

St Matthew's Westminster



Spiritual Resources for Lent Week V

Sunday 21st March – Saturday 27th March 2021

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Introduction

In this fifth week of Lent the focus turns inexorably towards the forthcoming death and resurrection of Our Lord. Following his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus predicted his suffering, death, and Resurrection and prepared his disciples to believe in the salvation that his death would accomplish.

Using the metaphor of the grain of wheat, Jesus introduced the idea that out of his death, new life would emerge – not only for his own body but for all creation. He also taught that those who called themselves his disciples must follow his example of sacrifice. This theme was to be repeated in John's account of the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as an example of how they must serve one another.

In this most solemn of seasons, let us remember that the journey to the Cross is not one we make alone. We walk with one another, and we walk with Our Lord through the darkness, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.



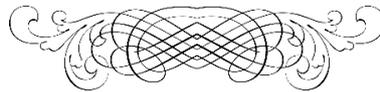
Reflection and Prayer for the Day

Sunday 21st March

Passion Sunday

I simply argue that the cross be raised again,
at the centre of the marketplace
as well as on the steeple of the church.
I am recovering the claim that
Jesus was not crucified
in a cathedral between two candles
but on a cross between two thieves;
on a town garbage heap;
at a crossroad of politics so cosmopolitan
that they had to write His title
in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek ...
and at the kind of place
where cynics talk smut,
and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble.
Because that is where he died,
And that is what he died about.
And that is where Christ's own ought to be,
And that is what church people ought to be about.

George Macleod (1895-1991), Founder of the Iona Community



In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me,
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

John Bowring (1792-1872)

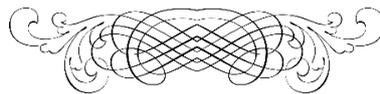
Monday 22nd March

Feria of Passiontide

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life - pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures - and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair.

Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not 'How am I to find God?' but 'How am I to let myself be found by him?' The question is not 'How am I to know God?' but 'How am I to let myself be known by God?' And, finally, the question is not 'How am I to love God?' but 'How am I to let myself be loved by God?' God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.

Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), The Return of the Prodigal Son



Almighty God grant all go well with thee.
Be an honour to the Church,
follow Christ's word,
clear in thy task and careful in thy speech.
Be thine an open hand, a merry heart.
Christ in thy mouth,
A life that all may know
a lover of righteousness and compassion.
Let none come to thee and go sad away.
Hope of the poor, and solace to the sad,
Go thou before God's people to God's realm,
that he who follows thee may come to the stars.
Sow living seeds,
words that are quick with life,
that faith may the harvest in human hearts.
In word and example
let thy light shine in the black dark
like the morning star.
Let not the wealth of the world nor its dominion
flatter thee into silence as to truth,
Nor king, nor judge, yea nor thy dearest friend
muzzle thy lips from righteousness

St Alcuin, writing to Ethelhard, Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 800

Tuesday 23rd March

Feria of Passiontide

Whether we really have found God's peace will be shown by how we deal with the sufferings that will come upon us. There are many Christians who do, indeed, kneel before the cross of Jesus Christ, and yet reject and struggle against every tribulation in their own lives.

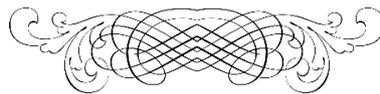
They believe they love the cross of Christ, and yet they hate that cross in their own lives. And so in truth they hate the cross of Jesus Christ as well, and in truth despise that cross and try by any means possible to escape it...

They have basically merely sought peace with the world, believing possibly that by means of the cross of Jesus Christ they might best come to terms with themselves and with all their questions, and thus find inner peace of the soul.

They have used the cross, but not loved it. They have sought peace for their own sake. But when tribulation comes, that peace quickly flees them. It was not peace with God, for they hated the tribulation God sends...

But those who love the cross of Jesus Christ, those who have genuinely found peace in it, now begin to love even the tribulations in their lives, and ultimately will be able to say with scripture, 'We also boast in our sufferings.'

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45), Meditations on the Cross



Eternal Light, shine into our hearts,
Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil,
Eternal Power, be our support,
Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of ignorance,
Eternal Pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind
and soul and strength
we may seek your face
and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

St Alcuin (c730-804)

Wednesday 24th March

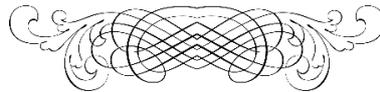
Oscar Romero

Archbishop Romero was the voice of the voiceless poor. A life lived out in El Salvador, a Roman Catholic country named after Christ the Saviour. A marksman's bullet killed him in the middle of Mass on March 24, 1980. No one was ever prosecuted.

When we struggle for human rights, for freedom, for dignity,
when we feel that it is a ministry of the church
to concern itself for those who are hungry, for those who have no schools,
for those who are deprived, we are not departing from God's promise.

He comes to free us from sin, and the church knows that sin's consequences
are all such injustices and abuses. The church knows it is saving the world when it
undertakes to speak also of such things.

St Oscar Romero (1917-80)



A Prayer of Commitment

Father

I abandon myself into your hands;
Do with me as you will.
Whatever you do, I thank you now.
I am ready for all, everything I accept,
If only your will be done in me
And in all your creatures;
I desire nothing else, my God.
Into your hands I commend my spirit;
I give you my soul
with all the love of my heart,
For I love you, my God, and so need to give,
To surrender myself into your hands
without measure
And with confidence beyond all questioning
Because you are my Father.

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)

Thursday 25th March
Annunciation of Our Lord

Universal Mother

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother' (St John 19. 26-27).

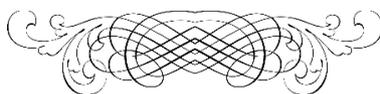
This encounter between Jesus and his mother is heart-breaking and tender. But one of the more unsettling aspects of John's presentation of the mother of Jesus is that the evangelist never uses her name. When she asks Jesus to intervene at the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus responds: 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come' (St John 2. 4). Now, from the cross, Jesus again calls her 'Woman.'

I can only imagine what my mother would have done had I addressed her as 'Woman'! Sulpician Father Raymond Brown, a noted biblical scholar, proposes that this was Jesus' polite term for addressing women, as evident elsewhere in the gospels.

Whatever Jesus' intent, we are struck at the distance the word creates. He does not use a term of endearment or of personal relationship. Rather, he identifies Mary by her biology: woman. In doing so, Jesus opens up the possibility for all women (and I would argue men as well) to find their place in this encounter. Those who stand on the verge of absolute grief, seemingly unredeemable suffering, and face an uncertain and frightening future are themselves standing as 'woman' or 'man' at the foot of the cross.

'Woman, here is your son' (St John 19. 26). Here, Jesus is not being self-referential. He is giving his mother a new son. Here, he is also giving a new mother to this disciple whom he loves. New relationships are being born from the experience of grief. Mary does not cease to be a mother at the death of her son. But she must now learn to be mother and woman in a new way.

Sister Laurie Brink, O.P.



Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of our death. Amen.

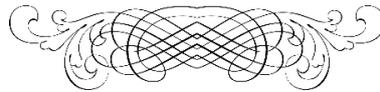
Friday 26th March

Harriet Monsell

Harriet Monsell (1811 – 1883) founded the Community of St John Baptist, an order of Augustinian nuns in the Church of England dedicated to social service, which by her death had expanded to numerous houses, including in India and the Americas. She was the first nun to take vows in the Church of England since the Reformation.

Human compassion, that most lovely of qualities, is the ability so to put yourself in someone else's place that you know a little what it must be like to go through their experience of suffering- and so love is drawn out of you ... Now what Passiontide does - what Good Friday does- is to invite us to open ourselves to the compassion of God. Not his anger, but his compassion: a God who from the cross begs us to be forgiven and to know ourselves accepted, valued and loved ... Ultimately, God will be seen to be what in Jesus he is declared to be: the one who by suffering alongside us reveals his passion and his compassion, and will at the end wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Michael Mayne (1929-2006), Dust that Dreams of Glory



A Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

Lord make us instruments of thy peace.
Where there is hatred let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled,
as to console; to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning
that we are pardoned, and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

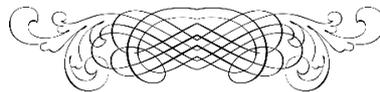
St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

Saturday 27th March

Feria of Passiontide

If I say that 'God exists', this is also not true. He is being beyond being: he is a nothingness beyond being. Therefore St Augustine says: 'The finest thing that we can say of God is to be silent concerning him from the wisdom of inner riches.' Be silent therefore, and do not chatter about God, for by chattering about him, you tell lies and commit a sin. If you wish to be perfect and without sin, then do not prattle about God. Also you should not wish to understand anything about God, for God is beyond all understanding. A master says: If I had a God that I could understand, I would not regard him as God. If you understand anything about him, then he is not in it, and by understanding something of him, you fall into ignorance ...

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)



A Prayer of Conversion

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend of all - the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

I would be faithful through each passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be strong to follow where He leads me;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

Howard Walter (1883-1918)

Reading for the Day

Sunday 21st March

Passion Sunday

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Hebrews 5.7-9

Monday 22nd March

Feria of Passiontide

When they kept on questioning him, Jesus straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

John 8.7-11

Tuesday 23rd March

Feria of Passiontide

Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me on the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily on the day when I call. Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment. You change them like clothing, and they pass away; but you are the same, and your years have no end.

The children of your servants shall live secure; their offspring shall be established in your presence.

Psalms 102.1-2, 25-28

Wednesday 24th March

Oscar Romero

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly

pardon. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 55.6-7, 12

Thursday 25th March

Annunciation of our Lord

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1.26-31, 37-38

Friday 26th March

Harriet Monsell

I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so I shall be saved from my enemies. In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Psalm 18.1-3, 6

Saturday 27th March

Feria of Passiontide

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever! Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Psalm 118.1, 19-23

Spiritual Communion

During this second national lockdown all public acts of worship have been suspended. This means that many people who would have received Holy Communion each Sunday, and some of them every day, are not able to receive the comfort and benefits of the sacrament.

This is a huge loss. However, it is not the first time that the Church has been in such a position. Throughout Christian history some Christian people have found themselves isolated from the sacramental life of the Church for all sorts of reasons, and particularly in times of plague, famine and warfare.

At such times the Church has encouraged people to make what is called a Spiritual Communion. It is a way of uniting yourself with Jesus and entering into communion with him even though you are not able to receive the sacrament itself.

The prayer that follows draws on the story of the woman who comes to Jesus but only touches the hem of his garment. She still receives healing and blessing (See St Mark 5. 25-34). In a way, spiritual communion is like this. We are not able to receive the sacramental bread and wine. But in a spiritual communion we still come to Jesus and he still receives us.

Act of Spiritual Reception

O loving God, in union with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Eucharist, hearing your holy Word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood of your dear Son, I offer you praise and thanksgiving.

Even though I am exiled from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Life I pray that you will unite me with all the baptised and with your Son who gave his life for us.

Come Lord Jesus, dwell in me and send your Holy Spirit that I may be filled with your presence.

The Angelus

for which the church bell rings out daily at the beginning of the day, at noon, and at the start of evening, recalling the centrality of the Incarnation.

The angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary:
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessèd art thou among women, and blessèd is the
fruit of thy womb Jesus.

**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death.**

Behold, the handmaid of the Lord:
be it unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessèd art thou among women, and blessèd is the
fruit of thy womb Jesus.

**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death.**

And the Word was made flesh:
and dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessèd art thou among women, and blessèd is the
fruit of thy womb Jesus.

**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death.**

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God:
that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Almighty God, pour thy grace into our hearts;
that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ
by the message of an angel, so by his ✠ Cross and Passion
we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection;
through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Simple Form of Morning Prayer

Opening Sentences

✠ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O Lord, open our lips;
and we shall praise your name.

Let your ways be known upon earth,
your saving help among the nations.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Banish, O Lord, all darkness from our hearts and minds,
through Christ, the Dayspring from on high,
who fulfilled your ancient promise
that we should find our freedom in your peace;
for all ages belong to you,
yesterday, today and for ever. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Taken from the daily readings found on pages [10-11](#)

The Gospel Canticle | Benedictus

Refrain: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.

✠ Blessèd be the Lord, the God of Israel:
who has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant, David.
Through his holy prophets, God promised of old
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us;
to show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father, Abraham,
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight, all the days of our life.
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.

Prayers

- Give thanks for a new day, for all God's blessings.
- Pray for those we will encounter today, and those far from us.
- Pray for the blessing of peace for all nations and people.
- Pray that our time may be consecrated by the presence of Christ.

Collects

Lent 5 Passiontide

Holy God,
in the Saviour's cross
your boundless love meets human sin:
strengthen and deliver us
that we may know the victory is ours
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Morning Collect

Almighty and everlasting God,
we thank you that you have brought us safely
to the beginning of this day.
Keep us from falling into sin
or running into danger,
order us in all our doings
and guide us to do always
what is righteous in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Conclusion

May God our Redeemer show us compassion and love. **Amen.**

✠ Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A Simple Form of Evening Prayer

Opening Sentences

✠ O God, come to our aid:
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.

The Blessing of Light

Blessèd are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
creator of the changes of day and night,
giving rest to the weary,
renewing the strength of those who are spent,
bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening.
As you have protected us in the day that is past,
so be with us in the coming night;
keep us from every sin, every evil, and every fear;
for you are our light and salvation,
and the strength of our life.

Blessèd be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Blessèd be God for ever.

Scripture Reading

Taken from the daily readings found on pages [10-11](#)

The Gospel Canticle | Magnificat

Refrain: Come, let us return to the Lord,
for our God will richly pardon.

✠ My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
He has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me
and holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
Casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant, Israel,
to remember his promise of mercy,
the promise made to our ancestors;
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning is now,
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Come, let us return to the Lord,
for our God will richly pardon.

Prayers

- Give thanks for the day past, for the means of grace and the hope of glory.
- Pray for all who are in need, for those who are sick in body, mind or spirit.
- Pray for those who have died, those we have loved,
those who have inspired us.
- As the day fades we commend ourselves to the love and mercy of God.

Collects

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed: Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Evening Prayer may conclude with the Antiphon

Ave, Regina caelorum

Hail, O Queen of Heaven
Welcome, O Queen of Heaven.
Welcome, O Lady of Angels
Hail! thou root, hail! thou gate
From whom unto the world, a light has arisen:
Rejoice, O glorious Virgin,
Lovely beyond all others,
Farewell, most beautiful maiden,
And pray for us to Christ.

V. Allow me to praise thee, O sacred Virgin.

R. Against thy enemies give me strength.

Grant unto us, O merciful God, a defence against our weakness, that we who remember the holy Mother of God, by the help of her intercession, may rise from our iniquities, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Contact Details

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