross. (Jn 19:17)Hail Mary
4. And as the led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, / who was coming in from the country, / and laid on him the cross, / to carry it behind Jesus. (Lk 23:26)Hail Mary
5. “Take my yoke upon you, / and learn from me.” (Mt 11:29)Hail Mary
6. “For I am gentle/ and lowly in heart.” (Mt 11:29)Hail Mary
7. “And you will find rest for your souls. / For my yoke is easy, / and my burden light.” (Mt 11:29-30)Hail Mary



8. And there followed him a great multitude of the people, / and of women who bewailed and lamented him. (Lk 23:27)Hail Mary
9. But Jesus turning to them said, / “Daughters of Jerusalem, / do not weep for me, / but weep for yourselves and for your children.” (Lk 23:28)Hail Mary
10. “For if they do this when the wood is green, / what will happen when it is dry?” (Lk 23:31)Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father ~

Fatima Prayer ~ (Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.)

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery – The Crucifixion of Our Lord

Our Father

1. And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, / there they crucified him. (Lk 23:33)Hail Mary
2. And Jesus said, / “Father, forgive them;/ for they know not what they do.” (Lk 23:34)Hail Mary
3. One of the criminals who were crucified with him said, “Jesus, remember me/ when you come in your kingly power.” (Lk 23:39, 42; Mk 15:32)Hail Mary
4. “Truly, I say to you, / today you will be with me in paradise.” (Lk 23:43)Hail Mary
5. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother . . . / and the disciple whom he loved. (Jn 19:25-26)Hail Mary
6. [Jesus] said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” / Then he said to the disciple, / “Behold, your mother.” (Jn 19:26-27)Hail Mary
7. And from that hour / the disciple took her to his own home. (Jn 19:27)Hail Mary
8. And there was darkness over the whole land. / And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two / from top to bottom, / and the earth shook. (Lk 23:44; Mt 27:51)Hail Mary
9. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said / “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Lk 23:46)Hail Mary
10. And he bowed his head / and gave up his spirit. (Jn 19:30) Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father ~

Fatima Prayer ~ (Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy.)

## **A Catholic Examination of Conscience**

The First Commandment: I am the LORD your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

- Have I loved God above all else?
- Have I prayed morning, noon, and night? Have I been attentive at prayer?
- Have I educated myself and my children about God and his Church?
- Have I valued the things of this world above God, such as wealth, fame, or popularity?
- Have I worshipped other gods?
- Have I denied my Catholic faith or left the Church?
- Have I refused to accept any infallible teaching of the Church?
- Have I visited fortune-tellers or trusted in horoscopes?
- Have I been proud or selfish?
- Have I despaired or been presumptuous?
- Have I lied in confession or received communion in a state of mortal sin?

The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- Have I used the name of God or sacred things irreverently?
- Have I spoken disrespectfully about the Church or her ministers?
- Have I used profane language?
- Have I broken a vow or lied under oath?

The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

- Have I attended Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation?
- Have I been habitually late to Mass? Have I left early without serious reason?
- Have I been inattentive at Mass?
- Have I engaged in unnecessary work on Sundays?
- Have I spent Sundays resting and enjoying time with my family?

The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

- Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
- Have I spoken uncharitably to or about my parents?
- Have I respected legitimate authority?
- Have I obeyed all just laws?
- Have I respected and obeyed my superiors?
- Have I loved and provided for my children materially, emotionally, and spiritually?
- Have I been a cause of scandal or set a bad example?

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.

- Have I murdered anyone or desired to do so?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have an abortion?
- Have I hurt another person intentionally or through reckless behavior?
- Have I abused alcohol or other drugs?
- Have I injured another person's reputation?
- Have I spoken uncharitably to or about another?
- Have I engaged in verbal or emotional abuse of another?

Have I hurt myself intentionally?  
Have I hated another person or been prejudiced?  
Have I engaged in gluttony?  
Have I been angry or impatient? Have I been vengeful or unforgiving?  
Have I hurt animals unnecessarily?

The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

Have I engaged in sexual acts with someone I am not married to?  
Have I used contraception or sterilization? Have I engaged in sexual actions that are not open to life?  
Have I abused another sexually or allowed another to do so?  
Have I watched pornography or engaged in masturbation?  
Have I willingly entertained impure thoughts?  
Have I told or listened to inappropriate comments or jokes?  
Have I kissed someone for the pleasure of the act and not as an expression of emotion and commitment?

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

Have I taken anything that does not belong to me?  
Have I destroyed the property of others?  
Have I been idle or dishonest about my time at work?  
Have I been generous to the poor and needy?  
Have I paid fair wages to my employees and treated them with dignity?  
Have I cheated at school, on my taxes, or in competition?  
Have I gambled excessively?  
Have I been a good steward of my resources and of the environment?

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I been dishonest by word or omission? Have I willingly deceived another person?  
Have I gossiped or committed libel?  
Have I been judgmental or hypercritical in my thoughts about others?  
Do I keep confidences that are entrusted to me?

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I lusted after another person?  
Have I dressed immodestly? Have I encouraged impurity in others?

The Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Have I been envious of other people's gifts?  
Have I been grateful for the good things in my life?  
Have I been greedy or stingy?  
Do I trust that God will provide all I need? Am I grateful for all the spiritual and material gifts he has blessed me with?

The Precepts of the Church:

Attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.  
Confess mortal sins at least once a year.  
Receive the Eucharist at least once a year at Eastertime.

Fast and abstain according to the rules of the Church:

Fast (one large meal, two small meals) on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Abstain (no meat) on Ash Wednesday and Fridays in Lent.

Marry according to the laws of the Church.

Contribute to the support of the Church (tithe 10%).

Act of Contrition: O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You and I detest all my sins, because of your just punishment, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasion of sin.  
Amen.

## The Mercy of God

### St. Maximus the Confessor, Early Church Father

This reading by St. Maximus the Confessor (Epist. 11: PG 92, 454-455) is a great Lenten Meditation on the Mercy and goodness of God our heavenly Father. It reflects on how the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the Good Samaritan shows how our Lord Jesus Christ goes to any lengths to seek us out when we have strayed and heal the wounds that we cause to ourselves by our sin. It is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Wednesday of the 4th week of Lent. with the accompanying biblical reading taken from Numbers 11:4-30. Saint Maximus wrote this reflection around the year 650AD

God's will is to save us, and nothing pleases him more than our coming back to him with true repentance. The heralds of truth and the ministers of divine grace have told us this from the beginning, repeating it in every age. Indeed, God's desire for our salvation is the primary and pre-eminent sign of his infinite goodness. Precisely in order to show that there is nothing closer to God's heart than this, the divine Word of God the Father, with untold condescension, lived among us in the flesh, and did, suffered, and said all that was necessary to reconcile us to God the Father, when we were at enmity with him, and to restore us to the life of blessedness from which we had been exiled. He healed our physical infirmities by miracles; he freed us from our sins, many and grievous as they were, by suffering and dying, taking them upon himself as if he were answerable for them, sinless though he was. He also taught us in many different ways that we should wish to imitate him by our own kindness and genuine love for one another.

So it was that Christ proclaimed that he had come to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous, and that it was not the healthy who required a doctor, but the sick. He declared that he had come to look for the sheep that was lost, and that it was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel that he had been sent. Speaking more obscurely in the parable of the silver coin, he tells us that the purpose of his coming was to reclaim the royal image, which had been coated with the filth of sin. "You can be sure there is joy in heaven", he said, over one sinner who repents.

To give the same lesson he revived the man who, having fallen into the hands of the brigands, had been left stripped and half-dead from his wounds; he poured wine and oil on the wounds, bandaged them, placed the man on his own mule and brought him to an inn, where he let sufficient money to have him cared for, and promised to repay any further expense on his return.

Again, he told of how that Father, who is goodness itself, was moved with pity for his profligate son who returned and made amends by repentance; how he embraced him, dressed him once more in the fine garments that befitted his own dignity, and did not reproach him for any of his sins.

So too, when he found wandering in the mountains and hills the one sheep that had strayed from God's flock of a hundred, he brought it back to the fold, but he did not exhaust it by driving it ahead of him. Instead, he placed it on his own shoulders and so, compassionately, he restored it safely to the flock.

So also he cried out: Come to me, all you that toil and are heavy of heart. Accept my yoke', he said, by which he meant his commands, or rather, the whole way of life that he taught us in the Gospel. He then speaks of a burden, but that is only because repentance seems difficult. In fact, however, my yoke is easy, he assures us, and my burden is light.

Then again he instructs us in divine justice and goodness, telling us to be like our heavenly Father, holy, perfect and merciful. Forgive, he says, and you will be forgiven. Behave toward other people as you would wish them to behave toward you.

## The Hint of an Explanation, by Graham Greene

A LONG TRAIN JOURNEY on a late December evening, in this new version of peace, is a dreary experience. I suppose that my fellow traveller and I could consider ourselves lucky to have a compartment to ourselves, even though the heating apparatus was not working, even though the lights went out entirely in the frequent Pennine tunnels and were too dim anyway for us to read our books without straining our eyes, and though there was no restaurant car to give at least a change of scene. It was when we were trying simultaneously to chew the same kind of dry bun bought at the same station buffet that my companion and I came together. Before that we had sat at opposite ends of the carriage, both muffled to the chin in overcoats, both bent low over type we could barely make out, but as I threw the remains of my cake under the seat our eyes met, and he laid his book down.

By the time we were half-way to Bedwell Junction we had found an enormous range of subjects for discussion; starting with buns and the weather, we had gone on to politics, the government, foreign affairs, the atom bomb, and, by an inevitable progression, God. We had not, however, become either shrill or acid. My companion, who now sat opposite me, leaning a little forward, so that our knees nearly touched, gave such an impression of serenity that it would have been impossible to quarrel with him, however much our views differed, and differ they did profoundly.

I had soon realized I was speaking to a Catholic, to someone who believed--how do they put it?--in an omnipotent and omniscient Deity, while I was what is loosely called an Agnostic. I have a certain intuition (which I do not trust, founded as it may well be on childish experiences and needs) that a God exists, and I am surprised occasionally into belief by the extraordinary coincidences that beset our path like the traps set for leopards in the jungle, but intellectually I am revolted at the whole notion of such a God who can so abandon his creatures to the enormities of Free Will. I found myself expressing this view to my companion, who listened quietly and with respect. He made no attempt to interrupt: he showed none of the impatience or the intellectual arrogance I have grown to expect from Catholics; when the lights of a wayside station flashed across his face that had escaped hitherto the rays of the one globe working in the compartment, I caught a glimpse suddenly of--what? I stopped speaking, so strong was the impression. I was carried back ten years, to the other side of the great useless conflict, to a small town, Gisors in Normandy. I was again, for a moment, walking on the ancient battlements and looking down across the grey roofs, until my eyes for some reason lit on one grey stony "back" out of the many, where the face of a middle-aged man was pressed against a windowpane (I suppose that face has ceased to exist now, just as I believe the whole town with its medieval memories has been reduced to rubble). I remembered saying to myself with astonishment, "That man is happy--completely happy." I looked across the compartment at my fellow traveller, but his face was already again in shadow. I said weakly, "When you think what God--if there is a God--allows. It's not merely the physical agonies, but think of the corruption, even of children. . . ."

He said, "Our view is so limited," and I was disappointed at the conventionality of his reply. He must have been aware of my disappointment (it was as though our thoughts were huddled as closely as ourselves for warmth), for he went on, "Of course there is no answer here. We catch hints . . ." and then the train roared into another tunnel and the lights again went out. It was the longest tunnel yet; we went rocking down it, and the cold seemed to become more intense with the darkness like an icy fog (perhaps when one sense--of sight--is robbed of sensation, the others grow more sensitive). When we emerged into the mere grey of night and the globe lit up once more, I could see that my companion was leaning back on his seat.

I repeated his last words as a question, "Hints?"

"Oh, they mean very little in cold print--or cold speech," he said, shivering in his overcoat. "And they mean nothing at all to a human being other than the man who catches them. They are not scientific evidence--or evidence at all for that matter. Events that don't, somehow, turn out as they were intended--by the human actors I mean, or by the thing behind the human actors."

"The thing?"

"The word Satan is so anthropomorphic."

I had to lean forward now: I wanted to hear what he had to say. I am--I really am, God knows--open to conviction. He said, "One's words are so crude, but I sometimes feel pity for that thing. It is so continually finding the right weapon to use against its Enemy and the weapon breaks in its own breast. It sometimes seems to me so--powerless. You said something just now about the corruption of children. It reminded me of something in my own childhood. You are the first person--except for one--that I have thought of telling it to, perhaps because you are anonymous. It's not a very long story, and in a way it's relevant."

I said, "I'd like to hear it."

"You mustn't expect too much meaning. But to me there seems to be a hint. That's all. A hint."

He went slowly on, turning his face to the pane, though he could have seen nothing real in the whirling world outside except an occasional signal lamp, a light in a window, a small country station torn backwards by our rush, picking his words with precision. He said, "When I was a child they taught me to serve at Mass. The church was a small one, for there were very few Catholics where I lived. It was a market town in East Anglia, surrounded by flat, chalky fields and ditches--so many ditches. I don't suppose there were fifty Catholics all told, and for some reason there was a tradition of hostility to us. Perhaps it went back to the burning of a Protestant martyr in the sixteenth century--there was a stone marking the place near where the meat stalls stood on Wednesdays. I was only half aware of the enmity, though I knew that my school nickname of Popey Martin had something to do with my religion, and I had heard that my father was nearly excluded from the Constitutional Club when he first came to the town.

"Every Sunday I had to dress up in my surplice and serve Mass. I hated it--I have always hated dressing up in any way (which is funny when you come to think of it), and I never ceased to be afraid of losing my place in the service and doing something which would put me to ridicule. Our services were at a different hour from the Anglican, and as our small, far-from-select band trudged out of the hideous chapel the whole of the townsfolk seemed to be on the way past to the proper church--I always thought of it as the proper church. We had to pass the parade of their eyes, indifferent, supercilious, mocking; you can't imagine how seriously religion can be taken in a small town, if only for social reasons.

"There was one man in particular; he was one of the two bakers in the town, the one my family did not patronize. I don't think any of the Catholics patronized him because he was called a free-thinker --an odd title, for, poor man, no one's thoughts were less free than his. He was hemmed in by his hatred--his hatred of us. He was very ugly to look at, with one wall-eye and a head the shape of a turnip, with the hair gone on the crown, and he was unmarried. He had no interests, apparently, but his baking and his hatred, though now that I am older I begin to see other sides to his nature --it did contain, perhaps, a certain furtive love. One would come across him suddenly sometimes on a country walk, especially if one were alone and it was Sunday. It was as if he rose from the ditches, and the smear of chalk on his clothes reminded one of the flour on his working overalls. He would have a stick in his hand and stab at the hedges, and if his mood were very black he would call out after one strange abrupt words like a foreign tongue--I know the meaning of those words, of course, now. Once the police went to his house because of what a boy said he'd seen, but nothing came of it except that the hate shackled him closer. His name was Blacker and he terrified me.

"I think he had a particular hatred of my father--I don't know why. My father was manager of the Midland Bank, and it's possible that at some time Blacker may have had unsatisfactory dealings with the bank; my father was a very cautious man who suffered all his life from anxiety about money--his own and other people's. If I try and picture Blacker now I see him walking along a narrowing path between high windowless walls, and at the end of the path stands a small boy of ten--me. I don't know whether it's a symbolic picture or the memory of one of our encounters--our encounters somehow got more and more frequent. You talked just now about the corruption of children. That poor man was preparing to revenge himself on everything he hated--my father, the Catholics, the God whom people persisted in crediting--and that by corrupting me. He had evolved a horrible and ingenious plan.

"I remember the first time I had a friendly word from him. I was passing his shop as rapidly as I could when I heard his voice call out with a kind of sly subservience as though he were an under servant. 'Master David,' he called, 'Master David,' and I hurried on. But the next time I passed that way he was at his door (he must have seen me coming) with one of those curly cakes in his hand that we called Chelsea buns. I didn't want to take it, but he made me, and then I couldn't be other than polite when he asked me to come into his parlour behind the shop and see something very special.

"It was a small electric railway--a rare sight in those days, and he insisted on showing me how it worked. He made me turn the switches and stop and start it, and he told me that I could come in any morning and have a game with it. He used the word 'game' as though it were something secret, and it's true that I never told my family of this invitation and of how, perhaps twice a week those holidays, the desire to control that little railway become overpowering, and looking up and down the street to see if I were observed, I would dive into the shop."

Our larger, dirtier, adult train drove into a tunnel and the light went out. We sat in darkness and silence, with the noise of the train blocking our ears like wax. When we were though we didn't speak at once and I had to prick him into continuing.

"An elaborate seduction," I said.

"Don't think his plans were as simple as that," my companion said, "or as crude. There was much more hate than love, poor man, in his make-up. Can you hate something you don't believe in? And yet he called himself a free-thinker. What an impossible paradox, to be free and to be so obsessed. Day by day all through those holidays his obsession must have grown, but he kept a grip; he bided his time. Perhaps that thing I spoke of gave him the strength and the wisdom. It was only a week from the end of the holidays that he spoke to me on what concerned him so deeply.

"I heard him behind me as I knelt on the floor, coupling two coaches. He said, 'You won't be able to do this, Master David, when school starts.' It wasn't a sentence that needed any comment from me any more than the one that followed. 'You ought to have it for your own, you ought,' but how skilfully and unemphatically he had sowed the longing, the idea of a possibility. . . . I was coming to his parlour every day now; you see, I had to cram every opportunity in before the hated term started again, and I suppose I was becoming accustomed to Blacker, to that wall-eye, that turnip head, that nauseating subservience. The Pope, you know, describes himself as 'the servant of the servants of God,' and Blacker--I sometimes think that Blacker was 'the servant of the servants of . . . ,' well, let it be.

"The very next day, standing in the doorway watching me play, he began to talk to me about religion. He said, with what untruth even I recognized, how much he admired the Catholics; he wished he could believe like that, but how could a baker believe? He accented 'a baker' as one might say a biologist, and the tiny train spun round the gauge 0 track. He said, 'I can bake the things you eat just as well as any Catholic can,' and disappeared into his shop. I hadn't the faintest idea what he meant. Presently he emerged again, holding in his hand a little wafer. 'Here,' he said, 'eat that and tell me. . . .' When I put it in my mouth I could tell that it was made in the same way as our wafers for communion--he had got the shape a little wrong, that was all--and I felt guilty and irrationally scared. 'Tell me,' he said, 'what's the difference?'

"'Difference?' I asked.

"'Isn't that just the same as you eat in church?'

"I said smugly, 'It hasn't been consecrated.'

"He said, 'Do you think, if I put the two of them under a microscope, you could tell the difference?'

"But even at ten I had the answer to that question. 'No,' I said, 'the--accidents don't change,' stumbling a little on the word 'accidents' which had suddenly conveyed to me the idea of death and wounds.

"Blacker said with sudden intensity, 'How I'd like to get one of your ones in my mouth--just to see. . . .'

"It may seem odd to you, but this was the first time that the idea of transsubstantiation really lodged in my mind. I had learned it all by rote; I had grown up with the idea. The Mass was as lifeless to me as the sentences in De Bello



Gallico; communion a routine like drill in the school-yard, but here suddenly I was in the presence of a man who took it seriously, as seriously as the priest whom naturally one didn't count--it was his job. I felt more scared than ever.

"He said, 'It's all nonsense, but I'd just like to have it in my mouth.'

"'You could if you were a Catholic,' I said naïvely.

"He gazed at me with his one good eye, like a Cyclops. He said, 'You serve at Mass, don't you? It would be easy for you to get at one of those things. I tell you what I'd do--I'd swap this electric train for one of your wafers--consecrated, mind. It's got to be consecrated.'

"'I could get you one out of the box,' I said. I think I still imagined that his interest was a baker's interest--to see how they were made.

"'Oh, no,' he said, 'I want to see what your God tastes like.'

"'I couldn't do that.'

"'Not for a whole electric train, just for yourself? You wouldn't have any trouble at home. I'd pack it up and put a label inside that your dad could see: "For my bank manager's little boy from a grateful client." He'd be pleased as punch with that.'

"Now that we are grown men it seems a trivial temptation, doesn't it? But try to think back to your own childhood.

There was a whole circuit of rails there on the floor at our feet, straight rails and curved, and a little station with porters and passengers, a tunnel, a foot-bridge, a level crossing, two signals, buffers, of course --and, above all, a turntable. The tears of longing came into my eyes when I looked at the turntable. It was my favorite piece--it looked so ugly and practical and true. I said weakly, 'I wouldn't know how.'

"How carefully he had been studying the ground! He must have slipped several times into Mass at the back of the church. It would have been no good, you understand, in a little town like that, presenting himself for communion. Everybody there knew him for what he was. He said to me, 'When you've been given communion you could just put it under your tongue a moment. He serves you and the other boy first, and I saw you once go out behind the curtain straight afterwards. You'd forgotten one of those little bottles.'

"'The cruet,' I said.

"'Pepper and salt.' He grinned at me jovially, and I--well, I looked at the little railway which I could no longer come and play with when term started. I said, 'You'd just swallow it, wouldn't you?'

"'Oh, yes,' he said. 'I'd just swallow it.'

"Somehow I didn't want to play with the train any more that day. I got up and made for the door, but he detained me, gripping my lapel. He said, 'This will be a secret between you and me. Tomorrow's Sunday. You come along here in the afternoon. Put it in an envelope and post it me. Monday morning the train will be delivered bright and early.'

"'Not tomorrow,' I implored him.

"'I'm not interested in any other Sunday,' he said. 'It's your only chance! He shook me gently backwards and forwards. 'It will always have to be a secret between you and me,' he said. 'Why, if anyone knew they'd take away the train and there'd be me to reckon with. I'd bleed you something awful. You know how I'm always about on Sunday walks. You can't avoid a man like me. I crop up. You wouldn't ever be safe in your own house. I know ways to get into houses when people are asleep.' He pulled me into the shop after him and opened a drawer. In the drawer was an odd looking key and a cut-throat razor. He said, 'That's a master key that opens all locks and that--that's what I bleed people with.' Then he patted my cheek with his plump floury fingers and said, 'Forget it. You and me are friends.'

"That Sunday Mass stays in my head, every detail of it, as though it had happened only a week ago. From the moment of the Confession to the moment of Consecration it had a terrible importance; only one other Mass has ever been so important to me--perhaps not even one, for this was a solitary Mass which would never happen again. It seemed

as final as the last Sacrament when the priest bent down and put the wafer in my mouth where I knelt before the altar with my fellow server.

"I suppose I had made up my mind to commit this awful act--for, you know, to us it must always seem an awful act--from the moment when I saw Blacker watching from the back of the church. He had put on his best black Sunday clothes and, as though he could never quite escape the smear of his profession, he had a dab of dried talcum on his cheek, which he had presumably applied after using that cut-throat of his. He was watching me closely all the time, and I think it was fear--fear of that terrible undefined thing called bleeding--as much as covetousness that drove me to carry out my instructions.

"My fellow server got briskly up and, taking the paten, preceded Father Carey to the altar rail where the other communicants knelt. I had the Host lodged under my tongue: it felt like a blister. I got up and made for the curtain to get the cruet that I had purposely left in the sacristy. When I was there I looked quickly round for a hiding place and saw an old copy of the Universe lying on a chair. I took the Host from my mouth and inserted it between two sheets --a little damp mess of pulp. Then I thought: perhaps Father Carey has put out the paper for a particular purpose and he will find the Host before I have time to remove it, and the enormity of my act began to come home to me when I tried to imagine what punishment I should incur. Murder is sufficiently trivial to have its appropriate punishment, but for this act the mind boggled at the thought of any retribution at all. I tried to remove the Host, but it stuck clammily between the pages, and in desperation I tore out a piece of the newspaper and, screwing the whole thing up, stuck it in my trousers pocket. When I came back through the curtain carrying the cruet my eyes met Blacker's. He gave me a grin of encouragement and unhappiness--yes, I am sure, unhappiness. Was it perhaps that the poor man was all the time seeking something incorruptible?

"I can remember little more of that day. I think my mind was shocked and stunned, and I was caught up too in the family bustle of Sunday. Sunday in a provincial town is the day for relations. All the family are at home, and unfamiliar cousins and uncles are apt to arrive, packed in the back seats of other people's cars. I remember that some crowd of the kind descended on us and pushed Blacker temporarily out of the foreground of my mind. There was somebody called Aunt Lucy, with a loud hollow laugh that filled the house with mechanical merriment like the sound of recorded laughter from inside a hall of mirrors, and I had no opportunity to go out alone even if I had wished to. When six o'clock came and Aunt Lucy and the cousins departed and peace returned, it was too late to go to Blacker's, and at eight it was my own bed-time.

"I think I had half forgotten what I had in my pocket. As I emptied my pocket the little screw of newspaper brought quickly back the Mass, the priest bending over me, Blacker's grin. I laid the packet on the chair by my bed and tried to go to sleep, but I was haunted by the shadows on the wall where the curtains blew, the squeak of furniture, the rustle in the chimney, haunted by the presence of God there on the chair. The Host had always been to me--well, the Host. I knew theoretically, as I have said, what I had to believe, but suddenly, as someone whistled in the road outside, whistled secretively, knowingly, to me, I knew that this which I had beside my bed was something of infinite value--something a man would pay for with his whole peace of mind, something that was so hated one could love it as one loves an outcast or a bullied child. These are adult words, and it was a child of ten who lay scared in bed, listening to the whistle from the road, Blacker's whistle, but I think he felt fairly clearly what I am describing now. That is what I meant when I said this Thing, whatever it is, that seizes every possible weapon against God, is always, everywhere, disappointed at the moment of success. It must have felt as certain of me as Blacker did. It must have felt certain too of Blacker. But I wonder, if one knew what happened later to that poor man, whether one would not find again that the weapon had been turned against its own breast.

"At last I couldn't bear that whistle any more and got out of bed. I opened the curtains a little way, and there right under my window, the moonlight on his face, was Blacker. If I had stretched my hand down, his fingers reaching up could almost have touched mine. He looked up at me, flashing the one good eye, with hunger--I realize now that

near-success must have developed his obsession almost to the point of madness. Desperation had driven him to the house. He whispered up at me. 'David, where is it?'

"I jerked my head back at the room. 'Give it me,' he said. 'Quick. You shall have the train in the morning.'

"I shook my head. He said, 'I've got the bleeder here, and the key. You'd better toss it down.'

""Go away,' I said, but I could hardly speak for fear.

""I'll bleed you first and then I'll have it just the same.'

""Oh, no, you won't,' I said. I went to the chair and picked it-Him--up. There was only one place where He was safe. I couldn't separate the Host from the paper, so I swallowed both. The newsprint stuck like a prune skin to the back of my throat, but I rinsed it down with water from the ewer. Then I went back to the window and looked down at Blacker. He began to wheedle me. 'What have you done with it, David? What's the fuss? It's only a bit of bread,' looking so longingly and pleadingly up at me that even as a child I wondered whether he could really think that, and yet desire it so much.

""I swallowed it,' I said.

""Swallowed it?'

""Yes,' I said. 'Go away.'

""Then something happened which seems to me now more terrible than his desire to corrupt or my thoughtless act: he began to weep --the tears ran lopsidedly out of the one good eye and his shoulders shook. I only saw his face for a moment before he bent his head and strode off, the bald turnip head shaking, into the dark. When I think of it now, it's almost as if I had seen that Thing weeping for its inevitable defeat. It had tried to use me as a weapon, and now I had broken in its hands and it wept its hopeless tears through one of Blacker's eyes."

The black furnaces of Bedwell Junction gathered around the line. The points switched and we were tossed from one set of rails to another. A spray of sparks, a signal light changing to red, tall chimneys jetting into the grey night sky, the fumes of steam from stationary engines--half the cold journey was over, and now remained the long wait for the slow cross-country train. I said, "It's an interesting story. I think I should have given Blacker what he wanted. I wonder what he would have done with it."

"I really believe," my companion said, "that he would first of all have put it under his microscope--before he did all the other things I expect he had planned."

"And the hints," I said. "I don't quite see what you mean by that."

"Oh, well," he said vaguely, "you know for me it was an odd beginning, that affair, when you come to think of it," but I never should have known what he meant had not his coat, when he rose to take his bag from the rack, come open and disclosed the collar of a priest.

I said, "I suppose you think you owe a lot to Blacker."

"Yes," he said, "you see, I am a very happy man."

## The Exultet

The Easter Vigil begins in silence and in darkness.

A fire is struck and blessed.

The Easter candle is lit from the fire and  
the fire is spread throughout the assembly,  
as the candle is processed to the front amid the  
the acclamation that grows louder:

Light of Christ!

Thanks be to God!

Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven  
exult, let Angel ministers of God exult,  
let the trumpet of salvation  
sound aloud our mighty Kings triumph!  
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,  
ablaze with light from her eternal King,  
let all corners of the earth be glad,  
knowing an end to gloom and darkness.  
Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice,  
arrayed with the lightening of his glory,  
let this holy building shake with joy,  
filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

(Therefore, dearest friends,  
standing in the awesome glory of this holy light,  
invoke with me, I ask you,  
the mercy of God almighty,  
that he, who has been pleased to number me,  
though unworthy, among the Levites,  
may pour into me his light unshadowed,  
that I may sing this candle's perfect praises.)

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and just.

It is truly right and just,  
with ardent love of mind and heart  
and with devoted service of our voice,

to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,  
and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.

Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal Father,  
and, pouring out his own dear Blood,  
wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.

These, then, are the feasts of Passover,  
in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb,  
whose Blood annoints the doorposts of believers.

This is the night,  
when once you led our forebears, Israel's children,  
from slavery in Egypt  
and made them pass dry-shod through the Red Sea.

This is the night  
that with a pillar of fire  
banished the darkness of sin.

This is the night  
that even now, throughout the world,  
sets Christian believers apart from worldly vices  
and from the gloom of sin,  
leading them to grace  
and joining them to his holy ones.

This is the night,  
when Christ broke the prison-bars of death  
and rose victorious from the underworld.

Our birth would have been no gain,  
had we not been redeemed.  
O wonder of your humble care for us!  
O love, O charity beyond all telling,  
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!

O truly necessarily sin of Adam,  
destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!

O happy fault  
that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer.

O truly blessed night,  
worthy alone to know the time and hour

when Christ rose from the underworld!

This is the night of which it is written:

The night shall be as bright as day,  
dazzling is the night for me,  
and full of gladness.

The sanctifying power of this night  
dispels wickedness, washes faults away,  
restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,  
drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.

On this, your night of grace, O holy Father,  
accept this candle, a solemn offering,  
the work of bees and of your servants' hands,  
an evening sacrifice of praise,  
this gift from your most holy Church.

But now we know the praises of this pillar,  
which glowing fire ignites for God's honor,  
a fire into many flames divided,  
yet never diminished by sharing of its light,  
for it is fed by melting wax,  
drawn out by mother bees  
to build a torch so precious.

O truly blessed night,  
when things of heaven are wed to those of earth,  
and divine to the human.

Therefore, O Lord,  
we pray you that this candle,  
hallowed to the honor of your name,  
may persevere undimmed,  
to overcome the darkness of this night.  
Receive it as a pleasing fragrance  
and let it mingle with the lights of heaven.  
May this flame be found still burning  
by the Morning Star:  
the one morning star who never sets,  
Christ your Son,  
who, coming back from death's domain,  
has shed his peaceful light on humanity,  
and lives and reigns forever and ever.  
Amen.