

LINES of GRACE
(A Catholic Devotional)

MEDITATIONS ON
Verses of Holy Scripture,
The Stations of the Cross,
and The Most Holy Rosary

(for the encouragement of
the practice of plenary indulgence)

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Opening Question: On Plenary Indulgence

Why has the baby been thrown out with the bath water, the power of Peter to bind and loose been cast aside so unceremoniously, and so the Word of Christ become overshadowed? If the only Son of God imparts to His Church the power to forgive men's sins in His Name, and if that Church has pronounced the availability of the great grace even of removal of temporal punishment* by the prayers of devout souls (souls who ask in the LORD's Name and with faith in His goodness, who therefore cannot be denied by a loving Father), why has the practice of plenary indulgence fallen into such disuse? Is it for its history of misuse? Then there is no hope for any of us; then the Church might as well fold up its tent and go home, for it will never be perfect in this world.

* "Remnants" of sin remain even after Confession, unless there is perfect contrition (completely out of love for God). Sin may be forgiven but atonement is often still needed, just as a child may be forgiven for breaking a window but still the window needs repair, and he will usually have to sacrifice his allowance... or at least be grounded for a while.

Introduction

The author has been in the habit of performing acts for plenary indulgence every day since the Great Jubilee of 2000, and he hopes to inspire others to practice of this devotion by engendering greater appreciation of the beauty and depth of Holy Scripture, the Stations of the Cross, and the Most Holy Rosary (three of the principal acts involved).

There are other acts that may be performed at various times and on various days throughout the year (and the Pope or a bishop may declare the availability of special indulgences), but it is indeed possible to gain a plenary indulgence every day, once a day - for oneself or for a poor soul in Purgatory - by the three acts mentioned above, specifically: reading the Bible for half an hour, praying the Stations where they have been duly erected, or praying the Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament or with family or a prayer group (also by adoring the Eucharist for half an hour), as long as the other requirements are met.

Please see the following for a guide to the requirements.

PLENARY INDULGENCE GUIDE

1. What is a Plenary Indulgence?

“remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven”
(CCC 1471)

It is possible (or even likely) to go to Confession and still have “remnants” of one’s sins upon one’s soul that would prevent one from being fully open to grace. And so the need for Purgatory, or a Plenary Indulgence. (“Plenary” means *full* remission of all punishment. There are also partial indulgences.)

A Plenary Indulgence can be applied only to oneself or a soul in purgatory.

A Plenary Indulgence can be gained once a day.

2. What are the **Conditions** for gaining a Plenary Indulgence

- Be in a state of grace
- Be detached from all sin
(may make an Act of Faith like:
“Lord, let me be free of sin and all attachment to sin”)
- Receive Holy Communion (same day)
- Go to Confession (within 20 days)
- Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father
(usually Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)

One Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Pope’s intentions are required for each plenary indulgence.

3. What **Acts** serve to gain a Plenary Indulgence?

- Reading the Bible for a ½ hour
- Praying the Rosary with family or a prayer group (or alone before the Blessed Sacrament)
- Praying the Stations of the Cross in a church or chapel (or any place they've been duly erected)
- Adoring the Blessed Sacrament for a ½ hour

So, if one goes to Mass and receives Communion every day, goes to Confession about once a month, prays for the Holy Father's intentions each day, is detached from sin and performs one of the above Acts... **one could receive a Plenary Indulgence every day.** That's a lot of souls entering heaven!

Amen!

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Preface:

The Word of God

What is more wonderful than the Word of God? Should we not want to read God's loving message to us poor creatures each day; and why not at least a half hour a day (perhaps focused on the readings for the day's Mass)? This would seem little to ask the committed Catholic. And yet this simple act could help to set a soul free to enter Heaven!

Do not fear the Word of God. Do not think it less than worthy of your time or more than worthy of your time - Read It! In it you will find greater treasure than you can discover anywhere else... if you but come to it as a child, a loving child before his loving Father.

I pray these short meditations on verses from the Bible (organized under five headings) will indicate what treasure may be found in reading the Word of God. One could consider virtually any verse in Scripture, but these have been taken as particularly poignant.

Come with the light of Faith and let the Holy Spirit speak to you.

I.

Verses of Holy Scripture

- A. Our Father**
- B. Our Lady**
- C. The Cross**
- D. Resurrection**
- E. God's Presence**

Opening Verse

“I have made your NAME known to them”

Jn. 17:26

In a previous work (*Christian Vision of the Old Testament*) I stated that no one was present when YHWH made the heavens and the earth and so no one knows what happened, how things came to be - all we have is His Word, the book of Genesis. But this is not the whole truth.

Jesus was present with Him at the time of Creation; He saw and He knows how things came to be (and what is) for He Is with the Father from the beginning, and all came to be through Him. And we share in oneness with Jesus. Anointed by the Spirit, we become one with the Son and so with the Father... and thus Jesus reveals the Father to us; thus He makes His NAME known to our hearts.

And this NAME is what was in the beginning: it is the Spirit moving upon the waters, the source of all. And this NAME is with us now, even in our hearts and upon our tongues.... It is written upon our souls for we are made (and remade) in His image, and we speak it by the grace that comes to us through Jesus by the Spirit. And so we are His prophets. And so we know.

His NAME is upon our lips; we are with Him in the beginning. May He speak His wisdom in these poor words.

A.

OUR FATHER

“Our Father who art in Heaven”

Mt. 6:9

In this prayer that the Lord Himself teaches us is contained all petitions in Heaven and on earth - there is nothing outside its domain. Indeed, the first five lines pertain to things divine, to the heavenly realm; the last five to this plane. And all is encompassed by the heavenly Father!

He is the Father of Jesus, and through Jesus He is the Father of us all. We are one with Him in Christ and so become His blessed children. And is this cry of “Father” not a child’s cry? Is not the word “Abba” (Daddy) the primordial utterance, the first sound of a baby putting his lips together? And so, must we not be as the humblest of children as we bring our prayer before our God?

If Jesus calls the Father “Abba”, should we not do the same? Do we not wish to imitate Him? Do we not want to receive the remarkable grace of becoming like the only Son of God? Is it not to Heaven we would come...? Would we rather remain with the worms in the ground?

Brothers and sisters, we have a great call: to come into the Presence of God, to dwell forever in His Light, with the Son and the Spirit, as little children before the Father of all. Join in prayer with Jesus now.

“Hallowed be thy NAME”

Mt. 6:9

How holy is the NAME of God! Beyond the tongue of any human being to utter - indeed, it silences the tongue. For how transcendent is our God and Father! How far beyond us is His Dwelling.... His ways are not our own, nor His thoughts (or Word). And so, holy we should make His NAME; in great reverence we should keep it. This let us never forget.

But neither should we forget His NAME itself, as happened under the Old Covenant. Should we not remember how transcendent He Is; should we not remember His NAME even as Moses was instructed (see Ex.3:15)? Is not this NAME (YHWH) a reminder to us of the greatness of our God... and His closeness to us?

With no other people at no other time had the LORD God shared His holy NAME. To His humble servant Moses He imparted this singular grace; and He calls all to treasure such a gift. And so, let us remember His NAME.

Let us remember it, indeed. Let us remember it by speaking it, for by speaking it we are silenced; and in such blessed silence and stillness He comes to dwell with us. He who is beyond our comprehension makes Himself known in surpassing awe when we pronounce His silent NAME: “YHWH” - and so we become holy as He.

“Thy Kingdom come”

Mt. 6:10

But the Kingdom of God is on high; how can it come to us? Our LORD is transcendent, beyond our reach... how can we know Him? For He and His Kingdom are one - where He is, there is His Kingdom - and so He would have to come among us if His Kingdom were to come.

And He has. Most certainly He has come among us and walked upon this earth. The Word has been made flesh - Jesus is the Kingdom come. Did He not say, “The Kingdom of God is in your midst” (Lk. 17:21)? Did He not let us know that we need not travel over earth and sea (or into space) to find it (see Dt. 30:11-14)? God is with us and so His Kingdom, too.

And so, what should we do but invite Jesus into our lives? If we wish to heed the words of this prayer and see the Kingdom come, then Jesus must be present in our hearts and visible in our deeds. May His words declaring the Kingdom of Heaven within us be proven true in all His disciples.

We become the Kingdom of God, brothers and sisters, when we reflect the glory of God the Father come to us in Jesus the Son. We are His Body, we are His Church, and we must accomplish His works. And so the Kingdom - which is already in our midst - indeed comes. Let us be with Him till the Day of His return.

“Thy will be done”

Mt. 6:10

How blessed is the will of the LORD! It is filled with light and truth: it is only love.

And how He desires to share that love with us all, with all His Creation. But how His creatures work against Him and His love.

But those who say, “Thy will be done,” who sincerely seek to make the Father’s will their own, to share as He wishes in His will to love – how blessed they are! How joyful, how happy... how wonderfully graced with the very presence of God in their hearts and in their hands, in their minds and in their feet, and all their bodies... in their very souls! There is no blessing that surpasses this grace at work in our lives even here on earth.

We must do His will, brothers and sisters. He cannot but be faithful to His will, to His love, and to His desire to share that love. But what of us? Let us cry out in all sincerity for the LORD’s will to be done in our lives, on this plane, this day. And if we are faithful in our prayer, it shall be answered. We will dwell in His Paradise.

There is much work to be accomplished; there is much darkness, much lack of His loving will here where we stand... and so, much light must be brought to bear. Bear it in joy with Jesus the Christ.

I. Holy Scripture

“On earth as it is in Heaven”

Mt. 6:10

Here the transition begins to take place, from Heaven to earth. Here is made explicit the call for God’s Kingdom to come to this world, for what is here to become like what is there... really, for Heaven to become all.

We must be heavenly creatures, not earthly, and it is in us the redemption of Creation must first occur. We must be saints. Even while here in this place we must strive with all our being to live as if already in Heaven. This must be our prayer.

The light comes down from above; the New Jerusalem descends from on high and reflects the glory of God - it is His holy Bride. And we are members of His Church, of the New Jerusalem, citizens of the heavenly Kingdom made so by means of our Baptism and the living of a virtuous life guided by that same Church and her leaders here on earth.

The saints themselves guide us as well by their writings and by the witness of their lives. They have shown how earth may become as Heaven - it is one with them as with Christ we must be.

What hope is in this verse! What transcendent light it gently radiates! There is to be no separation of man or the world from the LORD and His Kingdom. With Him we are called to dwell.

“Give us this day our daily bread”

Mt. 6:11

Now to matters of the earth, of “this day”, do we turn... though the Bread we eat is indeed of Heaven.

Our life is from above; the LORD Himself is the food we eat. Even into our bodies do we take the presence of Christ, of God. And it enables us to walk through this world enlivened by the Breath of Heaven.

But it *is* on this earth we are. It is on this plane we humans dwell, and travel. Though we are on our way to the Kingdom, nourished by the Bread of that Kingdom, yet our feet do still tread upon the soil of this world. In earthen vessels, indeed, we carry the great gifts of the Spirit.

O LORD, thank you for the Bread you provide in the Body and Blood of your Son. He has walked amongst us and remains with us, very really, in the Blessed Sacrament. And so we are fed. And so we have the life of Heaven as we toil here.

Hold not your hand back from feeding your poor children, LORD, your poor creatures wrought in dust. At all times and in all places let your Church be blessed with your food: the Bread of the angels let man consume! And so, let us be consumed by you and by your love... and so, let us be wed unto you, our God and our King.

I. Holy Scripture

“And forgive us our trespasses”

Mt. 6:12

If we are to eat of the food of the angels and live on this earth as if in Heaven, then certainly we will need forgiveness. Each day we must be forgiven our sins to dwell in the presence of God. It cannot be otherwise on this dusty plane.

For each day we sin, we remain imperfect... we are weak and we falter in ways we ourselves cannot comprehend or understand - but the LORD knows and the LORD sees how necessary the grace of His forgiveness is to us. He knows how much we need Him.

And He ever offers His forgiveness forth. As readily as we trespass, more readily does He forgive: indeed, where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more (see Rm. 5:20). There is no limit to His forgiving heart. It shines always, like the sun, upon all Creation and particularly upon man. There is no sin He cannot forgive; but He cannot force us to turn to Him.

And so we must say this prayer; and so we must ask for forgiveness - and so Christ teaches us this most necessary verse. Our trespasses are great, make no mistake. But His love is greater, and with Him we can conquer all sin and receive the blessings He would share with us.

**“As we forgive those
who trespass against us”**

Mt. 6:12

And how can we be forgiven by the LORD if we do not forgive others? It is not possible. If there is no forgiveness in our heart, then there is no forgiveness in our heart - our heart is hardened and lacking mercy. For it is the purpose of our Savior to instill within us His love, His salvation, and if we have not His love in us, we have not His salvation... we are still in our sins.

To harbor an unforgiving heart hurts no one more than ourselves. It is a clear sign that God's mercy is not in us; and if God's mercy is not in us, what is in us is iniquity. (And how shall that iniquity then be cleansed?)

So let us focus our hearts and our minds, all our soul and all our strength, on forgiving others, on loving them so much that we desire only their salvation - despite any condition of this world - and salvation shall indeed be ours: we will have the heart of Jesus beating within us, and there is nothing that can stop that heart.

O Jesus, how you love us - how you love! And how you wish to share that all-encompassing love with us poor creatures who are pale imitators of you and your love. May our hearts be like your own, ready to pour mercy on all the world.

I. Holy Scripture

“And lead us not into temptation”

Mt. 6:13

Save us, O LORD, from all the trials and dangers of this world to which the flesh is so prone. We are weak, LORD. Even those of us who have served you well for many years, even they are not safe from the wiles of Satan. Let us know this. Let us remember this, for this is the key to our safety: as long as we realize our need for you and your protection, we shall have it by your grace.

And so, let us say each day and many times a day, calling out to you always in words and in sighs and tears - let us not be tempted! You have promised that we shall not be tested beyond our strength, that you do not expect more of us than we can do, and that you strengthen us for every task.... Let us but believe you; let us trust in your Word.

Save us from every evil, LORD, and grant us peace in our day, that we might serve you and our neighbor undisturbed by any sinful inclination. And let us not tempt ourselves, dear God. Let us never presume upon your goodness or test your mercy but keep to the right path, which your Son has trod before us. Your will for us is only good - let us *live* according to that will.

“But deliver us from evil”

Mt. 6:13

O to be delivered finally and totally from all evil! To remain ever in the goodness of God, in His holy presence.... What petition can follow this one? For then we shall have everything - there will be no more for which to ask.

When the devil and all his minions are cast into Hell forever, when we are utterly free of all darkness, of all temptation, of all inclination to sin... when God is all for us and we are perfectly united with Him for all eternity - what will we be able to do then but praise the LORD?

Praise the LORD! Let all Creation praise His holy NAME. Let His goodness reign from end to end and His light shine more brightly than seven suns.... Then we shall be happy. Then all our prayers will be answered.

O what joy there is in the Kingdom where no evil is known! O what joy shall brim over in the hearts of all who enter there! Only joy will fill all souls who have been completely freed from the snares of the devil.

Now His light shines before us on His holy altar. Now He gives us Bread to eat, to sustain us all our days. But on that Day we shall eat this Bread no more, for we shall become as that Bread - we shall shine forever with Him in Heaven. Amen.

B.

OUR LADY

“A woman encompasses a man”

Jer. 31:22

And He has allowed Himself to be encompassed. And we must be encompassed with Him.

He was formed in her womb; the transcendent Word is thus made flesh. It is a marvel to behold!

And He is beholden to her, and beholden to us all. Jesus remained obedient to His Mother all His days, from the manger to the grave. He has become like one of us, fully human, and in this is unfathomable sacrifice: the Divine Word is subject to the limitations of our race.

And as a Man walking amongst us, He listens to us. Indeed, He is obedient not only to His Mother but to all of us. His sacrifice is complete.

And who is she who has brought about this wonder among us, who has borne God to us? Who is she who has encompassed not only man but God? She is the Blessed Mother!

O Mary, how thoroughly you are united to your Son! How completely you surround and protect the living God! And how humbly He allows Himself to be surrounded by you, and so by Israel, and so by humanity as a whole.

This indeed is a new thing worked in our midst that shall bring about the restoration of our race.

I. Holy Scripture

**“Every one when he is fully taught
will be like his teacher”**

Lk. 6:40

Who is our Teacher? Jesus, yes, certainly. We must be like Him. But who is most like Him among us? Is it not His Mother who is especially our teacher? Must we not conform ourselves to her and so be formed by the Spirit that is upon her, even as her Son Jesus? Must she not be our Mother, too?

Who is the first and most profound teacher of any child? Is it not always his mother? Is he not molded by her words and her witness even as he is molded in her womb? (And that the woman today, even the Christian woman, should despise such a blessed call - can there be a greater tragedy to afflict the human race? Is not Christ lost in this rejection of motherhood? Is this not at the heart of the culture of death?)

Mary does nothing but magnify her Son; she is nothing other than the handmaid of the LORD. It is through her that He has come to us in the flesh, and it is through her we come to Him. She is the door that leads to Heaven, that leads to God.

And so we must conform our lives to hers if we hope to enter the gates of Paradise. She must be our teacher and we must be obedient to her humble instruction. Unite your heart to hers and you will be united to her Son.

“I am among you as one who serves”

Lk. 22:27

Thus I AM is among us; in this way Jesus makes the Father known. And thus is Our Lady, too.

Indeed, she is the handmaid of the LORD, the servant of the Most High. How like her Son she truly is! He who has told us that we must serve, that He is the Servant of the servants and we must be like Him.

What a wonder this is to behold! How far beyond human thinking - how it astonishes us! For God is among us as One who serves. God is absolutely humble! The omnipotent LORD comes to us washing our feet on His knees.... Who can fathom such love? Who could imagine that the LORD of Heaven and earth is such a humble God? It is something impossible for the mind of man to conceive... and so He had to be conceived by one who was like Him.

And so it is by a humble handmaid, a simple young woman from Palestine, that the great I AM comes to us as Man. Only she could have embraced such a call, for only she was made by God without sin, without the pride and doubt that plague the human soul. Only she - and those who are formed in her by the Spirit - is able to be as the One who serves. O let it be so for us all!

I. Holy Scripture

“Hail, full of grace!”

Lk. 1:28

“Full of grace!” What kind of greeting is this? What kind of title? Who could be called such but she who was preserved from all sin by the blood of Christ and is thus “full of grace”?

Nothing but grace is with you, dear Mary. Nothing but the love of God is upon you. Truly, by the power of the Most High you are made holy.

What is lacking in the Mother of our Lord? She is but a creature, yet divinity is with her - the Holy Spirit overshadows her and weds her to God. And there is nothing that can separate what the LORD has joined together!

And her offspring is the Son of God, the Holy One, the promised Savior. She gives birth to the perfect Man: she gives birth to God. Yes, Jesus her Son is God Himself, one with the Father in Heaven and one with the Spirit... and O how she who is full of grace participates in their divinity!

O Mother, may we be saints with you who are the Saint of saints - let us be formed in your womb as was your Son. May we never forget our call to holiness, our call to share in the divinity you know so well.

You are completely united to God and present with Him in Heaven even as I write these lines.... Intercede for us that we, too, might dwell in eternal light.

“Man is now born of woman”

1Cor. 11:12

It is true that “woman was made from man” (1Cor. 11:12), for not only was Eve taken from the side of Adam and so formed of his flesh, but the Blessed Mother was preserved from all sin - she was formed in the grace of the Holy Spirit - by her Son and by His Blood. But now indeed all men are born of woman, are formed in her womb and by her words and her example... and certainly Jesus Himself was conceived in the womb of Mary, and formed and nourished there.

And by her side He remained till the hour came for Him to enter upon His ministry. He did not leave her, nor did she leave Him. And she remained at His side unto His crucifixion; and she is ever the Temple in which He dwells.

And thus He would come to dwell in each of us, in all His Church. And from us He would now be born: we must do His work and His will in this world even as His Blessed Mother has done so perfectly, and we too will become His Temple, the place He ever dwells.

Be born of us this day, O Lord, as you were born of Mary, and so become all in all.

I. Holy Scripture

“All generations will call me blessed”

Lk. 1:48

And so we call her blessed, we who believe in the Christ, we who are inspired by the Holy Spirit, as she was when she uttered these prophetic words.

Call her blessed, my brother, my sister, or you are not of the generation of God, or the Holy Spirit is not upon you. There is no need to choke on the words the LORD Himself has spoken through the mouth of His Virgin. She is holy. You should not be ashamed of this.

“Why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk. 1:43). Who are we that we should have Mary in our midst to be with us, to serve us, to pray for us. *Who are we?* And who is she?

She is not God. She is not divine as is her Son. But one with Him she has indeed become; and we shall not become as she if we fail to call her blessed (more blessed than we, or any other), if we fail to see the blessing that is upon her... for then we fall short of desiring such blessing ourselves.

She is the Mother of all the living for she is the Mother of Jesus, who is Head of the Church and by whose blood all are nourished, all are reborn. Do you share in this bloodline? Then, indeed: Call her blessed!

“Do whatever He tells you”

Jn. 2:5

Here is the essential instruction from our model teacher: Follow Jesus. As the Father has said, “This is my Beloved Son; listen to Him” (Mk. 9:7), so does the Blessed Mother echo in her word to all who would be servants of the LORD.

Listen to Jesus. Hear His Word. Let it sink deeply into your heart and there make its home - in your soul may the Spirit abide. There is nothing else we need than to embrace God’s Word.

If we have the LORD’s Word speaking in us, we have all things. We become as the Blessed Mother herself, who was the hearer and doer of the Word extraordinaire. There is none with as great a faith as she, but we can become like her if we follow her instruction, if we follow in her way.

For her way is the way of God; she walks in the footsteps of her Son most perfectly. And so, should we not listen to what she tells us? For what she tells us is to listen to Him.

Let us build our house upon rock, on the Rock that is the Church, on the Rock that is Christ... on the Rock that is formed by the Word of God, wrought by the Spirit. For this, obedience is all we need.

**“On your right stands the Queen
in gold of Ophir”**

Ps. 45:9

At the right hand of the King of Kings, her Son Jesus Christ, stands the Queen of Heaven and earth this day; and from there she rules with Him, interceding with Him for the needs of all her children.

She is arrayed in gold, shining more brightly than the sun in the sky - there is a crown of twelve stars on her head. What glory is upon the Mother of our Lord!

She is in Heaven now. She reigns from there with her Son. And so her reach is not limited by space and time; she is subject to no frailty of the human condition.... She stands at the right side of Jesus in glory.

And so, why should we hesitate to come to her, to seek her help, to request of her that she speak with her Son, who gives her power over Him for good, who pours all His graces through this blessed Aqueduct?

We should find the freedom she knows in her place in the Kingdom; we should be strengthened by seeing one of our race so exalted. Indeed, the lowly are exalted by the LORD, and none is more lowly, more meek and humble, than she - and so none is exalted higher than she. Yet she is one of us! Should we not rejoice?

“Behold, your Mother!”

Jn. 19:27

How clear Jesus makes it that Mary is not only His Mother but the Mother of us all, of all who are of the generation of the LORD. For John stands in the place of all Christ’s disciples, of all His beloved, and we, as he, must welcome Mary into our homes and into our hearts as our Mother.

Jesus declares that John is Mary’s son, and so he is. Indeed, all who love Jesus know that they are sons of Mary as well as sons of God, and that the two cannot be separated... for they are one in Jesus and one through Mary. If Mary is not your Mother, God is not your Father. You are not as Jesus.

Here at the hour of His death, what a gift our Savior provides to those who stand at the foot of His Cross, who unite themselves intimately with His suffering. Do you stand at the foot of His Cross, my brother, my sister, with Mary and John (and Mary Magdalene)? Does the suffering of the Christ pierce your heart as it pierces theirs? Are you with Him in His sacrifice, in this moment when He is glorified? Then your Mother you should warmly embrace, and become an obedient child.

“Honor your father and your mother”

Ex. 20:12

Is this not the first commandment after those concerned with love of God? Does it not in fact link love of God with love of neighbor? Is there anyone in our lives on earth closer to God than our parents? Do they not deserve a special reverence and honor from their children? Certainly the LORD of Heaven and earth believes so.

And if we are to honor our earthly father and mother, what of our spiritual ones? The Father of all merits our greatest respect, indeed, our worship; but the Mother of us all follows on the heels of the LORD: she is the first of the saints and deserves due honor and praise for the blessing that is upon her from God.

Jesus Himself was indeed “born of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), and not just any woman - as if she were but a lifeless tool in the hands of the LORD (much less a tool in our own hands). Mary is His Mother and, as we have said repeatedly, blessed to be so. And we are blessed to be her children.

And would you not honor such a great Mother? Would you break the commandment which directly follows those demanding pure worship of God? Give her due honor, my brother, and with the angel greet her with distinct reverence, recognizing the grace upon her.

C.

THE CROSS

“And it was night”

Jn. 13:30

And so His Passion dawns, the first day of three begins... and so the Son is glorified!

There is a night that comes when no man can work. During the daylight hours we may walk, we may do the will of the LORD freely; but when the night falls, our hands are bound, and with our Savior we must give ourselves over to the powers of this world.

But by this death new life comes.

Through the night we are glorified.

How dark is the night! How deeply and thoroughly darkness reigns in this hour. In this hour the Son of God is crucified; in this hour life itself comes to an end.

How? How can it be that life dies? O Jesus, why are you crucified? Why must the evil one be given rein to invoke a death sentence upon you...? Why but that death itself might be destroyed!

It was night. The light was gone. Now is the hour of death for the only Son. But O the glory that follows when this hour has passed, when the new Day comes.

“Why do you call me good?”

Lk. 18:19

How true it is that “no one is good but God alone” (Lk.18:19). And how true it is that Jesus is God!

Do you recognize the goodness of Christ as He stands before you; as you fall to your knees before Him, do you realize His divinity - and that you should worship Him alone?

Yes, it is good that you keep the commandments of love toward your neighbor, that you love your mother and father and never kill or steal or lie. But do you not wish to come to God Himself, to love Him with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength? If you really want to follow Jesus to the Kingdom where He leads all His disciples, it does not come without the Cross.

“If I am good, why do you not follow me? Why do you not give all you have, all that is of this earth and dying, to come to know the eternal life found only in me? Do you not believe I am in the Father and the Father is in me? Do you truly see that I AM God?”

“Then why do you fear the Cross? Why do you hesitate to walk the path I lead you upon? It is the way to glory, my son.”

“He who is forgiven little, loves little”

Lk. 7:47

O how we are measured by our love! How love is the measure of all things.

It is true, the one who is forgiven more, loves more, will have more cause for love and greater depth to his love, for he knows how great is the love that has saved him.

But to be forgiven, one must first be guilty of something - and one must recognize one's guilt. Does this mean we should the greater sin that we might the greater love? Heaven forbid! The Pharisee had no less matter (in his vanity and his pride) for which to seek forgiveness from the Lord than the woman who was a known sinner: there is ALWAYS something of which we can be forgiven; we are always prone to sin! The question is, again: how well do we RECOGNIZE our sin? (And how humbly do we repent?)

Jesus has come to forgive men's sins. This is His whole purpose. His mission is wrought into His very Name - which means “God saves” - as well as in His very veins. It is for this His blood has been shed. And would you say to Him, “I have no need of your sacrifice, no need of you. Come down from that Cross; you can go now”?

Don't be a fool! His blood is pouring forth for you this day. Your sin is as great as any man's. You have no need to look at the person next to you: He wants to save *you*. Open your heart to His love and be the greater blessed.

“Put your sword into its sheath”

Jn. 18:11

And so, what can Peter do? He has said to Jesus, “I will lay down my life for you” (Jn. 13:32), and has proven his resolve to fight to the death for the Lord by taking his sword and cutting off the ear of the high priest’s slave in the Garden of Gethsemane... but now he is commanded to put his weapon away, to stop fighting. And so, what can Peter do?

He knows not what to do. He cannot fathom this cup Jesus says He must drink, and so how can he begin to drink of it himself? Who is there even today that understands and accepts and lives this sacrifice to which all Christians are called? Many are willing to die in battle, but how few are ready to lay down their lives even for their enemies.

And so Peter is frozen. Is this not why he seeks the warmth of the fire in the courtyard of the high priest? He is cold, cold to his bones and without any understanding of what he can do to save Jesus from His crucifixion.

But there is nothing he can do. “Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” (Jn. 18:11), Jesus has said to him. How can he go against the will of the Father and the Son; how can he keep Jesus from dying? He can’t. His sword is useless. It is the witness of his tongue he is called to give... but he has not yet the Spirit to inspire him.

I. Holy Scripture

“You always have the poor with you”

Mk. 14:7

But we do not always have Jesus with us. Except, of course, in the poor, whom He leaves with us as His presence in this world, calling us to serve them. And whenever we will, we can do good to them, and so to Him. (And what a gift this is! That we might give alms at any time and thus serve the salvation of our souls.)

The woman who anoints Jesus prepares His body for burial. He will indeed die and be buried; and though He shall rise again, He will soon ascend into Heaven. And it will do us no good to stand there staring at the sky.... He will return as He has gone, but while the grass grows we must turn our attention to this earth and serve Him in those who are most in need.

I must note that none are poorer than those who suffer apart from God. And so it is a great service to our LORD to pray for the poor souls who suffer in Purgatory, who wait to be united with the LORD. And so it is also a great service to the poor to pray for those on the road to destruction, whose souls are in jeopardy of being lost for eternity. We should do all we can for them, while not forgetting those without the material necessities for a healthy life. The LORD made both soul and body, and so both must be tended to... but it is the soul that lives forever. (And both prayer and work are good, but remember that Mary chose the better part.)

“Most men’s love will grow cold”

Mt. 24:12

Sirach tells the wise soul to prepare his heart for trials (see 2:1), and the Lord Jesus says the same here to His disciples. Darkness will come, and persecution with it. We must stand strong in the NAME of the LORD.

Most men’s souls will grow cold because man is so weak and so inclined to sin and wickedness. It takes work to resist the devil and live as we are called, and so there are few real Christians in the world. Indeed, the way is narrow.

Will you be able to bear the darkness that comes in the end to all and which the Christian suffers day to day in this world? Do you think the way is easy...? Then you are on the wrong path. For the devil is quite real and the evil of the world inescapable, and so one either gives in to it or suffers great affliction at its hands.

This affliction of soul is necessary, though, to purge all the evil inclination from the heart of man. It is a gift meant to serve his salvation and a source of great joy to those seeking Heaven. We should not be afraid, nor turn away, but face the threats of our persecutors with a humble and loving heart, praying even for our enemies... loving even as we suffer and die.

I. Holy Scripture

“I was not there so that you may believe”

Jn. 11:15

There is a connection between Jesus' raising Lazarus from the tomb - His weeping as well as His waiting two days to go to him - and His agony in the Garden, where He prays that the cup might pass from Him.

In both cases He does not want to do what He has to do, but must for our sake. He would not see Lazarus dead and everyone mourning, but it is necessary to bring us to faith; and He would not see us crucify Him and cry thereafter at what we have done... but we learn in no other way.

How deeply moved Jesus is at our suffering! How clearly this is shown both at Lazarus' tomb and in the Garden. At the tomb He weeps and is greatly troubled at the death of His friend and the loss felt by those who love him; and in the Garden He sweats blood in anticipation of the pain and sorrow we shall know at His being raised on the Cross.

He does not want us to experience such agony, to mourn as for an only son - all this pain He would take upon Himself. And so He repeatedly begs the apostles to stay awake, to pray that they not be tested, that He will not have to die at our hands to prove He is the Son of God... but they sleep instead.

We are all sleeping. Our faith lies so dormant. What will it take for us to awake?

**“My God, my God,
why hast Thou forsaken me?”**

Mt. 27:46

In the voice of us all, who are abandoned because of our sin (and who abandon Him), Jesus gives expression to the quintessential cry of orphaned humanity: Why are we abandoned by a God who holds such blessings? Why must we suffer; why are we in pain? Why is there suffering in this world at all? This is the question all men ask - the desperation of mankind He here embodies.

Indeed, why has Jesus had to go to the Cross? Again, in the Garden of Gethsemane He would have had this cup pass from Him - He would not see humanity suffer such horror. And, brothers and sisters, it must be acknowledged that there is no greater suffering known to man than to look upon the innocent One whom we have pierced, to see our sin so plainly displayed before our eyes... but there is no other way we will be convicted of our sin, and so find repentance and salvation.

Jesus sees Himself fixed to the Cross; this mirror of suffering is held up before His eyes as well - and so He knows our pain, and so He takes this pain upon Himself. And so He would take this pain from your soul, if you would but accept His forgiveness.... If you would but recognize His sacrifice, all suffering would cease.

“I can do nothing till you arrive there”

Gn. 19:22

These are the angel's words encouraging Lot to flee destruction: he must await Lot's arrival in a town of refuge before he can effect the will of the LORD against the land of Sodom.

Do you see how these words reflect God's love for man? Not simply in the saving of the skin of Lot from destruction, but in His listening to and answering our prayers. For the reason the angel must wait for Lot (that his hands are, as it were, tied) is that, in accordance with the request of Abraham, the LORD has insisted Lot be spared.

The first miracle is that God listens to man at all, in this case that He has stopped to invite Abraham into His plans and that He acquiesces to his petition for Lot and his family (the “ten” to be spared). But the greater miracle is the LORD's remarkable faithfulness to His promises - here, that despite Lot's inexcusable weakness in fleeing, He continues to preserve his life.

Some might see this as a sign of weakness in the LORD Himself: is He not all-powerful and does He not do what He will do? Certainly. And the manner in which He shows His power is by allowing man to share in His will, stooping down to hear our poor prayers. Truly this “weakness” reveals the love of God, which is His greatest strength (shown most clearly in Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross).

“My yoke is easy, and my burden light”

Mt. 11:30

What is the yoke of Christ but the Cross? And why is it light except that Jesus carries it for us? We are yoked with Him under the Cross and His shoulders are much broader than our own. Even if the burden be upon us, even if the wood dig into our skin, still it is He who bears the brunt of this heavy weight - and by it we are strengthened!

Here is a great paradox, that the heavier the weight, the stronger we become. We are buoyed up by the Cross of Christ! How can this be but that indeed it is He who carries the weight for us? We need but give it to Him. To bear this weight He is well pleased.

And to strengthen us in the spiritual life, in the life of the Spirit, He is more pleased. To see the rest we find in Him grow more profound is His great delight. Take His yoke upon your shoulders and see what graces abound.

O Lord, thank you for your Cross, for sharing your gentle yoke with us poor sinners, that we might be lifted thus from the mire into which we've fallen, that we might escape the slavery under which we labor and soar as with eagle's wings unto your presence, and the presence of the Father.

He wishes but to save you from your burden, brother; accept His humble invitation this day.

I. Holy Scripture

**“My mother and my brethren are those
who hear the Word of God and do it”**

Lk. 8:21

The Word of God must become incarnate in us even as it is incarnate in Christ and in all His followers. It must take flesh. It must be lived and not just spoken of.

As Jesus has said elsewhere (cf. Mt. 7:26-27), those who do not *practice* the Word of God build their houses on sand. They are not strong - they are not houses of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, at all.

The Lord calls us to be as He is. This is a great grace, a great opportunity to enter into the Kingdom of God, into His own flesh... but that opportunity passes us by if we do not walk according to His Word, if we do not put it into practice.

It is not easy. The road to Heaven is not broad and wide, but narrow. It takes effort. It bodes suffering and the acceptance of that suffering. But it must be done. (And how wonderful are its fruits!)

And as we practice the Word of God, as we walk along the path Jesus trod, we grow stronger. If we take it step by step we find the strength we need. But let us not miss out on the opportunity with which we are presented; let us not let Jesus pass us by.... Let us become as His Mother and His brothers - let us be even as He is, though it lead to the Cross.

**“The one who is least among you
is the one who is the greatest”**

Lk. 9:48

The disciples were arguing among themselves about who of them was the greatest. They were seeking answer to a question, and Jesus gave them the answer. And the answer is the paradox of the saint.

The least is the greatest. How puzzled the disciples must have initially been by this essential teaching of the Christ. How their thinking must have gone in circles! “OK. So to be great, which I want to be, I must be the least. Then I will be the least.” But of course the problem comes in when one moves toward being the least, toward serving others, and then begins to think one is great. For once one begins to see himself as great, he becomes the least.

Indeed, this is the call of the saint: *always* to see himself as the least. And not just theoretically, not just in words... but in truth to *know* one is, as Paul has said, “the greatest of sinners” (1Tm. 1:15), unworthy even to serve. Even after performing some selfless work that is clearly of God and at which the Church Herself marvels, still one must realize - and more so! - that he is the least. Even more so should he see that only God is good and that he himself is nothing, nothing at all without Him.

I. Holy Scripture

**“Not by might, nor by power,
but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts”**

Zech. 4:6

Jesus shall go forth, and has gone forth, not leading a people armed with weapons of war to conquer an enemy by force, but bearing a Cross, a Cross all His army must bear with Him. It is in weakness He has come, lying as a babe in a manger and walking humbly among us... but all evil He shall overcome - nothing there is that can stay His hand.

His is a hand of love, a wounded hand dripping blood, which He holds out to every man. His life He lays down for our sins that we might be lifted up. And His disciples follow in His way.

The world gathers a fighting force, with sticks and clubs, with guns and knives, with bombs and other weapons of destruction. These are its arms. But His arms are spread out upon the wood, ready to receive the violence the world imparts.

And what does He offer even from the Cross but the forgiveness of the sins of mankind? Here is the most powerful act ever known, for it brings all who accept His love and walk in its way nothing less than eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

**“It is you who have accomplished
all we have done”**

Is. 26:12

He has wrought all our works. All the good we do is done by Him - without Him we could do nothing (but sin).

Remember the blessed chastisement of Jesus: When you have finished your work, say, “We are unworthy servants” (Lk. 17:10). All we do is what is ours to do, the task we have been assigned. The assignment comes from the LORD and the power to fulfill it is from Him as well. All we can do on our own is refuse His grace and mercy, and thus show ourselves to be fools.

And so, before you begin any work, pray; pray that it may be accomplished in the LORD’s NAME, and you shall be blessed. Pray that all is done in the will of the Father and you shall join the Son in His Kingdom. And you shall know the glory of His reign.

What power have you, my brother, that is not given from above? And so, do not boast of your accomplishments, lest you put your soul in peril. Boast only in the Cross, in the laying down of your life with Jesus, and let Him lift you up from the dust where you belong.

**“They shall set up the abomination
that makes desolate”**

Dn. 11:31

The crucifixion must be the abomination spoken of by the prophet Daniel, for it is the greatest sacrilege, the unholy act by the hands of men. Is its grave desolation not made known in the Lord's own words from the Cross: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me” (Mt. 27:46)? What greater abomination could there be than the killing of God Himself, the most innocent One who walks amongst us only for our salvation?

Yet by the LORD this greatest sacrilege is made the means of our salvation - Jesus' purpose has not been thwarted but fulfilled in His acceptance of such an ignominious death. In this sacrifice we learn the way to Heaven and have now the grace from above to find it; for by His blood we are made whole ourselves, a holy offering to the LORD.

Who can fathom the will of God or its working in this world? Past, present, and future are all one in His sight and He does what He will do. How far above our ways are His own! The blood of Christ is poured upon all time and all mankind, and raises the repentant soul from the depths of sin to eternal glory. O LORD, from this darkness bring your light!

**“In the shadow of your wings
I take refuge”**

Ps. 57:1

Where do we find shelter in this dark world but in the shadow of the Cross, in the arms of the LORD? Here the Son of God embraces us and holds us close to Himself, bringing comfort and peace to our troubled souls. Our only hope is in His sacrifice, our only hope for salvation.

And so, most especially on the last Day will we find refuge in the Cross, in the wounds of Christ and in His blood. If He shelters us from the beating sun here as we walk on this plane, how much more will He be with us when it comes time to leave and the darkness of the world closes in? It is the arms of the Cross that protect us, and will protect us when the end comes.

What need we fear as long as Jesus is with us, as long as His grace is upon our hearts by faith in His love? And how could His love be shown more wonderfully than in the sacrifice He makes for our sins, freely and completely giving His life for our sake?

Let us join Him there in such utter sacrifice and we shall find the refuge we need - we shall find the way to Heaven open before our eyes.

“Jesus looking upon him loved him”

Mk. 10:21

And so He invited him to the Cross.

As Jesus calls the rich man to sell all his possessions and follow Him, it is with love He offers such a grace. There is no greater blessing upon this earth than to join Jesus on the Cross. (For it leads to eternal glory, does it not?)

How unlike a blessing this call seems to the rich man, and to us all; and so it is no wonder he walks away sad. We can understand his dejection at having to give up all he owns... and this is the saddest thing of all.

O how blind we are, dear LORD! How blinded by the ways of the world and their unceasing pull upon our souls. Why can we not see your call to the Cross as a call to the greatest love of all? Why do we try so hard to avoid it?

It can only be that we do not really treasure the love of God above all else. It can only be that we lack faith in the LORD and His undying love for us.

“Jesus looking upon him loved him.” He loved him deeply, very deeply, with a love we cannot measure... and so He called him to the Cross, and so He called him to Himself, to be with Him forever from that day forward. Can there be a more desirable call?

**“Make no provision
for the desires of the flesh”**

Rm. 13:14

For the flesh must be crucified, it must die with Christ, and so to gratify it would only work against the Christian's purpose. Place even this in the hands of God.

All is from God and all is of God, and all must be given to God to be of any worth. And so if we concern ourselves with our passionate desires, seeking to indulge them and so being guided by them in the things we do and say, we will be moving in the opposite direction from our LORD... and thus end but empty and alone.

These evil desires which once controlled our lives must be abandoned, as Paul makes clear. We should have no affection for them anymore but despise the very thought of them. We must be free of the pull of this earth or we shall never fly to Heaven.

The LORD is drawing your soul to Him and if you trust in His call, in the light that comes from above and illumines the path of the faithful child, all fear and doubt will flee from your heart and you will no longer be drawn away by the flesh, the world, and the devil. The LORD is greater than these - trust in His love.

“They were cut to the heart”

Acts 2:37

Thus was Jesus crucified, that we might be cut to the heart, that we might be convicted of our sin and turn to Him for forgiveness - that we might find salvation in His blood.

What a grace this is, to realize one's sin. For what a horror is our blindness to sin and so our continuing in its path. Once we were dead and did not know it; now that Christ has died we know how dead we were, and are brought to life by Him.

What a sacrifice He has made for us! To suffer and die as He has done. And all this only for our sake, only that we might come to Him.

The Jews on that day of Pentecost begged of the apostles what they should do - how could they be forgiven the terrible crime of crucifying the only Son of God? Blessed they were for they did not harden their hearts and curse those who openly declared their crime but accepted the truth of their grave trespass.

Let none of us think our trespass is lacking gravity: *every* sin pierces the heart of our Savior. And so let us, too, find the grace of being cut to the heart, that we, too, might know salvation.

**“There will not be left here
one stone upon another”**

Mk. 13:2

On the last day all will be torn down. No church shall stand, the sacraments will be no more... for in the Kingdom of God they are no longer needed; and we must not be attached to these rather than the LORD's love.

It seems a terrible thing to think that all we see will fall to the dust, that nothing of this world will be left standing. But we must realize that it is indeed the things *of this world* that will be taken away, and nothing of God, nothing that is lasting. Let us be ready to give up all that is of this place to come to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And so our sights should be set on the world to come, not on this passing world. If our concern is being in God's presence, we should be glad at the passing of temporal things. For they shall pass anyway, but if our hearts are set on what does not pass - God's grace at work in our souls - then only joy will we know.

It is a sacrifice, no doubt, to give up all we have here: I love the Blessed Sacrament, love my friends and family, love the books I've read and especially God's Word... but the WORD of God will be all that is on that day, and the Sacrament will be fulfilled as we rejoice as one holy family in the glorious presence of our King - so the sacrifice should be sweet indeed.

D.

RESURRECTION

“Go and do likewise”

Lk. 10:37

Who was neighbor to the man lying beaten on the road? “The man who showed mercy to him” (Lk.10:37). The one who had compassion on the man, binding up his wounds, setting him on his own beast... and bringing him to a place of shelter and healing. This is he who was neighbor to the man.

And so when Jesus calls us to do likewise, what does He tell us but to make all men our neighbors, to have mercy on all? It is the sharing of mercy that makes us neighbors to others - we are indeed neighbor to the one we show love. And there is none that does not deserve our mercy and love, our concern for their welfare.

Jesus tells us to love even our enemies, thus making them our neighbors as well. Do you see in this how love overcomes hatred, how light overshadows darkness, and indeed makes it as light itself? This is our call; most especially, this is our call as followers of Christ.

Samaritans were enemies of the Jews and yet the Samaritan is held up by the King of the Jews as a model to imitate. Be like him, He tells His Jewish hearers (and all of us). So, not only must we love our enemies, we must also see the love that is in them. All are children of God.

**“When his eyes were opened,
he could see nothing”**

Acts 9:8

These words are spoken of Saul when he is struck by the light of Christ on the road to Damascus. How appropriate they are in illustrating what Jesus says repeatedly to those like the Pharisees who refuse to acknowledge their sin: “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” (Jn. 9:39). There are none so blind as those who refuse to see.

And how blind Saul is, how hard is his heart toward Christians, and so toward Christ Himself! But here on this road grace comes to him; the LORD has mercy on his soul and reveals to him his blindness. And so, now that his eyes are opened, he realizes he cannot see - he knows how blind he has been.

Is the darkness that now envelops Saul not filled with the light of truth? Does it not illumine well the darkness of his soul? O how necessary it is that we come to recognize how blind we are! Without the grace of this purgatorial darkness, the world would never have had the preaching of Paul; without this grace none would know the light of Heaven.

O LORD, let our eyes be opened to our blindness - let us sit in such darkness until it is time for you to remove the scales from our eyes. After three days your Son does rise!

**“You will never get out
till you have paid the last penny”**

Mt. 5:26

And who can pay the last penny? Who can redeem himself? What amount is needed to set free the soul of a man? No one and nothing can effect redemption, can bring a soul to salvation, except the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood. If you try to do so on your own and by your own will, you can but fail. And so, what hope have those who make themselves judges of other men and lack the mercy of God?

There is a Purgatory, certainly. There is a prison in which men are kept until they give all of themselves to the LORD and to His service. Here a man may be cleansed of all that clings to him, that keeps him from the presence of God. But in this state, what power has man himself? He must but learn to relinquish all power to the One who is all-powerful or he will be without possibility of entering Paradise.

Forgive; yes, forgive your brother. Reconcile. Yes, reconcile with every man. Then the face of your enemy will become as the face of God and you will by the LORD's grace recognize that the one whom you considered your foe is in fact your brother. And then you will be set free!

But if you stubbornly hold to the law of this world and its judgment, how will the last penny be paid? It is Christ alone who redeems man, and there is none He has not died to save.

I. Holy Scripture

“I received my sight and saw him”

Acts 22:13

Before we heard that when Saul opened his eyes (on the road to Damascus after witnessing the blinding light of Christ), he could not see. Now he tells us that when Ananias prayed over him, suddenly he received his sight. And whom does he look upon? What is now the light of his eyes? The verse refers literally to Ananias, but it is Jesus Himself he sees in the person of this disciple; it is indeed the Christ who is the light giving him vision.

There is clear substantiation for this interpretation in Jesus' words to Saul: “Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 22:7). In this instance it is Christians whom Saul has been persecuting, Christians who are thus equated (by the Lord Himself) with the suffering Christ: to persecute them is to persecute Him. And now one of those Christians Saul came to persecute stands before him... and he sees that the Messiah is indeed with him, that this man is of the Body of Christ.

O what vision this is! To see Jesus in those who follow Him. To know He is at work in the world today in those who profess His Name, who truly walk in His Way. And Saul (Paul) now becomes part of that Body of Christ; it is now Jesus who lives in him.

Does He live in you? Do you see His face shining in your brother's eyes?

“You shall eat like those who are in flight”

Ex. 12:11

Ready must we ever be to fly unto Heaven, ready as the Israelites waiting to flee from Egypt. There should be nothing else in our hearts, no other concern should we have in this dark night, than to find release from slavery to the world and entrance into the LORD's Kingdom. What else matters?

Should the Israelites have paused to cook their food when the hour had come to gain their freedom, to go to the Promised Land after four hundred and thirty years under Pharaoh? And how long have we been waiting here? Or do we not realize that now is a time of waiting for the return of Christ?

If to this we are blind, then we may be lost on the Day of His return. If His return is not our concern, we will be easily distracted by the vanity of the world. And where shall we be then? How shall we know the hour of our visitation if it is not something we long for with all our hearts? Jesus will then pass us by that Day, but not for the good.

He gives us time. He gives us time to get ready, to be ready for His coming. His patience is inexhaustible. But will we find the fruit of that patience, or lose ourselves in things that matter not for the salvation of our souls? Make yourself ready - now is the acceptable time. (Every moment is the time.)

**“It is really the number of crops
that he sells you”**

Lv. 25:16

In the year of Jubilee all returns to the LORD, He from whom all things come, and so nothing of this world is really our own - we but buy and sell here.

And the time is limited for our transactions; we have only so many years, so many days, in which to make a profit... in which to show ourselves good and faithful servants of the One who owns all things.

What we hold in our hands may be limited and passing, it may be ours only for a short time, but how important it is for us to trade wisely the talents the LORD provides each soul!

We can do nothing about the land, about the earth itself - it is the place in which all dwell: it was made by the Word of God and shall not pass away until His Word is fulfilled. But the fruit of this land, that which grows from it, we must tend with great care and diligence; for this work is our own.

May the LORD lead and guide us; may He inspire us in all we do, that all might be done in His NAME, and lead to Heaven.

**“Even the dogs under the table
eat the children’s crumbs”**

Mk. 7:28

What profoundly humble words that can only make our Savior exclaim of this pagan woman’s great faith! (And to what shame she puts all those who claim to be believers - bless her!)

She begs on her knees at Jesus’ feet, indeed as a dog before its master. Hungry is she for the food she knows only He has, and for it she is not ashamed to plead. And her obvious faith He cannot ignore... and so He answers her prayer.

Is this not where we *all* belong? Is this not our true place before the LORD of the Universe, before the King of Kings? Are we not blessed when we find ourselves where we should be?

How wonderful the truth is to our taste! How marvelous is this humility. We are but dust of the earth, passing flesh... but in His presence we are raised from the dead! He cannot help but pity the penitent soul.

O LORD, may we mirror the humility of this blessed woman. May we imitate her faith. What glory is known therein! For the truth does indeed set us free.

I. Holy Scripture

“Young man, I say to you, arise”

Lk. 7:14

Certainly Jesus has power over death. He has said elsewhere that the dead are only “sleeping” (Mk. 5:39). Such words are met with bewilderment and scorn by worldly souls, in a sense by us all, but for Christ they express a simple truth: to Him they are only sleeping, for He can rouse them at any moment with but a word.

He is life itself and life is supreme over death. Look at this scene at the gates of Nain: a great crowd rejoicing with Jesus meets a large crowd mourning the death of the only son of a widow, and what happens? All depart from there exclaiming the glory of the living God.

O let us all hear His blessed voice calling us to arise from the death that is upon us! Why should we be separated from the LORD? Why should we sleep in darkness? Does He not wish to bring us new life, to make us stand in eternal light, even here, even now?

Do not be afraid to open your heart to His Word. It is a word of love - His heart beats for you and for all those who mourn, and He cannot but reach out to wipe away your tears and give you Himself, the only Son of God, to bring you joy.

When we encounter Jesus, our sorrow is turned to joy. Only joy is there for those who follow in His way. He is calling you to arise.

“Can these bones live?”

Ez. 37:3

The dry bones. The bones in the midst of the open plain.... Can anything bring them back to life, or will they lie there forever, rotting in the sun? Only God knows, for it is only in His power to revive that which has become so dry and lifeless.

But what do you say, my brother? Do you think the LORD has the power, and the will, to bring your dry bones to life? Do you think He loves you enough to do so? How dry and lifeless we have all become, we sinners abandoned on the flat surface of this earth - how much we need His Spirit!

It is His desire to breathe new life into the dead lying in their graves. It is His will to bring all to eternal life. For this, Christ has died... and Christ is risen from the dead. Christ is risen from the dead. *Christ is risen from the dead!* (And He would have you rise with Him.)

The bones can live. As the LORD has demonstrated the power of the Spirit to bring bone to bone and cover them with sinew and flesh and skin, and breathe new life into them; as He has brought Israel back to its land after its distressing exile... so He has shown in the death and resurrection of His Son, His power and His desire to raise all men from the death of sin to stand in freedom in His eternal Kingdom.

I. Holy Scripture

**“Wherever this water comes,
the sea shall be made fresh”**

Ez. 47:8

The water flows from the Temple, ever increasing in volume, and enters into the sea. The water is life-giving. The water brings healing. The water is the blood of Christ flowing from His side.

And indeed this water makes all things fresh and new. We who are mired in sin, who are like the stagnant waters of a salt sea, a dead sea, are brought to life again by the grace of God in the blood flowing from the Cross of Christ... by His Spirit pouring upon us.

This water cannot be stopped in its path; nothing can stand in its way... and nothing can gainsay its life-giving power. There are those that harden their hearts against the working of the Holy Spirit, who refuse the grace of forgiveness found in Jesus' blood - but the blood itself continually flows forth for them, as it does for all.

Come to my heart, O water of Christ, and set me free from all darkness and sin. Soften my spirit to accept your Word, to receive your Spirit into my life. O let your blood flow over me to make me a new creation this day!

**“Greater will be the future glory
of this house”**

Hg. 2:9

Both the silver and the gold belong to the LORD, both the former glory and the latter, both the glory we had before the Fall and that which is ours after the coming of Christ; both the glory known here on this earth and the glory of Heaven, both the glory that was with the Jews under the Old Covenant and that surpassing glory available to all under the New... but greater indeed by far is the latter, for in the heavenly Kingdom no shadow remains beside the eternal light.

Here we see the “happy fault” of Adam come into play: if he had not sinned, Jesus would not have come, God would not have dwelt among us, neither in this place nor in a perfect way in Heaven. Greater is the glory now known in Jesus Christ, for it unites us more intimately with the Father.

The former glory of the temple of old seemed all we could hope to restore, was all that man could imagine. But the LORD exceeds the silver of our tarnished minds; the gold that is His, He provides to us, if we but have the faith to receive it.

**“Where sin has increased,
grace has overflowed all the more”**

Rm. 5:20

So much greater is the love of God than the hatred of man. There is none who can best the LORD in generosity and goodness, and in His ability to conquer evil. Isn't this the answer to the question as to why there is suffering in the world? Certainly there is suffering because of the sin of man; but all should be assured that the LORD's grace far surpasses men's sins and any violence they bring with them. Indeed, His grace abounds all the more, turning even the greatest suffering, the greatest evil that can be performed, into a greater good.

Have faith, my brother. Have faith, and have love. Love is stronger than death itself and faith is greater than any doubt, for God is far greater than the devil and his minions; indeed, there is no comparison. Like a fly or a mosquito crushed by the hand of justice are Satan and his works before the LORD of all.

But do not fail to be disciplined; presume not upon the grace and goodness of God. Is this not why He allows Satan to have his way for a brief moment on this plane: that we might prove ourselves faithful, that we might show ourselves to be true to the LORD, to light and to love, and that we might grow unto Heaven even as His grace increases?

**“You have become obedient
from the heart”**

Rm. 6:17

And this is true obedience; this is true righteousness, true goodness in the sight of God. We cannot simply follow laws and rules but must in our hearts embrace them and love them and live them without needing to be told, without the threat of punishment hanging over us. We must enter into the New Covenant in the blood of Christ!

It is good to go to Mass as the Church teaches is necessary, but it profits a man little if he goes (even every day) only because he “has to,” as if he would prefer not to go at all. And so it is with any law, any commandment of God: we must not lie or steal or kill or commit adultery, yes, and if we do these things we separate ourselves from God and His life and love... but it is not enough just to avoid these evils; we must desire in our hearts *not* to commit sin, not acting merely out of a servile fear but out of a genuine love of the LORD and others, and with the realization that His Law is indeed a blessing, not a curse.

One should love to go to Mass to meet the LORD, to hear His Word, to receive His very Body and Blood! And one should in all things desire truth and love, and they shall fill him and carry him unto Heaven.

**“The sufferings of this present time
are as nothing”**

Rm. 8:18

What are the sufferings of this present time? My brother, my sister, look upon a crucifix and there you shall see them, there you will find indication of how severe they are. God Himself has undergone great violence at our hands, being beaten and scourged and nailed to a cross... and yet this is as nothing when compared to the glory to which it leads.

What are your sufferings, my friend? Are they greater than these? Are they greater than having the one you created out of immense love, the one whom you would hold to your breast and share with all the goodness of Creation - the one for whom you would readily lay down your life... are they greater than having your beloved child turn upon you with such violence, such anger, such hatred...?

Unite your sufferings to God's own. As those are forgotten in the light of the Kingdom so any torment you undergo here, too, shall pass, and even bring you to eternal life.

Do not be afraid. Do not fear the temptations to despair the devil throws across your path. They are as nothing. They come to nothing. In Christ they are made the means to glory on high. (Your God still loves you.)

“Why should it exhaust the soil?”

Lk. 13:7

So the landowner asks of a tree that bears no fruit; and so the LORD asks of those who do not work for His Kingdom. If we are not fruitful, why should we remain in His House, on His land? There is no wasted space in Heaven.

We spurn the value of the ground onto which we are born, the value of our own lives and the gift they are from God, when we waste time and all the talents at our disposal. We are planted here for a reason, and our purpose we must appreciate.

We are not made to bide our time or do as we please, feeding our own selfish desires. We are not made to atrophy, to decompose while still on our feet. We are made to do the will of God in all things, in essence, to love - to serve Him who made us, and our neighbor.

Seek the Kingdom of God, my brother; desire it with all your heart and it shall not be far from you. You will not be left alone in a salt waste if it is the will of God you long to fulfill. It shall come to you quickly and you will bear fruit abundantly... and there will be no need for the gardener to cut you down and throw you into the fire.

“A lying mouth destroys the soul”

Ws. 1:11

How deadly indeed are the lies we tell. The lying tongue is worse than the murderous hand, for it is the spirit that is slain thereby. There is hope that the body will rise unto glory on the last day, and so the murderer may indeed be forgiven his sin... but sinning against the Spirit is an unforgivable offense, for the soul becomes lost in its web of deceit (and soon sees no need for forgiveness).

Cry out to the LORD, O treacherous tongue! Turn quickly from your evil ways, or what hope shall you find? No hope have you as long as you tread such a wicked path.

In your own illusions you will be trapped; as surely as a sword pierces flesh, so does your lie slay your soul.

You who deny the existence of God, how shall you be saved? You smother the very life within you and nullify your only means of salvation. You who scoff at love of neighbor, how hard your heart becomes! Will you trust in your own rotting tongue?

How foolish the man who trusts in his lies, who turns from the glory of God and the light He shines to make an artificial light to live by.... In darkness he remains.

“The dead are raised”

Lk. 20:37

Yes, there is a resurrection. As there is a God, there is a resurrection. For all things are alive to Him and are brought back to life by His Son.

No Christian can be so foolish as to say there is no resurrection. No believer in God can hold this. Unless he knows not the One in whom he pretends to believe. Indeed, it is not possible for any man to say in truth that he believes not in the resurrection. He shows only by this that he knows not even himself, and certainly has a skewed vision of the LORD.

God is Life. Where there is life, there is God, for He is the source of life itself. Indeed, “all live to Him” (Lk. 20:38). Life cannot be denied because it would take breath, the breath that is so essential to life, to deny it. One would thus be a liar or a fool to say as much. And so God cannot be denied, for He is Life.

And the great I AM draws us to Himself, raises even the ungrateful sinner from the dead, calling all to stand before Him. This no man can escape, try as he might. God lives and His creatures live to Him, whether in joy and consolation, or in abject misery because of their refusal to love as they ought.

**“He who does not believe
is condemned already”**

Jn. 3:18

The world is shrouded in darkness. This is what we must see. The world is shrouded in darkness and we stumble blindly in the dark.

Sin is pervasive. Man is fallen; he is subject to condemnation for the disobedience of Adam and his own transgressions. There is an inclination to death now poisoning our very flesh and bone.... It is so: we stand condemned.

Thus Jesus comes, to save us from condemnation, to rescue us from the darkness that surrounds us and threatens to enter in. He brings light to this forsaken place that we might find our way to vision of Paradise, that we might conquer the sin that weighs upon our souls and rise to eternal life.

Without this light we are condemned: we remain mired in sin and death is on the horizon. With this light we have hope of sharing in the new day that is dawning in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is your only means of finding salvation, of living in truth and love in eternity. If you do not believe in Him who is Truth and Love itself, on the last day, how will you stand?

**“The LORD knows how to rescue
devout men from trial...”**

2Pt. 2:9

“...and how to continue the punishment of the wicked up to the day of judgment.” In this we can trust. In this we should take warning. Those who are godly, who are with the LORD, shall be protected by the LORD - He cannot help but love and care for His own, for they are close to Him at all times. But those who set themselves against the will of God and His love shall have their worlds turned upside down, can only struggle vainly to effect their unholy desires.

To those who trust in God it must be said: Do not fear. There is no cause for fear among the children of light. You may not always be able to recognize the hand of the LORD at work in your life, but whether you are aware of it or not, He rescues you from all harm. Only keep your heart committed to doing His will.

But dread fear should fall upon those who stand in opposition to God’s love; those who have others at their beck and call and enslave their brothers for their own selfish ends can only be punished severely in the justice of the LORD. Truly, He is a just God.

I. Holy Scripture

**“He will turn the hearts of fathers
to their children
and the hearts of children to their fathers”**

Mal. 4:6

May it be so with all of us; only in this way will we be saved, will we enter the glory of God.

The hearts of fathers must turn to their children in love, in concern for the welfare of their offspring, ready to sacrifice their lives like Christ. And the hearts of children must turn to their fathers in obedience, listening to their words of loving guidance - accepting the sacrifice made for their sakes.

This is how it was meant to be; this is how it must be. This is the love of the Father and the obedience of the Son, and we should mirror this perfect love. For this we were created. How we have gone so far astray, I cannot say. That fathers are set against sons and sons against fathers is a terrible crime. But hope remains.

The above quote is the last verse of the last book of the Prophets; it foretells the return of Elijah before the end of time. The end of time is upon us now - we are under the New Covenant. Elijah (John the Baptist) has come, and Christ as well. The prophecy should be fulfilled in us or we will have little hope.

Love all in your care with a sacrificial love; to all in rightful authority give obedience. Only in this way will peace come. Only in this way will we enter the New Jerusalem.

E.

GOD'S PRESENCE

I. Holy Scripture

**“Son, you are always with me,
and all that is mine is yours”**

Lk. 15:31

The LORD takes nothing from us when He shares His love with others. We need not be afraid, nor hold tightly to our possessions, especially our heavenly inheritance.

How kindly the father speaks to the older son, the one that has stayed with him and not been profligate with the gifts showered upon him, but who is concerned now for his inheritance. This son is representative of the Pharisees, and so Jesus offers a particularly, one might say unusually, kind word to them. But it is a word to the heart of every Christian, of every man who follows the Lord and sets his heart on the Kingdom: your faithfulness is not forgotten in His forgiveness of those who stray. In bringing them back into the fold, your place is in no way compromised, your goods no way diminished.... You must know the abundance of God’s love, that it is without measure - how can you call yourself His disciple otherwise?

We must wish for all souls to be so blessed, to enter into the love of God and know His generous gifts. In this way indeed we shall always be with the LORD and share in all His possessions, for we shall be encompassed by the light of His love.

Pray for the repentance of *all* souls, that they will be welcomed into the Father’s arms.

“Moses...put a veil over his face”

2Cor. 3:13

Moses' face shone so brightly when he came from speaking with the LORD that the people begged him to wear a veil when he spoke to them. They could not bear to see the glory of God shining so clearly; they needed thus to hide from it, to keep it from themselves.

Now the glory that shone on Moses' face was a passing glory - this light did not last but faded in time (till He spoke face to face with YHWH again). And so, if this “secondhand” glory was too intense for a people wrought with sin to endure, what of the light of the face of Jesus, which does not pass away, which is the face of God Himself shining before us: how shall we bear looking on it when He returns?

How easily people expect to enter Heaven; what a facile thing it seems to most. But those who think this have little notion of the glory that awaits our souls and how difficult it is to stand (forever) in that light - we must all beg the grace of God!

Do not be ignorant of your own sins and their dark consequences, nor of the surpassing glory that is our LORD. You best prepare your hearts now to see Him, for such a moment is not to be taken lightly and will require surpassing humility and innocence, and the falling to one's knees. There will be no veil at our disposal when that time comes.

I. Holy Scripture

**“When the crowd had been put outside,
He went in”**

Mt. 9:25

And He raised Jairus' daughter. (We have an echo of this scene in Jesus' taking the deaf man apart from the crowd to heal him in Mark 7:33.)

There are at least two lessons here. One is that only those of faith can know the healing touch of Jesus. Those who mock the LORD and His power must be set aside that the power of faith may be effective. Those who do not believe will not see, and their distracting influence must be removed (and will be removed permanently on the last Day).

Secondly, we see that God is hidden, as faith is hidden, too. Jesus calls His disciples to come apart with Him not just to separate them from the meddling crowd, but more importantly that they might move toward the heart, where God dwells. The LORD makes Himself known not in noise but in silence (as evidenced clearly in His silent NAME, YHWH), and it is in this divine silence our faith speaks.

And so, those caught up in the noise of the world and having unbelieving hearts do not know God. Those whose souls are set on things outside themselves will never know the One who is at the heart of all Creation. We must put away from ourselves all such sinful distraction; then indeed we will know His touch.

“There is need of only one thing”

Lk. 10:42

Indeed, there are many things that capture our attention, by which we are busied throughout our days. Always there is something to be done.

But our Lord tells us only one thing is needful; therefore, all others are not necessary for our salvation. If we have this one thing, we have all things, but if we have it not, we have nothing at all.

What is this one thing, this most profound need all men have? It is the LORD. It is God Himself we need, and to have His words pour like life-giving water into our ears. What else could we possibly need if we have this? And if we have not this, how very empty we are.

We must be as Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, giving all our attention to Him and to His teaching. Even if we are busy as Martha, performing many tasks of service, still we must have our hearts and minds and souls set on Him and on His love, on His Word.

Here is peace, the peace that surpasses understanding. Here is the NAME of God, the silent NAME (YHWH) speaking most clearly to all listening hearts.

And thus the Spirit of God is instilled within us and serves to animate all our actions, all we do upon this earth.

“The form of this world is passing away”

1Cor. 7:31

And so we should do all as if not doing it; we should not be attached to things that pass away, lest we pass away with them.

Here is the teaching on attachment: we live in the world but are not of the world; we possess things in this world but they do not possess us - we keep the LORD's perspective, which sees all things for what they are, and what they shall soon become.

Dust shall return to dust, but spirit to Spirit. That which transcends all shall not pass away, and that which transcends all is within us now animating all we do. And so we must interpret spiritual things in spiritual terms, having our hearts set always on the Spirit of God.

We do not abuse the flesh or otherwise harm that which shall not last. In fact, it is made sacred by the Incarnation of Christ. But in the Kingdom soon to come the flesh is of no avail. Yes, we shall have bodies, for we are human beings... but it is not the flesh we shall look upon or recognize - it is the soul that shall be most real, most apparent to our eyes.

Thus do the disciples have difficulty recognizing Jesus after the Resurrection: their eyes are still trained upon the flesh - they have not yet learned to look upon the spirit of the person, which is the person unveiled, particularly when he is glorified.

“Where can I hide from your Spirit?”

Ps. 139:7

Nowhere. There is nowhere we can go where God is not - for God Is.

First of all, as human beings made in the image and likeness of God, His Spirit is wrought into our very being. We cannot escape our bodies, for wherever we go, they go with us; and we cannot escape the LORD, who is present with us wherever we are. And those who try, try in vain, bringing only torture upon themselves.

And this torture is compounded in those who are baptized in Christ, for they are now sealed by the LORD in a supernatural way, by virtue of the grace conferred upon them by the sacrament. Though our souls had been deformed by the Fall, they are reformed in the Spirit, and the Spirit's presence is thus made so much more intense, so much more transcendent... so much more real. He is so much more present to us. And so to attempt to escape is that much more futile, and that much more torturous.

You have arms and legs, my brother; you have a body - you are a creature of God. And the Creator is not separated from His Creation but always present to it. And the blood of Christ that has poured upon your soul has sealed you in the Spirit.... Allow the LORD to embrace you in His all-encompassing love.

“If it dies, it bears much fruit”

Jn. 12:24

Look at a tree. It is beautiful, alive with the light of God. But though the sun's rays draw it upward and make it radiant with color, where does its life come from? Is it not from beneath the earth; is this not the source of its life?

And what is beneath the earth the eye does not see: it is hidden. One could easily ignore it all together, or even have difficulty believing it exists and is the source of life. Yet those with a measure of knowledge realize this undeniable truth.

The grain of wheat must fall to the earth, it must die and be buried, if it is to produce new life. For in the earth is indeed where life is hidden, and here it finds nourishment to produce great fruit.

God is hidden, my brother. He is not seen. Jesus has made Him known, God Himself has walked among us... yet still no man can see God. Man looks only upon the surface of things and penetrates not to the Spirit.

How humble we must be! How humble we must be (like the dust of the earth) to begin to know God, to begin to find life within ourselves. Indeed, we must die - we must be buried with Christ. Are our lives not hidden with Him who gives the water that nourishes our dry earth? Then let us be hidden with Him in the Father's breast, in the shadow of the Cross.

**“To my eyelids I will give no slumber
till I find a place for the LORD”**

Ps. 132:4-5

What is the resting place of the LORD? David seeks without respite to build a house, a temple, for God - a place He might remain on this earth. But where is the place the LORD makes His dwelling? It is in Jesus, certainly, the Temple not made by human hands... but does He not seek to make His home in every man?

And is this not done in a surpassing way in our Blessed Mother? Is this not what her Son indicates when He says to His anxious Mother, “Did you not know I must be in my Father’s House?” (Lk. 2:49) to calm her fears - is she not the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple of God where the LORD ever dwells?

And must we not all find our home in her and in the Son of David that He might come to dwell in us with His heavenly Father? Indeed, our spirits are restless until they rest in Him... and O how He desires to rest in us!

It is the human heart, the human soul, the LORD seeks in a preeminent way to make His home. The heavens and the earth cannot contain Him, but He would make us His tabernacles, His resting place, even in this world. Truly we are temples of the Holy Spirit as the Apostle has said.

I. Holy Scripture

**“He did not count equality with God
a thing to be grasped”**

Phil. 2:6

Even for Jesus, divinity is not something to be held in one's hand and shaped as one pleases - one cannot buy it, nor become worthy of it by one's efforts, nor control it for one's purposes.... It is but to be received. It is but to be lived. It is but to be accepted as the free gift and grace it is, for if one reaches out one's hand to grab it, it shall certainly disappear (as it did for Adam and Eve).

Divinity simply is, for God simply Is - we cannot put our finger on Him or manipulate Him in any way. We cannot even see Him. We know Him by faith, by a silent heart aware of His presence.

Listen. Listen for His voice, be moved by His Word - be obedient to His command, His command of love, of sacrifice, and you will become as He is.

This is the message of Jesus in His assuming our nature: by such “emptying” of Himself He shows the way that we shall attain to the Father. Indeed, we must empty ourselves of ourselves, of all that is corrupt in us, to find the purity Jesus always had (and never lost, despite His descent into our midst).

Divinity is near us and with us, near indeed as our heart and our lungs.... Allow the light of God to shine in you by laying down your arms.

**“He will search who searches the mind
and knows the depth of the heart”**

Ps. 64:6

This is where God dwells; this is His domain - the depths of the heart and mind, the unseen, hidden places. And do you think you can hide from Him?

How futile man is in his blindness, his denial of God. God is closer to him than he is to himself, yet he says God does not exist. And so man knows not his own existence; thus nothing exists for man.... He but dwells in empty darkness. For one cannot deny the light and yet have vision.

Thus the Light of God - which does not leave, however much a man may deny it - indeed becomes a torment to the mind that is defiled, that willingly sinks into darkness. What should bring absolute joy, what should be recognized as a marvelous blessing (as it is by the pure of heart) becomes as hell itself to the soul that runs from such beauty and love.

He indeed searches the mind and cannot but shoot His arrows in this His domain. May we find them sweet and not troubling; may our hearts rejoice as we lay down our lives.

Welcome the LORD in the deep recesses of your being.

I. Holy Scripture

**“The earth shall be filled with knowledge
of the LORD as water covers the sea”**

Is. 11:9

What separation is there between the water and the sea? What is the sea but water? And so, what separation shall there be between the earth and the Light of God on the Day of Jesus' return? They shall be one; mankind and all Creation shall indeed be infused with the glory of the LORD.

And what shall be wanting to us then? Peace shall reign, the peace of Christ, the peace that passes all understanding - all will be filled with God's peace. The abundance of His grace shall pour forth upon every creature, and all shall know Him from least to greatest.

And what is it to know Him but to be one with Him, to be as He is, as John has told us we shall be (see 1Jn. 3:2)? To be as He is. *To be as He Is.* To be as He who Himself is Life, who Himself is goodness and light... who Himself is glorious beyond our ability to comprehend.

How can this be? How can it be that our mortal flesh shall be so thoroughly enlivened by the presence of God that we become as He is? The Holy Spirit is with us even now and so we have a sense of how this can be - O what a marvel it shall be to behold! It is beyond words.

**“There is nothing concealed
from its burning heat”**

Ps. 19:6

Who could hide from the Word of God? Where does its light not shine? Indeed, its message goes out to all the earth; and though the voice of the LORD is silent, it is spoken clearly by all His apostles.

The sun always shines, and the Son of God ever radiates the love of God to this forsaken world, a world shrouded in darkness. Whose eyes shall be opened to see His glory?

The eyes of the LORD look upon all, they see all things - there are no walls that can stand in their way. And you are exposed to the light of His eyes, my brother, my sister; He sees you as you sit or kneel or stand.... Nothing escapes His vision.

And how marvelous this should be for us to comprehend, to begin to understand: His omnipresence should reassure our hearts that we are never alone, that His love is always near. And so we rest securely in His arms.

But the heat of His light can indeed be burning to those who do not cherish its purity, who do not wish to remain in His sight. It is to them as a burning flame, much like the flames of hell... but to us it is heavenly delight.

I. Holy Scripture

**“The Word is very near you;
it is in your mouth and in your heart”**

Dt. 30:14

What could be nearer to us than the Word of God and God Himself? Who dwells more intimately with us than the LORD? He is so close to us that most of the time we don't know Him, for we are not that close to ourselves.

His Word is in our mouth, and He Himself lives in our heart - how well this was known to St. Teresa of Avila (whose feast is celebrated the day of this writing). She found Jesus dwelling in the Mansion deepest within her. She knew how native His presence is to His blessed creatures.

And we should hear Him speaking there, too; we should know the NAME of our God and His Breath upon our souls... for it is He who gives us life. Without Him we quickly die.

But this Silence, who can hear? His quiet light shining, who can find within himself? How much noise and how many distractions keep us from coming to the LORD our God!

Yet it is Him we must know. His presence must be real to us. God cannot remain an abstract idea - we must realize we are flesh of His flesh, one with Him in a spiritual marriage beyond our imagining yet ever ready to be consummated.

“This night your soul is required of you”

Lk. 12:20

There is no escape from the will of God. Our souls are always required of us by Him; and if we fail to give what is demanded of us, we but suffer, we but die.

We cannot put off doing the LORD's will till tomorrow or next month or next year... or even for an hour. Constantly. Constantly we must apply ourselves to the work of God, for constantly He seeks such work from us.

Can we stop breathing till next week? Can our hearts cease to beat for a time? The call of the LORD is more urgent than our need for breath or a beating heart - immediately we die when we turn from Him to sin.

And no priest is needed to tell us we have died: such death by sin cannot be denied - it is present at once in the soul who has lost his life. The priest may serve to revive the corpse, but the corpse is made by the straying will of the subject alone.

Is your heart set on the things of this world, on pride and greed, envy and lust? Then you are not alive to God. And if dead to the LORD in your inmost being, you are without light: you stumble blindly in the night.

The Light of God never wanes; may we never move away from it.

I. Holy Scripture

“His glory will dwell in our land”

Ps. 85:9

Jesus has come to be with us. His salvation is now poured out upon the face of the earth. He was born a Man and died on a cross for our sins.... His glory is in our midst.

And those who turn to Him in their hearts find His glory dwelling within them. Baptized in His blood they are made anew and shine as light in this dark world. And that light shall extend to the ends of the earth and fill all with its brilliance.

Do not forget that Jesus has come. Do not forget that He is with us now, in His Word, in the Sacrament, in the Spirit that breathes upon all who know Him, all who love Him and desire Him in their inmost heart. He is there. Such glory will not be fulfilled till the end of time and the return of the Son... but, indeed, even now He is with us.

Is He with you, my brother, my sister? Does He reign in your soul? Do you turn to Him in prayer as a little child? If you do then you know of what I speak; if you do then you are blessed.

O LORD, let us never forget the presence of your Son with us now, and the promise of the glory that is to come.

**“The splendor of His NAME
reaches beyond heaven and earth”**

Ps. 148:13

You can stand on tiptoe or shoot a rocket to the moon or Mars or wherever, but you will be no closer to the LORD and His glory. He is beyond the limits of space and time (though quite present in them).

It is beyond the power of words to express this wonder and glory: it is beyond your arms to reach Him. All that you know is below what He Is; though all knowledge of this world and power at our hands be used in His service, we would still fall short of God. Without His grace we would end where we started.

Yes, we must use all the gifts and talents at our disposal to honor and glorify His holy NAME - we must do His work and His will in this world. And this may indeed gain His favor, and He may indeed smile upon us and reveal Himself to us... but He would yet be beyond our reach.

Call us up to where you are, dear LORD. Call us into your courts. These courts are not made of the elements of earth and sky, yet we of the earth desire to dwell in them. And this favor you will grant to those who realize your glory is beyond heaven and earth. Praise you, O God!

**“The image of His own nature
He made them”**

Ws. 2:23

How like God, man is! And how this is revealed in His only Son. Thus we are called to be like Him, called to rediscover our sonship in Christ.

“Our Father” we call Him, in accord with the solemn instruction and example of Jesus, our Lord. He is our Father, we are His children - how like God we are! And though the image has been distorted by sin, by the Fall of man, it is not destroyed; and is restored by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

He has come among us; He is here with us. He stands before us and says: “Look at me. As I AM so can you be, for I AM as you are.” And so we do not despair our falling short of the glory of God, the glory wrought into us by our Maker. We know now that the evil that has hurt us, that has separated us from the LORD, will be utterly cast from our midst on the coming Day. And we shall stand with Jesus before the Father.

The image of His own nature He made us, and in that image He would remake us: that image is with us still. O LORD, let us shine your holy light, even as your only Son! May we partake of your divine nature.

“The Kingdom of God is in your midst”

Lk. 17:21

The Kingdom of God is eternal. It was from the beginning and has always been... and it does not pass away. It is not made by human hands but by the LORD alone. The question is: will we enter there?

Do not look for God by human means or with human power alone. His Kingdom cannot be limited in this way. It simply Is.

When Jesus tells us the Kingdom is in our midst, He speaks most particularly of Himself - for He is standing amongst His disciples as He speaks (He who is God, who is the Temple, the Kingdom)... but He also indicates its eternal nature: as Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end, so the Kingdom of God has no beginning or end (outside itself) and so no limitation by which we may grasp it with our soiled hands or minds. We must but accept its presence and be willing to enter therein.

He is with you now, my brother. Do not think you need to search for Him as if He were lost or hiding. He is with you, and you are in His Kingdom insofar as you are with Him. Be with the LORD even this hour, even this day... even if you must die along the way.

**“God did not make them
out of existing things”**

2Mac. 7:38

Nothing comes from anything that is already in the world - it would but be something changed in form. All that is comes only from God, who is immaterial and eternal and has all power to create.

The origin of the universe is not in the universe itself - it far transcends the universe. The physical comes from the spiritual, for God is pure Spirit and He precedes everything we see or feel.

The same is so for man, of course. He does not create himself nor is his essence found in the things around him, though he may be made from them and of them. His existence is also from God, who is the source of all that is (as He Himself Is).

Man is, in fact, the preeminent visible creation of Almighty God, closest to Him in being. The light of the sun may shine more brightly than that in the eyes of man, and there may be beasts that are stronger and faster than he... but it is he who is most like God, the Creator of all things. For, again, the universe has its origin in the transcendent LORD and man is most akin to the Spirit of God. He alone has an immortal soul.

“Blessed is your holy and glorious NAME”

Dn. 3:52

Blessed above all things is the NAME of the LORD. Nothing could be more blessed, nothing could be more of a blessing for us than that the LORD has shared His own NAME with us poor creatures (except of course that He has sent His Son).

How glorious is the NAME of the LORD, how holy! So holy that it is beyond our lips to utter, beyond words as we know them.... Pure silence, complete transcendence, is with us in the NAME He reveals to Moses: YHWH. How can creatures as weak and sinful as we, know the NAME of God? And yet with us He shares such holiness.

We can be holy as He, holy as His Son who came to redeem us that we might share in the holiness of God. And no greater blessing could there be. Imagine, the holiness of God upon you, breathing within you, becoming one with you.... Speak His holy NAME, my brother! Silence your tongue before Him and His light you will begin to shine.

I have written elsewhere, and repeatedly, of the silent Word that is the NAME of God (YHWH), the pronounceable silence that is this great gift from the LORD. It will lead you to holiness, and the glory found in His only Son.

II.

The Stations of the Cross

**Of Our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ**

(In Five Acts)

II. Stations of the Cross

**We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you!
Because by your holy Cross
you have redeemed the world.**

Plenary Indulgence Note

How marvelous to identify with the Passion of our Lord, to walk with Him on this glorious path. It is the most profound of meditations, is it not? How blessed is His suffering, and how blessed are those who suffer with Him.

The author attests that in praying the Stations every day (except Sundays and Solemnities) since Lent of 2003, he has always found it most efficacious. Next to the Mass itself (where we enter fully into Jesus' sacrifice, receiving its fruits even into our body), this prayer has provided the most unfailing graces. How blessed indeed to walk with Christ!

O may we ever be at the foot of His Cross with Mary and John and Mary Magdalene, and all the saints of God! O may we make our home in His wounds! For there is the most blessed comfort and peace on this earth, and there we make our way to the glory of Heaven.

Walk with Him, my brother, my sister, even every day. At each station genuflect and say at least, "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world," and you will be fulfilling the obligation for this act worthy of plenary indulgence. As you contemplate each station allow His love to enter more deeply into your spirit, and you will be the greater blessed.

Peace of Christ!

Introduction

To traditional literature there is always a beginning, a middle, and an end. In drama this form takes five parts: the Exposition (or introduction), Complication (or rising action), Climax (the high point and turning point), Falling Action, and Resolution. Action begins, rises to a climax, and falls from there to a conclusion. Our five acts here represent this dramatic movement, and within each act there is a sense of this structure as well.

It should be noted that the Stations themselves begin at the high point, the climactic moment of Christ's Passion. (Jesus' Condemnation coincides with the Crowning with Thorns, the third or climactic mystery of the Sorrowful Mysteries, which also address the Passion of the Lord.) They therefore focus on the Falling Action and Resolution, the second half of the Passion, from the time our King is condemned until He is laid in the tomb, dead. (The Resurrection represents a kind of epilogue, though part of the drama itself.)

Each scene/station has two pages. The first is a poem of four stanzas, four lines each. The rhyme scheme varies, but in each stanza every line rhymes with one other (two pairs). The second page also has sixteen rhymed lines - in two paragraphs; a four-line poetic summation; and a parenthetical explanation of the drama.

A

Act One:

IT BEGINS

- 1. Jesus Is Condemned to Death**
- 2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross**
- 3. Jesus Falls the First Time**

Jesus is condemned for our sins, He carries the weight of them... and He falls under that weight. This is all really one movement, one act of the will - and here with this act His Stations begin.

II. Stations of the Cross

The First Station:

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

A crown of thorns upon His head,
Our Blessed Lord is condemned to death.
Christ's blood called down upon Israel,
Pilate washes his hands of guilt.

And so Jesus takes our sins upon Himself
As He stands in our stead.
What hope would we have of life
If He did not suffer and die?

And so, as blood pours down His face,
He is led out to the Skull place.
Graciously He accepts all in love,
His heart ever turned to Heaven above.

There He would lead us if we would but follow;
Our souls, too, He would see hallowed.
But who can bear His holiness -
Who is flesh of His flesh?

The Lord is condemned for our sins; here indeed it begins. Here at the climax of His Passion, all is set for His destruction. The die is cast, there is no turning back - He will walk along this path that leads to certain death.

O King, our King! Why is it we have done this thing? How could we have been so heartless, to leave the Son of God so helpless. You are Lord, in majesty wrought, yet our punishment you have bought. The price of a murderer you must pay, though life is born in you each day.

Here in silence

Jesus hears His sentence -
a Lamb led to slaughter He will be
to set our tortured souls free.

(The condemnation of the Lord is present throughout the Stations. It sets His path to death in motion, and keeps it in motion - from crucifixion He will not escape. Like a stone rolled down a mountain, He will not stop till He reaches bottom.)

II. Stations of the Cross

**The Second Station:
JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS**

The Cross is made of the weight of our sins;
For our sake Jesus takes it upon Himself.
Now the walk of death begins -
Only His suffering will bring us health.

When the Word was made flesh, the suffering
was born:

Flesh itself is a burden He bears.
And the burden is fulfilled this dreadful morn -
Like a millstone is this Cross on His shoulders.

He will not lay it down until the end,
Until He has been ground by its full weight,
Until nothing is left of the man...
Our sins must be carried without respite.

He is a worm and no man,
A slave for the lost and fallen.
And so He lifts us in His hands
That we should no longer be forsaken.

The Cross He has longed to bear for us, and so now, like a friend, He lifts it up and places it gently upon His shoulder, like a lamb that has wandered from its pasture. And though it digs into His skin, though it causes blood to pour from Him, yet no hesitation does He show - He willingly bears this torturous yoke.

My Lord, how can you be so strong? How can you suffer all our wrongs? All the world is upon you now, and yet you do not seek to lay this burden down. Your sacrifice is beyond our understanding; your love exceeds all comprehension. How can we accept this offering you make? How shall we allow ourselves to be saved?

He reaches down and lifts us up,
and cradles us in arms of love.
Our sins He welcomes as a friend,
seeking only their blessed end.

(Throughout the Stations Jesus carries His Cross: this is what He has come to do, what the Passion is all about. And so at the center of this first part it stands, and in every part it shall remain.)

II. Stations of the Cross

The Third Station:

JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

For this, too, He has come,
And most specifically:
To fall helplessly to the ground,
To bruise and batter His sacred knees.

For we have not prayed;
We have not turned back to God.
And so to the dust He must be pummeled,
Suffering the punishment we bring upon
our heads.

Fall to the earth must this seed;
Planted with violence He must be.
His broken body, His lifeless corpse -
We shall be redeemed only at such cost.

How is it Almighty God does thus fall?
How can the invincible be without strength
Even to hold Himself up on His feet?
What is it but our sins that bring an end to all?

A. It Begins

He has come to fall, to be driven into the dust, His lifeless body standing no more, emptied of power by our lust. This is the sacrifice He must make; only this will cause us to wake and rise from our sin to shine once more - it is indeed His offering that opens the door.

O Lord, let us enter Heaven where you are. Let us stand without shame even as you fall. Let us accept this movement of your heart - from this seed planted in our earth, let us grow tall. For our faces are now flat to the ground; without your love we shall never be found within the heavenly gates as you desire, but end in the undying fire.

The body of a Man
is broken
and so falls to the earth,
thus bringing all souls new birth.

(Here, too, it begins, for this is really why He came: to fall. Not to stand and shout of our sinful ways, but to be emptied of all silently for our sakes. Ever He falls; His divine flesh and bone meet our earth - indeed to this we drive Him, and freely He is driven down, to the lowest place.)

B

Act Two:

ALONG THE WAY

- 4. Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother**
- 5. Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross**
- 6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus**

Three souls meet the Lord along the way of the Cross: His Mother, the archetype of the Church, the first of Saints and so pioneer for us all; Simon, the prototypical Christian man who selflessly bears the burden of the Cross with our Lord, not afraid to die, to lay down His life, to toil and sweat for the good of all; and Veronica, the prototypical Christian woman, she of compassion and love who cannot resist coming to the aid of the One in need, giving herself entirely in His service, and so in the service of all.

Let us join with them.

**The Fourth Station:
JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER**

She is first to meet Him along the way;
She must be first to accompany Him,
First to join with Him...
To bear His Cross on this dark day.

For she is first of all the Saints,
The human closest to our divine Lord.
He indeed is her Son,
And none of us could bear what she has borne.

The sword pierces her heart as it does His:
Her shoulders may as well be beneath
 the wood -
If they were, it would lighten her load,
Which is deeper certainly than this.

The sorrow she knows is especially her own,
Though she would share it with us all,
For it is the sorrow of her Son,
To whom she ever leads our souls.

II. Stations of the Cross

All souls must bear their cross with the Lord; all must meet Him along the way. But she must indeed be first of all, she who is Mother of Him who saves. It is only in her wake we follow; always in her shadow we stand. For as the Cross is raised, its shadow forever finds her at His side.

O Mother, open the way for us to the Lord; may we be His companions on this journey, joining you under His blessed Cross - like you, ever praying upon our knees. You make a way of hope for us, that He shall not escape our poor souls. Though His sacrifice be unfathomable, by your intercession His blood makes us whole.

Beneath His Cross she ever waits;
At His side she always stays -
Before her no creature comes
To the blood of the only Son.

(Jesus climbs the Mount of Calvary, and along the way, as He rises, He finds souls who sympathize with Him. Are you there to see Him walk and help Him? Do you follow in the Blessed Mother's wake?)

**The Fifth Station:
SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY
HIS CROSS**

He falters; for our sake, He falters.
All He does He does for us,
And for our sake He falters.
And so we must help Him carry His Cross.

To carry His Cross is a blessing for us,
A sharing in His love.
Simon is a sign for all souls -
We must do as He does.

A man must lay down his life,
Must take up the Cross for God and others.
This call is a holy one come from Christ,
Who shows us thus the way to Heaven.

Shoulder your burden beside the Lord;
Relieve Him as His faltering bids.
The glory known under this weight
Will strengthen your wavering faith.

II. Stations of the Cross

Along the way He meets a man who is driven to help Him; and though he go reluctantly, soon the grace of this work he sees. For it is not Jesus who is being helped; rather, it is those who help Him. Though it seems we are being led to death, it is by His Cross our eyes are opened.

O Lord, what blessing to greet you thus along the way of your Cross! And what blessing it truly is to share in your holy sacrifice. You offer by your weakness to make us strong indeed. Though we be beset by blindness, by your love you set us free.

Jesus falters weakly along the way,
and so a man must share His place.
His shoulder to the heavy wood,
Renewed is he by Christ's blood.

(Here at the climax of the rising action we see most obviously how all souls are called to carry Christ's Cross after Him. Here the call is quite literal, quite physical, and is accomplished by one who stands, like Peter, as a sign of every man.)

**The Sixth Station:
VERONICA WIPES THE FACE
OF JESUS**

She is there without a fear,
Heart bleeding for her Savior.
Turn to Him resolutely she does
To relieve the pain He undergoes.

A woman without weakness
(Except for her soul's tears),
She moves toward Him through the crowd
to make her inspired round.

Every woman's heart has compassion
For the suffering she sees in others,
And here is she who leads all women
To the divine Son of Man.

Indeed, all souls must be as He is,
With love for every heart that beats;
And so with her cloth she seeks to assist Him,
To wipe the face that weeps and bleeds.

II. Stations of the Cross

What hope is there for the human race, if it does not match Jesus' tenderness? If compassion and love do not fill our souls, dead will we be forevermore. And so He invites us to look upon His face, to see what it means to bleed for others. And so she comes forward to touch Him, to answer this call to salvation.

Jesus, your wisdom knows no bounds: you know how to touch our hearts, which are as tombs. And it is a woman whom you touch easiest; to love as you she is the first. The imprint of your face be upon our souls; let us not forget the way we are called. Let us not fail to help all who bleed, like a kind woman looking upon a child in need.

She reaches tenderly out to Him,
touching His face with the cloth in her hand.
His blood He freely gives to all,
so she takes it deeply into her soul.

(The compassion to which all are called by the Passion of our Lord is here fulfilled along the way by the kind Veronica. A woman of women is she, showing us all how we should be - of the love of Christ, heeding His call... revealing His blessed face to all.)

C

Act Three:

WHY HE CAME

- 7. Jesus Falls the Second Time**
- 8. Jesus Comforts the Women
of Jerusalem**
- 9. Jesus Falls the Third Time**

At the climax of His Stations our Savior falls; at the high point of the drama He lies upon the ground. But from this place, devoid of strength, He lifts His head to look upon His children, and invoke the cleansing of our sins.

II. Stations of the Cross

The Seventh Station:

JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

Repeatedly He falls;
To the ground He is drawn
By weariness and the blows upon Him,
His face pressed to the earth by sin.

It becomes His home,
This stone cold earth,
This rock that tears His skin...
Here is played out our bloody rebirth.

Again and again He is driven down.
Though ever He rises to stand,
Though unwaveringly He seeks to walk...
He can but fall under the weight of the Cross.

The wood makes its place beside Him
As He lies bruised and battered and torn.
Yet He readily embraces us,
Even as we continually abuse His love.

C. Why He Came

Sin, our sin, has caused Him this fall, and causes Him to repeatedly fall. We are unwavering in our commitment to iniquity, but He is more resolute in His suffering. Here the battle is fought for our souls; here our mighty warrior goes forth. Broken and beaten He triumphs: though His body lies prostrate, He rises.

O Lord, why do you fight this battle for us who are your main opponent? Do we not side more readily with Satan? How can we merit such love? Epic is the struggle you undertake - here our very lives are at stake. Though it is you who endure the blows, the refreshment is brought to our bones.

To the ground He falls, He falls,
seemingly to rise no more.
But again and again He lifts Himself up
that He might drink more from this cup.

(The climax of the drama is upon us, and where is our Savior but on the ground. All this He suffers for our sakes to win the battle for our immortal souls. He shall not give up... and the devil shall be defeated, even by this sacrifice He makes.)

**The Eighth Station:
JESUS COMFORTS THE WOMEN
OF JERUSALEM**

The Church cries for the Lord,
Cries out to the Lord
For all the pain and suffering
He undergoes in her name.

He turns to her in His agony,
He lifts Himself up from the ground
To look upon her in her misery,
To comfort her in her tears.

He forgets Himself entirely,
Forgets His torn skin
And the nails that await Him...
He wishes only her sorrow to ease.

Thus would He grant forgiveness,
Thus would He wash us clean,
By offering His tears for our sadness -
O the gaze of our crowned and merciful King!

C. Why He Came

The women of Jerusalem are the Church in its sorrow, in its sorrow for our sin and the suffering we cause Him - seeking relief, before Him we bow. And though He be driven to the dust, though upon the ground He does lie, yet for our sakes He lifts Himself up to shine upon us the light of His face.

O Jesus, your compassion is endless; your desire for our salvation knows no bounds. And so you lift yourself from the ground to minister to our needs. Our need is for you, dear Savior, for you and for your blood, to wash us clean by your favor, to shelter us from the blows of this world.

As blood flows down
from His pierced and battered brow,
He looks with pity upon tearful souls...
and comforts us with a word
from His blessed mouth.

(Here is the climax of our drama, the high point of our action - Jesus raising Himself from the ground to look with pity upon troubled man, to forgive him, to redeem him from his slavery to sin... that he and his children might live again, despite the encroaching darkness.)

II. Stations of the Cross

The Ninth Station:

JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

Now He falls once again,
And for the final time.
From where He lies upon the ground,
Of His own power He shall not rise.

Now the fall is complete;
Now all strength is taken from Him...
And all that is left is His crucifixion -
All that awaits is our darkest deed.

He can walk no more,
And so He will be forced along
The final few feet to the wood,
To the hammer and nails in human hands.

It is over! It is over!
And the end is upon us all.
The darkness closes in on our souls,
For weakness overtakes our Lord.

There is no rising now, at least from this stony ground; for comes the devil's hour, and He lies prostrate without a sound. Who shall save us now that our Victor is without strength? What shall become of our souls now that He is at the door of death?

You are our only hope, dear Lord, but your beaten flesh and bone lie motionless; your blood upon the earth is poured, and so we are defenseless. But this is not the end, we know, though darkness quickly approaches. Though the shout of victory is in the devil's throat, upon it he shall soon choke.

His face flat now to the dust,
the laughter rises
as the whip falls -
He shall rise no more.

(The climax is ended, the fall becomes complete... and Satan's hour draws nigh. Now alone it is left for Him to be dragged to His crucifixion. Utterly without strength anymore, He shall submit Himself to such a call.)

D

Act Four:

THE HOUR HAS COME

10. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

11. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

12. Jesus Dies on the Cross

His fleece sheered, nails through His hands and feet, He is fixed to the tree... and dies for our sins. This is the hour of Triumph. What seems the devil's victory, this hour when darkness reigns, shall be turned back upon him - by it the Lord shall prove His ultimate power and strength.

Note: as this drama of the Passion is one of the fall of our Lord, it is appropriate that the significant action takes place in this fourth part, the falling action.

**The Tenth Station:
JESUS IS STRIPPED
OF HIS GARMENTS**

Yes, now the hour has come,
And so the sacrifice must be prepared.
Now the struggle is done,
and He must but endure till the end.

First there is humiliation,
As the sheep led to the slaughter
Is sheered of its wool by the hands of men
And made to stand naked, exposed to all.

O how the Lamb of God
Subjects Himself to our corrupt plans!
O how He gives up all
To save these very murderous men!

Is there nothing He will spare?
Will He be stripped of everything for our sakes?
Four ways His garments are shared
That we might all be clothed in His grace.

II. Stations of the Cross

Everything He has He gives away, including His divine majesty. He stands naked for our sake, that from sin's possession we might be set free. Let all be cast to the wind; let poverty be His only friend. And let us follow in His wake, giving all for others' sake.

Lord Jesus, of even your clothes you are stripped bare, that your abundant life we might share. Nothing you retain of this world, that to Heaven we might join our souls. All that is of the flesh help us disdain; let no concupiscence remain. A white wedding garment let us find, enrobed in your heavenly flesh till the end of time.

He has no clothes! He has no clothes!
His dignity they would take.
But all this He bears for our souls -
The Lamb surrenders everything
for our sake.

(Yes, the Lamb is led to slaughter; with violence they strip Him of His clothes. But He submits, though the Cross is near, holding back nothing from the greed of man. Let them cast lots for what He owns; still He shall love every soul. Thus will the devil's plan come to naught.)

The Eleventh Station:
JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

The innocent Lamb is fixed to a tree,
Crucified for our sins.
His blood pours down upon our souls
To sanctify us, to make us whole.

Yes, such torture He must bear,
For such punishment we do merit.
In absolute pain He atones for us -
We shall only be forgiven by His Cross.

Call His blood upon you, my brother;
Stand at His feet with John and His Mother.
Share in this sacrifice so pure...
His ultimate love we must all endure.

Here is the way that leads to Heaven;
This is the ladder by which we climb.
This pierced offering is the leaven
That causes our poor souls to rise.

II. Stations of the Cross

The iron nails through His hands, through His feet, hold Him now to the wood. From this place upon the tree, He cannot move. How will He reach out to heal our disease? How will He run to comfort us in distress? It is our will that He be thus stilled, and so it is our own heart we pierce with a sword.

Why do we seek to kill you, Lord? Why do we crucify your love? Why do we assist the devil in this his darkest deed - wherefore the reveling in this empty triumph? For God and His love we cannot kill; He will long for us despite all. We can only destroy our own soul by a sin that turns from His call.

The slaughter is accomplished;
the blood runs down the branches.
Will our roots be thereby nourished
by the sacrifice of this worm who is no man?

(Yes, the act is completed, the deed is done. What He was called to from birth He realizes as His arms are stretched out. And by this holy offering, all souls He would gather into the Father's love.)

The Twelfth Station:
JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Here He hangs, and dies,
Lifted upon the Cross on high.
His Spirit He commends into the Father's hands,
And so ends the life of the Son of Man.

He came among us to lead us to the Kingdom,
But who will listen to His desperate cry?
Do we not rather forsake Him
And leave Him alone to suffer and die?

No breath remaining in His lungs,
What more can He say?
No more blood coursing through His veins -
How can He move from where He is hung?

Now it is time for us to cry,
To beat our breasts, for our Savior has died.
For Him the travail is done,
But for us it has only begun.

II. Stations of the Cross

Our Savior completes His course; He does not come down from the Cross. He gives up His Spirit freely to the Father, entering into the deepest darkness. There is no life in Him who is Life. He through whom all is created has died. So, what hope is there for you and me, now that we have fixed Him to a tree?

O Lord, freedom you place in our hands, and we can but take up hammer and nails. Give us the obedience you display, or the sin we make will never leave this land. Help us to lay down our lives as Thou; under the mighty arm of God let us bow. May the blood from that arm touch our souls, before it dries and leaves us alone.

His cry rings out
and He bows His head;
now the only Son of God
is dead.

(The darkest hour has come upon this earth, and now we can but pray for new birth. Our only life, our only love, is gone - will we cry out as for an only Son? Or will His sacrifice we make vain: will we continue in our sin?)

E

Act Five:

WHAT FOLLOWS

- 13. Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross**
- 14. Jesus Is Laid in a Tomb**
- 15. Jesus Is Raised from the Dead**

What follows the sacrificial death of our Lord must necessarily proceed: He must be taken down from the tree and be buried in the cold earth, certainly. But He must also rise on the third day as He has said, for the devil cannot have the last word. For the love and life of the Lord is unconquerable, and what Satan has attempted has not succeeded - the Christ bears no ill will toward any soul... and He is perfectly obedient to the end.

II. Stations of the Cross

**The Thirteenth Station:
JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN
FROM THE CROSS**

The day is holy; He cannot stay there -
The Jews recognize this truth.
And so His lifeless body is removed
And carried to His waiting Mother.

Limbs dangle over men's backs,
Then dangle from Mary's sacred lap.
She holds Him in her broken heart,
Pierced as He by the lance's art.

But strong is the foundation she provides
For His body to lie upon.
Helpless as when a child,
He gives Himself over to her protection.

And she holds Him forth for us to see,
For us to carry within our own body -
This only Son of the human race,
Who redeems all men by His grace.

This should be graven into our minds, this image of the sorrowful Mother with her lifeless Son. Here upon her knees He lies, without breath - motionless. But she holds Him up and offers Him to us: here is the Savior of mankind, whose head falls back upon her arm.

O Lord, how is it you have fallen asleep? How is it there is no life in Thee? How could the Christ thus be killed? How could His body be so still? But you are He, our only hope, though your flesh be turned so cold. You must awake, my God, and walk again... O what have we done by our sin?

His flesh and bones are taken down
and draped across His Mother's lap.
She cradles Him and offers Him forth
to show the fruit of our acts.

(After He dies, He must indeed be taken down and laid in the ground... but first into the sacred earth of His Mother's arms, first to return to her womb - and first we must all see the dire results of our folly before His body they do bury.)

II. Stations of the Cross

**The Fourteenth Station:
JESUS IS LAID IN A TOMB**

In a cave He was born,
And in a cave He must be laid;
For He would enter the cold heart of man
And bring him to the light of a new day.

In this dead earth the broken seed is placed;
In the four walls of our hardened flesh
He makes His home.

To bring new life to our decaying bones,
He becomes one of our fallen race.

Even to death He does go;
Even the grave He makes His abode.
For even your soul and mine He would redeem,
Despite the gravity of our sin.

And so let Him make His home in you
That your stony heart might be made anew.
Let this Word of God within you grow,
That His eternal love you might know.

E. What Follows

He is carried by human arms to this resting place. Where else could we bring Him, we the fallen race? God has become one of us, and we can but show Him a stone tomb. Barren of any semblance of love, we make this our Savior's home.

And, Jesus, there you would be laid; the very darkness of our souls you would mine. You give yourself even to the depths of our sin, and your light we do thus shroud. But new life you will bring by this sacrifice: nourishment thus comes to our empty souls. We are born again by your holy presence in our hearts made of stone.

He is lowered to the depths;
in absolute darkness He takes His rest.
And the stone is secured that none
 may enter
into the tomb of our Savior.

(How much further could He sink? To our very depths He goes. Yes, in the darkness of the grave we leave Him alone, with no hope of seeing Him again. It seems His Passion's ended, that He is gone, and we are left abandoned.)

II. Stations of the Cross

The Fifteenth Station:

JESUS IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

Though the days before seemed the darkest,
Though the devil had appeared triumphant,
On this early morn eternal light shines -
The Lord our God is truly risen!

And so by this blessing it is proved
That by the Cross the devil is subdued.
Jesus Christ reigns supreme!
And into us new life is breathed.

By the Spirit the crucified is touched,
And He who was slain is given life by His love...
He indeed rises from the dead
To everlasting glory in Heaven.

And so we are made new, we are made whole,
Who cling to Him who ascends the throne.
All sin and death is banished by the Son,
For power over all is in His hands.

Run to Him, my brother, run to Him! O sister, keep watch at His tomb! For He shall not dash your hope of seeing His shining love. In this darkness He does not remain; in Heaven He has always been. And as He rises He takes you there - He has shouldered all your cares.

O Jesus, who are we to be so blessed, to glory in your holiness? How can we come to this vision of light - how can we share with you new life? For you have conquered even death: the devil's plans you have frustrated. With the full force of our sin He has attacked, but for love of us, you have driven him back.

The stone is rolled away
and the tomb is empty.
He is not here,
for truly He has risen from the dead!

(Here is the last act played out, revealing the power of our Lord and the victory He has won. As the light of this new day comes, we shall never be the same; for that power over death and the devil He shares with us - we are no longer fated for the grave.)

II. Stations of the Cross

This work was written after more than two years (now thirteen and counting) of daily Stations of the Cross prayed for plenary indulgence before Mass each morning. It is the fruit of this prayer.

May I recommend this practice to you?

III.

The Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Introduction

Is the Rosary just a prayer for elderly ladies before daily Mass? Are they the only ones who can mine the depths and blessings present therein? Can no one else meditate on the Gospel of Christ with His Mother?

Here indeed the Gospel, the life of Jesus, comes alive, is presented to our human minds; and here indeed Our Lady accompanies us on this journey. The events of the life of our blessed Lord are indeed worthy of contemplation by any soul who treasures his salvation; and Mary - who gives birth to our Savior and whose faith surpasses that of any other member of our race - is a worthy guide for anyone who considers himself a disciple of Christ. If we cannot humble ourselves to be led by her, we shall not discover the glory to which she leads.

God has come to us through this Virgin; it is only just that we go to Him through her. Allow yourself to be guided by her wisdom and enter into the profound experience of the Son of God she knows. Here in the Rosary the faith becomes real to all who give themselves to its graces. And prayed with family or a prayer group or before the Blessed Sacrament, it serves as an act able to bring a soul to the eternal fruits of Heaven.

The Four Mysteries

A. THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation
5. The Finding in the Temple

B. THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Baptism of Jesus
2. Jesus' Self-Manifestation
at the Wedding of Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

C. THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion

D. THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption
5. The Coronation

Prefatory Note

Much like the Stations of the Cross reflected upon previously, this meditation on the Most Holy Rosary is conceived according to traditional dramatic structure: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution - each set of mysteries representing one of the first four acts. In order to complete the drama that is our salvation in Jesus Christ, an epilogue, a fifth act, has been added consisting of meditations on Church history.

In addition, the (two-page, rhyming) format of the Stations is present here, too, with the Rosary.

A. THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

The five Joyful Mysteries are obviously the opening act in the drama of the Rosary. They introduce us to Jesus, who is Himself our salvation. His birth is the central scene, of course; and this first act begins appropriately enough with the annunciation of His birth, His conception in the womb of His Mother... and ends with Him as a boy looking to begin His ministry in the temple.

There is one significant note to be made, however: though these mysteries be joyful, each has its distinct sorrow or pain for the Lord's Blessed Mother (and certainly for Jesus Himself - for He comes from the presence of the Father to be with us on this soiled earth). From the fear the Virgin experiences at the angel's appearance, to the arduous journey she must make to visit her sister in the hill country, to the trials of childbirth in a cave (not to mention her more arduous travel to Bethlehem), to Simeon's prophecy that a sword will pierce her heart, to the anguish of separation from her Son - and the words He speaks that so perplex her soul... Mary knows indeed the bitterness and sorrow that undercut and prepare the heart for the true joy of salvation in her Son, our Lord.

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The First Joyful Mystery:
THE ANNUNCIATION**

O Mary, you will be the one
To bring to us the only Son,
If only you accept the Word
Delivered by the Angel of God.

Have no doubt now in your heart,
You who were ordained from the beginning
of time
To bear the only Son of God
For the salvation of mankind.

Your kinswoman has in her late years
Conceived a child in her womb;
Your prayer has thus been answered -
Please, now answer the Angel's call.

He shall be born! It is so!
For she has said, "Let it be done."
No more questions in her soul,
Victory over death shall indeed be won.

He will sit upon the throne: He is the true Son of David. In Him the Father's will is done; by Him alone men are saved. And you shall carry Him, Virgin Mary, though having made a vow most solemn. Your word shall not hereby be broken - it is by the Spirit you will conceive.

And all will come to adore your Son, the Messiah, our King. And though you too shall bow before Him, it is you His favor is upon. And so the Angel sings her praises; so he greets her royally. For her Son is Ruler of the ages: free of sin and full of grace is she.

The Angel appears to the Virgin;
he speaks astounding words to her heart.
But she accepts this heavy burden,
bowing to the will of God.

(Yes, here it begins: the coming of the Savior is announced to the Virgin. What has been awaited for all ages, what has been prophesied, is upon us now in the womb of this obedient child.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Second Joyful Mystery:

THE VISITATION

In haste she travels to meet her cousin,
To behold the miracle for which she prayed -
To be with Elizabeth in her blessing,
And her own blessing to proclaim.

Here comes the handmaid of the LORD
Over the hills in arduous journey;
But no pain does she know,
For all is joy now that Jesus is near.

Elizabeth she finds sequestered,
Hidden in her room, the curtains drawn.
She wishes not to risk losing the gift within her,
And so she lies in her bed alone.

But Mary comes bringing faith and joy,
as her voice stirs Elizabeth's son.
With love she opens the curtains
To let in the light of a new day.

A. Joyful Mysteries

Yes, she comes now as the first apostle, bearing the Word of God to the covenant of old. And so, from a seemingly lifeless womb, a prophet of God shall be born. Mary, it is your voice that brings John to life, you who proclaim the salvation of your Son. And so the voice in the wilderness does arise; so the will of God shall be done.

Over such blessing you proclaim your Magnificat: your soul greatly glorifies the LORD. You are the humble servant who carries the light of God to all. The promise of Israel shall now be fulfilled. Though it seemed the nation had become a whitewashed tomb, it will be redeemed by this Son of David, and declare to the ends of the earth God's holy Kingdom.

Across stone hills her feet do tread
to bring to her sister the Son of God.
It is she who opens the curtains of time
to let in the rays of divine life.

(Should not all generations call her blessed? Does she not bear the Son of God? Does her voice not make your heart leap up as well? If not, you cannot call yourself God's child. Here the Word of God first goes forth into the darkness of this world.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Third Joyful Mystery:

THE NATIVITY

To Bethlehem next she must travel,
Heavy-laden with the Son of God.
And there in the town of God's bread,
She shall give birth in a cave.

There is no room in any inn,
For He does not fit into the census of men.
So she must lie down in this dark place
Where only animals find themselves safe.

But there the quiet light does shine;
There the Spirit is present in time.
There a Son is brought forth
Who is the salvation of all the earth.

In a manger He is laid,
Food for souls who desire such Bread.
Of Him we shall eat until the end of time,
When we join Him with the Father on high.

He is born. The Word becomes flesh, becomes man. God visits His people, becoming one of them... and now our eyes behold Him. Through all ages we waited for you, dear Lord, and now you come to us hidden and poor. How could you be as humble as this? How could you enter so quietly into our midst?

The blind expect a royal entry, trumpets blaring and cannons flaring. But you come to us meekly, beside a beast of burden neighing. Only the LORD knows how humble He is, how silently He speaks to those who listen. We must open our hearts to such pure sacrifice, to know the radiant Word of God among us.

He reaches out and touches her cheek
as He lies in a manger so meek.
Yes, He has come into the world -
a Child is born, the Son of God!

(And the angels sing and the shepherds tremble... all heaven and earth declare His arrival. And soon the kings of the earth shall bow down before this humble Son of Man. He is born unto us this day. Alleluia!)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The Fourth Joyful Mystery:
THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS**

Light comes to the temple:

The Blessed Virgin carries her Son
to this house.

And there the prophet declares Him glorious;
There fulfillment of God's promise is foretold.

His heart will be pierced by a lance
And cause the rise and fall of many:
Only by Him will any be saved,
Even as others are condemned.

Here is the Child who brings the old prophet
peace;
In Him all faithful souls find rest.
Though with His Mother we too be pierced,
Our lives will be preserved from the final test.

Here is the source of all men's rejoicing
Now come into the house ordained by God.
Through Him all find blessing,
The life of the world to come.

Two turtledoves are offered by Joseph in the place of Mary and her Son; their blood is a sign of the sacrifice the prophet sees on the horizon. Your eyes are opened, dear Simeon. A light now dawns upon your aged mind; and you cannot but take Him in your arms and declare His glory to all mankind.

A sword shall pierce Him as surely as the knife that cuts the two turtledoves. This to His Mother you confide, for she shares wholly in His sacrificial love. Now all Christians are made ready to die with this saint, and all should be so ready to proclaim the LORD's praise. The Son dwells here in the Church of God, the light that illumines its walls.

She enters the portal
and hands Him to the prophet -
here is the answer to a call,
the first offering of our Lord.

(Jesus subjects Himself to the Church on earth; He does not eschew the laws of the temple but these He fulfills. By giving Himself over to religion's ways, He sanctifies the temple in humility. Come to the House of God and find His light shining in its Tabernacle.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The Fifth Joyful Mystery:
THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE**

Where is Jesus? Where is our Son?
Is He not among the caravan?
We cannot find Him any place,
And now we have journeyed a day.

We must return to Jerusalem;
He must have been left behind.
Where are you now, my Son?
I fear that I have lost Him.

Everywhere we have searched,
But He is nowhere to be found.
Let us approach the inner court -
This is where we should have begun!

“Jesus!” she cries, as she hears His voice
And sees Him sitting among the teachers.
They nod to the guard to let her pass,
And she falls to her knees before Him
in tears.

He touches her cheek and speaks reassuringly: this is where I must be. But there is something she does not yet see. Joseph, take Him by the hand and lead Him from there. His time is not near, and this is not the temple where He shall remain.

O Mary, you are the House where the Lord makes His home - do you not see that you always hold Him? Never are you separated from your Son; rather, it is through you all souls are led to Him. Perhaps she knew in her heart where He was: amongst those who will call for His crucifixion. Perhaps His death she saw imminent... but His time had not yet come.

Woman, what care I for your concern?
the guard speaks to Jesus' fretful Mother.
But she will not be kept from her Son -
she carries Him always within her.

(In the Temple Jesus always dwells, in His Church, born of His Mother. No more separated than she are any of Her children - always we carry Him in us. And the sacrifice we too must make will find its time... but never apart from our Mother.)

B. THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

These mysteries of Jesus' ministry are indeed mysteries of light, but also of turning, of conversion, of change... holy, blessed change. They begin with the most dramatic of changes, Baptism, wherein man is transformed from a sinful member of a rebellious race into a child of God. Jesus leads us to this change, making the waters of Baptism pure for us who could not make them pure ourselves.

At the wedding at Cana, of course, Jesus turns the water into wine, His first public miracle and a sign of His power and Kingship. He thus not only presages His final miracle at the Last Supper, but also indicates the manner in which He changes the water of our being, of our human nature, into the wine of Heaven, that we may be wed unto Him as sons of the Father.

Next, the Kingdom to come is proclaimed by our Lord, who brings His Kingdom to us. The message of the Kingdom is to repent, to convert, to turn from our sinful ways to the ways of Heaven... to take up our cross, to die to self, that we might live unto God and His will, and so His glory.

Jesus is then transfigured before the eyes of the principal apostles. The glory to come is revealed to them while they are still this side of the death they must undergo. Here the light of

B. Luminous Mysteries

Heaven shines as Jesus shows Himself in glorified form. His divinity is made apparent even in His humanity.

Finally, the Lord invokes the blessing of the Father over the gifts of the table, of the altar, and they are thus made into His own Body and Blood. Here is the Sacrament that feeds poor mortals with the food of Heaven. Here is our means of turning day to day to the LORD of all, of becoming as His own flesh and bone.

O that we might all turn to God
and know His glory, His wonderful light!

(A note re the drama: these mysteries of Jesus' ministry represent the rising action; for all His teaching and healing, all His work here on earth, leads to His Passion - the climax of our drama.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The First Luminous Mystery:
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS**

Jesus is baptized in the Jordan by John,
And so new life comes by the only Son
To these corrupted waters we are,
That we might stand again with our God.

Death is all around in this world of sin,
But through Jesus new life does begin
To shine with a light from above...
The Holy Spirit now brings us His love.

Let all be baptized with Him.
Let all be anointed by His grace.
Salvation is withheld from no one:
All are invited to gaze upon the LORD's face!

But all else must be left behind;
All sin and division must be no more.
Entering these waters we die,
Then rise with the Spirit upon us like a dove.

B. Luminous Mysteries

Jesus is here prepared for His mission, subjecting Himself to the baptism of John. He has no need of this cleansing; all things He does for our sakes alone. Lord, to the waters you come, drawn by the will of the Father. Our sin in these waters you drown, that we might live in light forever.

The Father of all declares you blessed; the Spirit makes Himself known upon you. Here your anointing is clearly revealed, that all men might come to the truth. From here He will be driven into the desert that He might be further prepared. He will subject Himself to the temptations of the devil, but the flesh and the world hold no sway over God.

In the waters of the Jordan He is submerged
with all the sinners needing to be purged.
But upon Him alone the Spirit rests,
that He might meet every test.

(Here the waters are sanctified by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the first step of His mission - to prepare us a place for regeneration. Now He shall walk through this wilderness bringing light; to all faithful souls He bears new life.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The Second Luminous Mystery:
JESUS' SELF-MANIFESTATION
AT THE WEDDING OF CANA**

Jesus comes to the wedding feast
With His Mother and His brothers;
And when the wine runs out,
The servants approach Mary.

She turns to her Son
With the plea of the people -
But He seems to reject her concern...
Or is His time now here?

She had called Him from the temple when a boy,
For she was not ready for His hour.
But now she accepts the Cross as she says,
"Do whatever He tells you."

She prevails upon the Lord,
And so His work is begun:
His first miracle He performs,
And His disciples now put faith in Him.

What is this miracle we behold, this changing water into wine? Why to a wedding feast does Jesus come and here begin to let His light shine? Lord, is it not to a wedding feast you call us, to the Kingdom of God Most High? Would you not make us one with you, Jesus, that we might know eternal life?

Leave us not without drink to cheer us, to lead us on our way to you. Provide your blood this day in abundance, and to your call to the Cross we shall remain true. Brothers and sisters, come to the feast now; drink wine and milk at no price. Freely does salvation flow.... Let all hearts begin to sing and dance.

The jars are filled
according to His word,
and, when tasted,
reveal the power of the LORD.

(He comes to bring us light and blessing, even on this earth where we are still so human. For human is He, though divine, and to every soul He would impart His divinity, cost Him what it may. Open your eyes now and see.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Third Luminous Mystery:

**THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE KINGDOM**

The Kingdom of God is at hand;
Repent, and turn to the LORD's grace.
Leave aside your evil ways
And embrace the things of Heaven.

Now the Son walks confidently forth,
Openly preaching the Kingdom to come,
Healing all souls who come to Him
And the blessing of His Word.

This can be yours, too,
O faithless child.
You whose heart has been so hardened,
Listen to His unwavering truth.

There is a place in the Father's House,
Which now the only Son prepares.
He calls us to enter His presence,
To receive the gift He offers.

From town to town now Jesus travels, bearing the Word of truth. He speaks with the authority of God's temple, and every soul He serves to soothe. Heal us, O Lord, leave us not alone in this empty, dying world. Call us now to your Kingdom, where we will be whole.

And may your apostles be as faithful as you in bringing forth light to all hearts, that all might know the glory which awaits those who love as you. Hold to nothing of this earth, dear brother, for it is all passing away. Only God's Word lasts forever, and only Jesus illumines the way.

The light of truth
is spoken by the mouth
of the Savior who has come,
all souls to redeem.

(Here the light of the Gospel shines most clearly in the preaching of the Son and His call to salvation. But the Kingdom can only be attained by those who find their way in Him, turning from this sinful land to the promise of Heaven.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The Fourth Luminous Mystery:
THE TRANSFIGURATION**

To the mountain Jesus leads His three apostles,
And there He is transfigured before
their eyes.

Light shines from His face and His clothing -
Here we glimpse our glorified King.

He will have to come down from the mountain;
There is yet a Cross He must endure.
But before He dies He reveals the blessing
Which all His disciples will share with
their Lord.

On this mountain we would have Him stay
That we might behold His glory always.
But before we come to God's beloved Son,
His Cross we must make our own.

For this vision of light we thank the LORD,
For it serves to lead us forth in hope
Despite the impending darkness -
The voice from the cloud speaks of His grace.

Elijah and Moses converse with Him: all the Prophets and the Law have discourse with the Word. For it is from Him they receive their power - it is through the Christ they are fulfilled. O Jesus, Lord of all the ages, of Heaven and earth and all that fill them, holy art Thou alone... Let us be a tabernacle of your graces.

Your fearsome power how can men bear?
The light of your face how can we look upon?
The Father's voice how can we hear and still
remain standing? He lifts us up from our knees;
in compassion He comes to you and me. And
He confides to us the glory that awaits beyond
the suffering and the grave.

More brightly than the sun He shines;
Whiter than snow is His appearance.
This is God's beloved Son -
in Him let us make our home.

(Here in this fourth mystery of light, God's light shines most brightly for all eyes to behold by the witness of His three holy apostles. And so we are prepared for the Cross, having glimpsed the glory to which we are called.)

The Fifth Luminous Mystery:

**THE INSTITUTION
OF THE EUCHARIST**

On the night He was betrayed
He took bread,
and holding it in His hands
Offered it up to Heaven.

This is the Body He gives for us;
The cup is His holy Blood.
Here He offers Himself for our sins
That by His grace we might live again.

The sacrifice Jesus makes
Is sacramentally completed at this table.
He will now but have to endure His Passion -
The blows must yet come upon His skin.

But here He dies as He provides
The nourishment we require to live our lives
In Him and through Him with the Father,
Becoming flesh of His flesh, His very brothers.

Death must come to the only Son, a death He has been born to endure. Only this sacrificial offering will save man, and we receive its blessings at this altar. Jesus, how you think of us! For you have awaited this moment all your life. You are so filled with holy love, it is your desire to give us even yourself.

Pour out your blood upon us this day; let us eat of your Body and so be strengthened. Without your grace how would we find our way? We would be dead without this Sacrament. Do not hesitate to come to Him; it is for this He has died. Receive well what He has ordained to bring every faithful soul: new life.

Looking up to you, Father in Heaven,
He held the Bread aloft...
and so instituted the Blessed Sacrament
that nourishes us body and soul.

(The apostles at the table were first to taste of the death of Christ and the blessings it brings to the spirit of man. They knew the light of His sacrifice about to begin. Here His ministry is all but complete; now He is ready to die.)

C. THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

These are indeed the climactic mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary. Jesus came to die to redeem us from our sins, and here He accomplishes that mission. Here He suffers; here He is tortured. Here He is mocked and condemned in our place, and here He bears the heavy burden of our sins, even unto crucifixion.

Here is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; here in His suffering and death He indeed conquers sin and death and opens the gates of Heaven to all men. Here the devil is defeated and the Son of God emerges triumphant, laying down His life for our sake.

The Light came into the world, but men preferred darkness, and so the Light they vainly attempt to extinguish. But this Light is eternal - join yourself unto the graces offered through the Cross of Christ.

**The First Sorrowful Mystery:
THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN**

Jesus sweats blood as His apostles sleep;
For their sakes, He falls into the deep...
Into the arms of His captors He is thrown
For the sake of our redemption.

Because we abandon our Lord,
He is abandoned of all solace.
Because we leave Him alone in the Garden,
He must die for our sins.

Only an angel can comfort Him,
Can strengthen Him against the darkness ahead.
By betrayal He is now surrounded,
And only the Father brings consolation.

But this consolation, too, shall soon run,
As for our rebellion He is forsaken.
The only kiss He knows is from Judas' lips;
All human love is here eclipsed.

III. Most Holy Rosary

How our Lord is troubled by the coldness of our hearts. How He regrets that we do not stand at His side. For it shows the love we lack; it reveals that we have not God's light. O Jesus, to save us from such darkness, such darkness you endure. Here upon you the sun sets, and the devil happily enters.

We do not awaken despite your pleas; though you ask repeatedly, we cannot keep our eyes from closing - our hearts cannot keep from slumbering. And we seal our Savior's fate. O my brothers, our conversion will come too late to rescue Him from the path ahead, to preserve Him from the Cross and the abode of the dead.

Blood comes from His pores,
Covering Him head to toe.
Darkness indeed enters in,
the fruit of our unyielding sin.

(Here the Passion begins, with Jesus alone in the Garden. In a garden we have fallen; in a garden He commences our redemption. He would save us from His suffering... but our heads are too heavy, our eyes too blind... and so comes the devil with glee.)

**The Second Sorrowful Mystery:
THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR**

Jesus is beaten for our sakes;
Because of our sin His skin is flayed.
Because of the corruption of our flesh,
His is torn to pieces.

No mercy have these violent arms;
Yes, fierce bulls have surrounded Him.
They are only too happy to hear Him cry -
The wicked desire to see Him die.

For it is He who pricks the conscience of men,
He who calls us to live again.
But how can we curb our lust,
Which longs so to shed His blood?

We are but an adulterous lot,
And so our Savior is severely whipped...
In hopes that we will be satisfied,
He indeed lays down His life.

III. Most Holy Rosary

His back is laid bare, the lashes prepared.
Upon the stone His body is spread... He is now
in Satan's lair. But your heart is ready, O Lord,
for this pummeling; your desire is only to atone
for our sins. And so as the whips come down,
you take refuge in the Father's hands.

O Jesus, how can we look upon the
punishment you endure for us? How can we
stop the bleeding, cease the arms from their
mad flailing? He will appear a worm and no
man, after the cohort of soldiers is done. Barely
will His life be spared, only that He might suffer
more.

The stone is cold He leans upon;
the cords are biting as lion's teeth.
His flesh is cut till little remains -
But He will yet stand upon His feet.

(O what our concupiscence has wrought! Our
sins of the flesh take their toll on His own. But
our Lord endures all willingly, and will do much
more to set us free.)

**The Third Sorrowful Mystery:
THE CROWNING WITH THORNS**

Here He stands,
His body twisted and broken.
The crown He wears upon His head -
Our King is ready to be condemned.

Robed in purple our Savior waits
Beside the prince of this land;
And though His fate seems in Pilate's hands,
The truth is quite the opposite.

All is in the hands of the Father
And in the One He has sent.
Thus those who represent Him on this earth
Bear the greater guilt.

“His blood be upon us and upon our children!”
O how pregnant is the declaration they make!
For he has come to redeem all men,
And by these words they seal His fate.

III. Most Holy Rosary

This same blood shed in the Passion of our Lord is that which will save our souls. Though violence is all we have to offer, He returns only love. Jesus, you are our King, our Lord, our Savior! Though here you seem a worm and no man, all shall know your power who recognize their sin.

Your Chosen lead us in this wounded path, and all the faithful follow - there must be true repentance by those who have crucified you. Here He stands in our stead: will we come to Him, calling down His holy blood that we might find a cleansing?

This is the moment
of decision -
now He shall be led to death,
to His crucifixion.

(The very climax of salvation history is in this fateful moment: they have pressed the crown of thorns upon His head, and now He awaits condemnation. Our King stands patiently before this wicked mob... all humanity has come to rob the Son of His inheritance.)

**The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery:
THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS**

Now the weight is placed
Upon His waiting shoulders;
Now the path is set
That leads unto His death.

And though He stumbles several times,
Though He falls to the ground,
He ever rises
To walk this way again.

It seems unending the path He treads...
And He is helped along the way
Only that He might not fall short
Of the nails that impatiently wait.

Who cries out for His pain?
Who is there to endure a little with Him?
Do not all hearts turn away,
Unable to look upon their sin?

III. Most Holy Rosary

The iron weight of sin He bears, though He is completely innocent. He struggles along this rocky path surrounded by our faithless stares. Jesus, the wood digs into your skin; it seeks to break your back - there long furrows are ploughed, where grows redemption from our sin.

Another step you cannot take, yet you do go on; stretched now beyond your strength, you call on our hearts to wake. We are all dead, slumbering as He suffers, but perhaps our eyes shall somehow open at the sight of what He endures.

The wood finds a welcome place
on the shoulders of our Lord.
With our sins He will walk,
though to the stones they press His face.

(How can He bear such weight, brothers and sisters, the weight of all our sins? Not just yours, not just mine, but every fallen mortal. Here is the longest road known to man - though but several hundred yards, it spans all the darkness of the ages.)

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery:
THE CRUCIFIXION

Into the yawning darkness
For our sakes He sinks.
Death comes upon the Master of life,
Nails through His hands and feet.

Like the worst of criminals
He is crucified.
In the place of us worthless men,
He is pierced and dies.

These holes in His hands and feet
Will be windows unto Heaven.
But now they are marks of pain,
And our disgrace is disclosed for all to see.

The Lamb is here led to the slaughter;
His body is raised on high.
Let all eyes look upon their Savior,
And by this Cross come to new life.

III. Most Holy Rosary

What hope have we of salvation now that our Savior has been killed? Though darkness covers all the land, we shall be redeemed by God's will. O Lord, you will be raised, we know, but now the tomb encloses you. You are the Victim for our sins and had to suffer such punishment.

We are sorry, LORD, for what we have done; for we have murdered the only Son. The very life of God we have completely rejected. Cry out to Him, brothers and sisters. Though He is buried deep in the earth, He yet hears your sincere prayers, and will save you from all you suffer.

Nails through His hands and feet,
to the Cross the Savior is fixed.
And here He dies obediently -
the Son every soul forsakes.

(His Mother keeps vigil at His feet with John and Mary Magdalene, but only this remnant stays with Him of all that have declared His greatness. He is dead now.... Who will live with Him?)

D. THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

After death comes new life. After His murder, the revelation of His power. Here the love He has shared, the life He has laid down, bears the fruit of Heaven.

These Glorious Mysteries necessarily follow the death of the Lord, for they are inherent in it. His death ever leads to new life for all the faithful, all who discern the purpose of His sacrifice. Those of faith know that the blood Christ sheds is only for our salvation.

And so He is raised from the dead, that we might be raised from our sins. So He ascends into Heaven, carrying us with Him to His holy throne. So from there He sends the Holy Spirit upon us, even while here on earth, to lead us to the Kingdom where He remains. And so Our Lady is first to be raised with Him, preserved from all corruption; and so she is crowned Queen of Heaven... that we might have her intercession for our sakes complete, that to Jesus' side she might precede us and assist us on our way to reign eternally with our Lord and King.

III. Most Holy Rosary

The First Glorious Mystery:

THE RESURRECTION

He is risen! The light has come!
Take your refuge now in Him.
What the angels declare is true -
By God's hand the stone is removed.

He is not here; He goes to Heaven...
His body is no longer in this grave.
With faith in Jesus' resurrection,
Your immortal soul will be saved.

The devil is defeated, the Victory won;
All power is in the hands of the Son.
Sin and death hold sway no more,
For He is now the Sovereign Lord.

In this light of glory stand;
In His radiant presence remain.
He is alive who once was dead
And will cleanse you from your every stain.

D. Glorious Mysteries

Here is the Word we all seek: Jesus has won the Victory. Death no longer has dominion, for it is conquered by the only Son. Jesus, these walls could not contain you; in this stone you would not make your home. Nor would you see us here remain - you carry us to the Kingdom with you.

For our sin we deserved to die, but assuming our flesh you bring new life. And subjecting yourself even to death, you now grant us perfect health. All is now within our grasp; the stone before our heart has been rolled away. Be sure to receive the graces that come by the resurrection of the Christ.

Cry no more, Magdalene,
that your Lord is not present here.
He has risen as He said
to redeem all souls from the dead.

(Alleluia! He is risen! Our Lord has conquered the grave. What had to follow now comes to pass - here is a light that shall ever last. Take refuge in it and not the tomb, for it is the hope of man. Comes now the fruit of a blessed death; comes now the proof of God's love.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Second Glorious Mystery:

THE ASCENSION

He mounts His throne to shouts of joy,
A trumpet blast unto the Lord.
Our King ascends from our midst
To the glory of Heaven.

From our presence He takes His leave,
Though ever He remains here,
Watching over all our ways
And guiding us through these final days.

In Heaven He reigns with the Father;
Our flesh He brings there to be purified,
That we, too, the Kingdom might enter,
That we too might be glorified.

From His place He will send the Spirit -
He could not do so while here.
And so His love shall be in all and everywhere...
There is no escaping His holy Light.

He is King, and now it is revealed as He ascends unto Heaven. His place is at His Father's right hand, though flesh of our flesh He does remain. Jesus, you are always in God's Kingdom; you are always the Son Most High. But now you carry us with you to Heaven - now with you we know eternal life.

You need no witness of the angels, no declaration from the sons of men. Yet for our sake you have been humbled, and now rise to reign again. Jesus is LORD from before time; all was created in and through and for Him. But He became Man to redeem us, to draw us into God's presence by His love.

How the angels and saints celebrate!
All Creation rings with praise!
For our blessed Lord and Savior
returns now whence He came.

(Here is our hope - that He is in Heaven, this God who became Man for our sakes. For in all this the only purpose is that we might join Him where He is. The most majestic Lord on high is our very brother, and commits His glory to the salvation of men.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

**The Third Glorious Mystery:
THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Now falls that glorious light
Upon the apostles of Christ.
Now the Spirit shakes this House;
Now all souls are here aroused.

All proclaim the marvelous wonder
Of the redemption of our Savior.
Tongues of flame envelop all
Whose hearts are set on their holy LORD.

Now all the earth will be set on fire;
All mankind the Spirit inspires
To leave behind the things of this world
And cherish God's eternal love.

And now His Church is hereby born
To carry the Son's redemption forth.
The works of the LORD are manifold,
But all are one in the Spirit of God.

Jesus sends the Advocate as He has promised, and He will be with us till the end of the age. O Lord, how glorious you are, joining all souls to the living God! Your fire makes us one with Thee, and so we shall live eternally.

Your light upon us sets us free to walk in your favor endlessly. O Spirit, remain upon this House, that the Chosen may be ever blessed. Here is God's glory for us laid bare; here is His NAME written on our hearts. Be inspired by such grace, my friend, and serve among the laborers He sends.

All doubt by this Flame is extinguished;
all fear by this Wind is driven away.
And now stand God's holy children
prepared to proclaim His blessed Day.

(O the power of the Holy Spirit and His love!
Our souls are by Him infused with the light of
God above. Glory shines now in our midst, and
this flame cannot be quenched. It is this day for
which we have waited, for now God's work is
completed.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Fourth Glorious Mystery:

THE ASSUMPTION

She is taken up to Heaven,
Uncorrupted by this earth,
And beside Him takes her position,
Where she has been called since birth.

Our Lady was preserved from sin
By the provident will of God;
Immaculate she was conceived,
Thus to bear the only Son.

And now the favor upon her is fulfilled,
She who is full of grace.
What is pure enters Heaven freely,
Without need of purging flame.

O glorious Mother, to the Kingdom
 you precede us,
Blazing the path for simple souls
Who love so thoroughly Jesus the Lord
With your same obedience.

She can but be assumed into Heaven to reveal the LORD's eternal blessing. All holy souls shall one day reach there, but she must be first to enter. Mary, you are pure, ever Virgin; you carry your Savior ever in your womb. Thus never from Him can you be separated - at His right hand you stand within the Kingdom's gates.

O what favor is upon you! Never to know the purgatorial flames. O what grace with you remains - how your LORD has blessed you! She was kept from stain of sin, and drawn straight into Heaven. Immaculate in her birth, she is pure still in her death.

The angels carry her body and soul
over the heavenly threshold.

Not a moment after death is wasted
for she is the Virgin uncorrupted.

(Through Heaven's gates she precedes all men, for she is the Blessed Virgin. The Mother of the only Son is raised to His Kingdom by His grace. Nothing of the netherworld she knows, for this is no place for such a holy soul.)

III. Most Holy Rosary

The Fifth Glorious Mystery:

THE CORONATION

A crown she wears this blessed Day,
The Queen at the right hand of her Lord.
Her role as the new Eve here fulfilled,
She becomes Mother of all the holy.

She shares now fully in the light of the King,
And so her praises we do indeed sing;
For the glory that is hers in Heaven
Is beyond that known by any other human.

She is clothed in gold of Ophir,
Mary, whose bitter suffering is now sweet.
Jesus, her Son and every soul's Savior,
Lays the blessings of Heaven at her feet.

Yes, she is duly crowned
And intercedes for all with her Son.
All graces pass through her majestic hands -
She, the means by which all good comes to man.

D. Glorious Mysteries

Every generation shall call her blessed, all born of her as was her Son. Our Mother must indeed be honored, or the will of God is not done. O Mary, you bore the only begotten Savior; by you the LORD God has brought us such favor. And now the blessing upon you is made complete - let us but sit at your holy feet.

Look upon us this day, dear Mother, for you are Queen of Heaven and earth; accept all the gifts we offer - without your care they are nothing worth. She will lead you to glory, my brother, my sister, for beside the King of glory she stands. Consecrate your lives to her, and you will draw closer to the Son of Man.

As the angels lift her up,
Jesus crowns this blessed Saint
who bears new life into the world,
whose glory now mirrors His own.

(Here is the fulfillment of the glory the Lord has come to bring His children on earth. In His Mother it is first made apparent, but we shall follow as her sons. The Church now journeys to meet her, drawing all souls into the Kingdom on high. Pray for us, dear Queen, that we might indeed join you in the heavenly light.)

EPILOGUE:

Meditations on Church History

1. The Council at Jerusalem
2. The Dedication of St. John Lateran
3. The Call of St. Francis
4. The Visions at Fatima
5. The Second Coming
(and the Bride's Descent)

To complete contemplation on the drama of salvation wrought by Jesus and presented in the Most Holy Rosary, we add meditations on the history of the Church. They are to serve as a fifth act, which seems necessary after Pope St. John Paul II's promulgation of the Luminous Mysteries, for the Passion is salvation's climax and so should be the center of the drama.

When but three mysteries were prayed, there was a clear dramatic form (like a three-act play). With the introduction of the Luminous Mysteries, this form was altered. The author wondered at the time not only how this addition would effect the movement of the prayer, but also how new mysteries could arise after so many centuries. Where had they been before?

He found answer to the latter question in the final decade of the Joyful Mysteries, the Finding in the Temple, which directly precedes the

Mysteries of Light. These new mysteries on the ministry of our Lord seemed latent in the decade wherein Jesus would have begun His mission had He not been found in the temple, and removed from there, by His Mother. (Note that after Jesus' baptism by John, it is Mary who leads her Son to begin His ministry at Cana - commencing thus the Luminous Mysteries that now follow the Joyful.)

Considering this, the author found that there were potential meditations latent also in the final decade of the Glorious Mysteries. Our Blessed Mother is the image and embodiment of the Church, and her crowning in Heaven seems a clear foreshadowing of all God's children coming to their glorious reward. And so one asks: What of the Church? Does She not continue the work of salvation until its fulfillment at the Second Coming? And so ecclesial meditations were conceived, coming together in remarkable fashion on the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima, May 13, 2004.

The first reading for that Ordinary day described the first council at Jerusalem; the reading in the Office for the Ordinary day was of the descent of the New Jerusalem from Heaven at the Second Coming; and, of course, it was the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima. So three of the added meditations were present at that hour. The other two - the decade concerning the Dedication of St. John Lateran,

Epilogue

the mother church of Christendom (and seat of Peter); and the decade on St. Francis, the image of Christ, and his call from the Lord to rebuild His Church - soon fell into place.

Here are salient moments in the rich history of Catholicism, of Christendom: first, the council at Jerusalem confirms the apostles' and especially Peter's authority - the authority of the Church - and opens the grace of salvation freely to all; this declared openness of the Faith to Gentile as well as Jew brings with it persecution (from both Jews and Gentiles), but that persecution is ended and the spread of Christianity greatly facilitated by Constantine's acceptance of the Faith for the Roman Empire, signified in his bequeathal of St. John Lateran to the Church; a negative consequence of this wide acceptance is entanglement of the Church with worldly wealth and temporal power (including a proclivity to war), but St. Francis is called at the climax of these meditations to rebuild God's Church before it falls into utter ruin, to lead it back to the poverty of Christ; Our Lady then appears at Fatima (and elsewhere) to encourage all souls to remain with Christ, even as the end approaches; and, finally, the Lord Himself will return, fulfilling the glory of His Heavenly Bride.

And so we seek here to complete the mystery of salvation presented in the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The First Meditation:

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

The Church convenes
To resolve the question
Regarding the Gentiles
And their following the customs of Israel.

Here the first crisis is to be addressed:
Should men of all nations be circumcised?
And so it is to Jerusalem Paul travels,
Seeking word from the apostles of Christ.

There is no little controversy created -
The voices of those gathered are deeply divided,
Till Peter stands up and all become silent...
His pronouncement ends all argument.

For He is first of the blessed apostles,
To whom is given the keys of the Kingdom.
There shall be no burden placed on the Gentiles:
it is by grace all men are saved.

Epilogue

Here the authority of the Church is first made apparent; here is confirmed upon it the seal of the Spirit. God's House, the New Jerusalem, must always refer to Peter and the apostles. Do you hear, O Peter, the Lord's voice: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Are you ready now to heed His call and feed the sheep He has entrusted to thee?

You are the Rock upon which He builds, and so you must stand fast here at the foundation of the new Israel, wherein you are forever high priest. James will order written down what has been decided, but Peter is he who has decided, and gotten the Apostle a hearing. Here at this Council the administration of the Church begins.

He who was first called to the Gentiles
Now intercedes for their great Apostle.
And because He speaks, all listen,
For the Lord's authority rests on Him.

(The Gentiles have not to be circumcised; all are saved by the grace of Christ. And so the first controversy is settled, and the Church shall now go forth to every nation. But always here to its source it returns - one cannot build without a foundation.)

The Second Meditation:
THE DEDICATION
OF ST. JOHN LATERAN

The Church enduring severe persecution,
The LORD sends a sign
To the man who would be Emperor -
By this Cross he will conquer.

And so the enemies of the Church are
put down
And the Word of God accepted,
That all might know the love of the LORD
And the salvation wrought by His Son.

The See of Peter is established;
The Keys of the Kingdom come to rest
Here in St. John Lateran -
His Holiness sits upon this Throne.

Thus the City of God
Finds a place in the city of man.
And so by the grace of the LORD
His peace spreads throughout the land.

Epilogue

The blood of the martyrs has increased to the point of bursting. And so upon the Church the LORD takes pity, that He might preserve His wineskin. "By this sign, conquer"; Constantine, do you hear Him? Do you see the special mission to which the LORD calls you by His favor?

And the Cathedral of Christendom this king gives to the Church; the reign of the Lord is thus established on earth. The Empire now friendly to the Christ, His servants speak openly of His sacrifice. Peter gains the world's respect, and many souls come freely to the font of new life.

Let all be baptized
into Christ and His Church;
it is within these walls
the LORD deigns to dwell.

(To the ends of the earth let the Word go forth; let none be deprived of the blood of the Lord. He gives power to both Church and State to serve the evangelization of the world. All roads lead now to Rome - may all peoples enter His Temple.)

The Third Meditation:
THE CALL OF ST. FRANCIS

“Rebuild my Church,”
He hears from the Cross,
This saint who bears the wounds of Christ.
And he is obedient to this word.

In an age when the Church was in disarray,
At a time when holiness was wanting -
And eternally to remind all men -
The Lord called Francis along His way.

It is from the dust all men come,
And to this do they return:
To the poverty and humility of Jesus Himself
The great saint beckons all souls.

For in this, God’s glory is known;
In this is holy ecstasy.
And so this epitome of a Christian
Walks the narrow path that sets us free.

Epilogue

He gives up all to follow Christ; naked He stands before the world and God. The garments of the earth he happily sheds that he might embrace the abundant life. Francis, no man is as rich as you, for you follow your Savior in spirit and truth. His Cross you bear more perfectly than any man that has ever been.

His own Mother do you imitate in complete obedience to the will of the Lord and His way - you remain ever in His presence. And so, great miracles are worked in his life; and so with Christ's wounds the saint is marked. For upon the Cross he lives and dies, in love for every creature and for God.

On his knees before a cross he prays
in a church fallen into disrepair:
from here the Lord calls him to support
the Church upon his shoulders.

(St. Francis stands at the center of the Church in time and in holiness of life, calling all souls to Christ. It is from the Lord's side the Church is born, and to Him we must return. Be ever made in the image of Jesus.)

The Fourth Meditation:
THE VISIONS AT FATIMA

To three children she appeared -
Always by the eyes of children she is seen.
She came to call us to her Son
Before His glorious return.

O Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace,
Bearer of the Most Holy Rosary,
How shall we declare our thanks to you
Who care for each and every soul?

She would see all enter the Church
Of which she is indeed Mother.
And so she comes to call us to new birth,
To prayer and penance and love of neighbor.

In white she is clothed;
More brightly than the sun does she shine.
And none who witness the miracle
Can deny her touch upon their lives.

Epilogue

The end of the age is upon us, we know, as it has been since the death of our Lord. And so our Mother comes to call us home, that life in Heaven we might find. Dearest Mother, Our Lady, our Queen, how shall we have eyes to see thee as clearly as these children - how can vision of your loveliness come to fallen man?

O beautiful Lady, held aloft by the hand of God, alight upon our hearts this day, that we might hear the message come from above. Let us repent now, brothers and sisters; let us pray and join the suffering of Christ. For we know the time is short... the sun will soon fall from the sky.

Three children in a field
see a light from on high -
this radiant blessing returns repeatedly
to help us see with innocent eyes.

(The Blessed Mother appears at Fatima as she has throughout history, and continues even to this day. She shall remain as a constant reminder to walk in the way of her Son... until He comes.)

The Fifth Meditation:

**THE SECOND COMING
(AND THE BRIDE'S DESCENT)**

On the last Day He shall come,
When all our days have been fulfilled.
Then the New Jerusalem will descend
from above
And heavenly light shine in every soul.

Then there will be no mourning;
No more tears will we cry.
For our Savior will be with us for eternity,
And so forever we shall sing.

Caught up in the clouds we will be -
Life in the Spirit alone we shall live.
Transformed by light into glory,
Our hearts will be wed to Him.

Then there shall be feasting;
Then all will be dancing...
The foundation of the City firmly laid,
We shall enter its radiant gates.

Epilogue

Heaven and earth will disappear; rolled up like a scroll they will exist no more. The Word of God will reign among us in the Kingdom prepared by Jesus. O Lord, for your return make us ready, that your Church may stand with its head to the sky, and not in shame be cast from your presence to wail and grind our teeth in darkness.

Please let us sit at your table surrounded by the heavenly angels; with your saints let us take our place and rejoice forever in your grace. Even now that Kingdom is being built upon the foundation of the apostles: even now let us look to the coming of the Son, whose return will complete our salvation.

The sky is opened
and comes the Son of Man
with the heavenly angels -
it is the time of fulfillment
for the New Israel.

(There is nothing to consider beyond our Lord's return, for on that Day His Church will be renewed, will come to maturity in the Kingdom of God. He alone will be our light and we will be wed to Him on high. Alleluia!)

Final Note

I hope the writing contained herein has enhanced your meditations on Scripture, the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary, and that you have thus been encouraged to seek plenary indulgence for yourself and for the poor souls in Purgatory, even every day. May I request your prayers for my own soul when I have departed this earth? Thank you for your kindness to a brother in need.

Other Books by James Kurt

***Two Books: Paradox and the Christian Faith/Hippie Convert* –**

The apparent contradictions of the Faith are explained for those who seek wisdom; and a member of the flower generation addresses true love and peace, in poetic form. 238 pp. 2016. w/imprimatur.

***Christian Vision of the Old Testament* –**

Synopsis and exhortation; faith-filled overview of all books of the Old Testament as prefiguration of Jesus, with a focus on the prophetic nature of God's Word. 273 pp. 2013. w/ imprimatur.

***Blessed Guilt: A Universal Conversion Story* –**

On the life-giving repentance found in Jesus' blood; vaguely autobiographical but without particulars. 119 pp. 2013. w/ imprimatur.

***Chapters of the Gospels* –**

Exposition of the four gospels, chapter by chapter; in the style of *Our Daily Bread*. 114 pp. 2009. w/ imprimatur.

The Most Holy Trinity

***and The Four Corners of the Universe* –**

A collection of writings on the Trinity and its reflection in Creation; founded upon the Shema. 300 pp. 2008. w/ imprimatur.

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On the significance of the contemplative silence that is the NAME of God, and its application to a spiritual life. 260 pp. 2008. w/ imprimatur.

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A page of prayer to each saint on the General Roman Calendar for the United States. 230 pp. 2007. w/ imprimatur.

Our Daily Bread:

Exposition of the Readings of Catholic Mass -

A page of writing for every Mass of the liturgical calendar for Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite; reflections drawn from the readings themselves.

727 pp. 2004. w/ imprimatur.

Turn of the Jubilee Year: A Conversion Song -

Autobiographical depiction of vocation search through pilgrimage to Medjugorje and stays at a hermitage or two. 230 pp. 2004.

Songs for Children of Light:

Ten Albums of Lyrics -

A white on black conceptual work with simple drawings for each song. 150 pp. 2003.

silence in the city -

Short contemplative poems; moments of divine silence in the midst of city life. 148 pp. (74 pieces). 2003.

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