



LAMB
of GOD

**Meditations
on the
Passion
of
Jesus**

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

Leader:

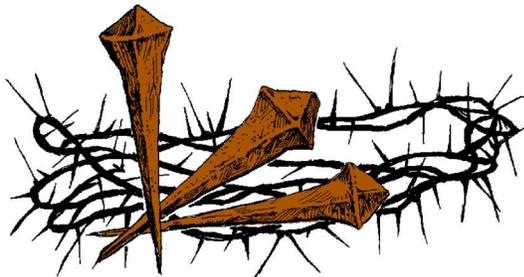
The Passion of Christ is the story of Jesus Christ's arrest, trial and suffering. It ends with his execution by crucifixion. The Passion is an episode in a longer story and cannot be properly understood without the story of the Resurrection. The word Passion itself comes from the Latin word for suffering.

The Passion is a story about injustice, doubt, fear, pain and, ultimately, degrading death. It tells how God experienced these things in the same way as ordinary human beings. Spiritually, the Passion is the perfect example of suffering, which is one of the pervasive themes of the Christian religion.

Suffering is not the only theme of the Passion, although some Christians believe that Christ's suffering and the wounds that he suffered play a great part in redeeming humanity from sin. Another theme is incarnation - the death of Jesus shows humanity that God had become truly human and that he was willing to undergo every human suffering, right up to the final agony of death. Another is obedience - despite initial, and very human, reluctance and fear, Jesus demonstrates his total acquiescence to God's wishes.

But the final theme is victory - the victory of Christ over death - and this is why the Passion story is inseparable from the story of the Resurrection.

The following meditations should help each of us better understand this love. It provides us with short, pointed considerations for quiet prayer and for personal and profitable meditation. Let us now set our hearts and our minds to this task.



Leader: The First Meditation - Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 22:39-46](#)

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Already here, it is written that our Lord is in agony. He is not yet being physically beaten or scourged. And yet He suffers deeply in both body and soul. For He is in a very real sense carrying the weight of the world. Gethsemane means “olive press” where olive oil was pressed out. Jesus experiences here the

greatest of pressing and pressure, as even the blood is pressed out of His body with His sweat that falls to the ground. He knows the suffering that lies before Him. Above all, Jesus does not wish to be cut off from His Father whom He loves with perfect love. That the Father would turn His back on Him at the cross was an unbearable thought. But this Jesus does for us. He submits Himself to the Father’s will out of love for us, that we may share in His love with the Father.

Remember Jesus’ agony when we ourselves are in mental or emotional anguish, when the weight of the world seems to be pressing down on us, when we are pressed or depressed, and there seems to be no way of escape. Remember Jesus, who did not escape, who will not let us be tempted or tested beyond what we can bear. He is our escape. He is our rest and our refuge. He drank the cup of judgment, so that now there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. We are given to drink the cup of salvation. The cup of God’s mercy overflows to us in Jesus.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.



Leader: The Second Meditation - Jesus is betrayed by Judas

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Mark.

Mark 14:43-50

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Swords and clubs are instruments of power and force and coercion. They are what the chief priests and scribes and elders wield to lay hold of Jesus. They are what even Peter tries to use to defend Jesus. But for both it is in vain. God's kingdom cannot be established by the use of force and worldly power. God's kingdom cannot be stopped or undone by the use of force and worldly power. For His kingship is exercised not through coercing His subjects but through the giving of Himself for His subjects. In love He rules the hearts of His people through faith. We dare never put our trust in the powers of this world to establish or save the church. We dare never behave as Peter did and think the success of the Gospel is dependent on our wisdom and strength. The Gospel thrives precisely in apparent weakness and defeat.



Even amid the physical roughness here, the most hurtful thing that is done is Judas' betrayal. This cuts to the heart, even for Jesus who knew in advance what would be done. As a true man, Jesus feels the human hurt of having a friend and follower stab Him in the back, all with a smile and a kiss, all while His companions flee for cover. Remember this when people deceive and betray and use us for their own ends, when they bring us to tears. Jesus has been there for us, He is with us in our hurt to deliver us, to vindicate all who take refuge in Him.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword had pass'd.

Leader: The Third Meditation - Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Mark.

Mark 14:55-65

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

“As a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” For Jesus had not come to defend Himself against false accusations but to defend us against the true accusations that the devil would lay against us. He allows Himself to be condemned in our stead.



Put under oath, Jesus does speak the truth of who He is, the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, who will come again on the Last Day for judgment. But here in His first coming, He allows Himself to be placed under judgment, that there might be deliverance from the final judgment for all who take shelter under His wings.

Jesus had used His spittle to heal, to give sight. Now He is spit upon by those who are blind to who He is—that He is the true temple, where God’s presence dwells in bodily form. He will be destroyed in death and then raised up in glory on the third day, that the people of God might have an eternal dwelling in Him.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Oh, how sad and sore distress'd
Was that Mother highly blest
Of the sole-begotten One!

Leader: The Fourth Meditation - Jesus is denied by Peter

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 22:54-62](#)

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Peter has three chances to confess that he knows Christ. Three times Peter fails. He would have to live for a while with the awful emptiness of his disloyalty and failure. We know that weakness of the flesh, too, when we deny Jesus with our words or behavior, seeking to avoid negative consequences to our reputation or our income or our life. Apart from Christ, Peter can do nothing, in spite of his good intentions.



Jesus had told Peter this would happen. When it occurs, as the rooster crows, as Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin, He turns and looks at Peter who is there in the courtyard. Jesus did this not simply to cut proud Peter down to size, but also to teach Peter that His love would remain despite Peter's sin. This was not a look of anger, but of sorrowful compassion. Peter would call Jesus' words to mind and weep. But he would also realize that Jesus didn't reject him even though He knew this about him ahead of time. So also with us—Jesus knows us and how we will stumble and falter. And yet He doesn't reject us; He sticks with us despite ourselves. The rooster's crow is not only a call to repentance but also a call to faith in Jesus, who looks on us with constant love.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Christ above in torment hangs;
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.

Leader: The Fifth Meditation - Jesus is judged by Pilate

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Mark.

Mark 15:1-15

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

The name Barabbas means “son of the Father.” But this Barabbas did not act like a child of God, but of the evil one. He was a murderer in the rebellion. And so Barabbas represents us. For all sin ultimately is rebellion against God. It is the attempted murder of God, to get Him out of our way so that we can run things the way we want without any interference or consequences. This is what the chief priests were doing. They handed Jesus over because of envy, because He was a threat to their plans and their power. They were a more pious version of Barabbas, rebelling against God in the name of religion and good order, very literally seeking to murder God.



And the Father allows them to succeed. And their success is their undoing. Evil is overcome by getting its way. The wicked fall into their own trap. Sin and death and the devil are overcome by the crucifixion of Jesus. Justice is satisfied by this injustice. Christ takes our place in death so that we may be real Barabbases, real sons of the Father through Him. The Savior is crucified so that we are made to be true children of God in Christ.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelm'd in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold

Leader: The Sixth Meditation - Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. John.

John 19:1-5

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

The first time we hear of thorns in the Bible is in Genesis after Adam and Eve fell into sin. God spoke a curse on the ground saying, "thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you." The very ground out of which man was created will itself turn against him. No longer will food come easily as it did in Paradise. Now it will come only with thorny and sweaty labor.

Behold the kind of king we have then in Jesus. He is one who is willing to bear sin's curse, literally wearing it on His head in order to break the curse and release us from it. Here is your king, who doesn't parade His wealth with gold and jewels in His crown, but who manifests His love with blood stained thorns. There is no fault in Him, as Pilate said. But He bears all of our faults. And they died with Him. No need to beat ourselves up over them anymore. Jesus our king has freed us and given us new life. By His wounds we are healed.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold



Leader: The Seventh Meditation - Jesus carries His cross

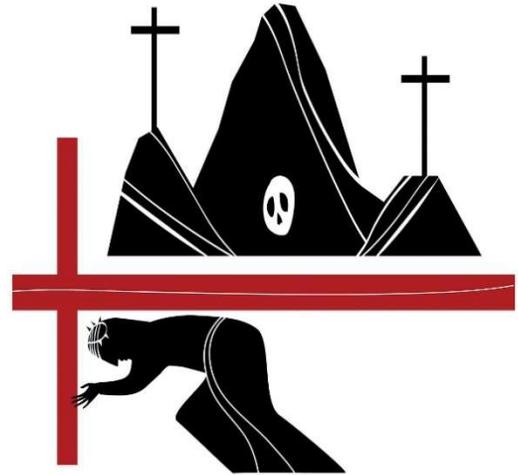
Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. John.

John 19:14-17

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:



Golgotha, Place of a Skull. What happens with the skull, with the head, is a key theme of salvation and deliverance in

Scripture. The very first explicit promise of the Gospel in Scripture is that the Redeemer would crush the serpent's head. When God gave victory over the enemies of His people, there were many times when the taking of the enemy's head was a sign of triumph. Goliath was decapitated. Jael pounded the tent peg through the temple of Sisera's head.

Now, our final and ultimate deliverer carries His weapon, His cross to the Place of a Skull. There He drives His cross into the Skull like a sword, to defeat the power of death, to destroy the work of the devil. Though Jesus' feet are pierced, yet those same feet crush Satan's head and pulverize the power of the grave.

This is why Jesus bears His cross. This is why He allows Himself to be delivered over to be crucified, to deliver us from the powers of darkness and bring us as His own into His kingdom of light, where we will serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Bruis'd, derided, curs'd, defil'd,
She beheld her tender child
All with bloody scourges rent.

Leader: The Eighth Meditation - Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Mark.

Mark 15:21

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:



Jesus is so weak from the beatings and the flogging He has endured that He can only carry the cross for a short distance. The lack of sleep, the loss of blood, the weight of the world's sin causes Him to fall beneath the burden of the cross.

And so a man named Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry Jesus' cross. Simon was in the city for the Passover feast and was probably pulled out of the crowd randomly by the Roman soldiers to do this duty. And yet it wasn't entirely by chance that this happened. For God chose Simon to perform this special task which would give a vivid picture of Jesus' own words, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up the cross and follow Me."

So it is for us. In our baptism we were chosen by God to bear the cross. We received the sign of the holy cross on our forehead and on our heart to mark us as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. We are given to carry that cross daily, bearing the burdens of the callings into which God has placed us, sometimes suffering because of faithfulness to the truth of Christ.

But notice the fundamental distinction between us and Christ. Though we take up the cross, yet we do not bear the judgment against sin. That's all on Jesus. He bears the real burden. He bids us to follow Him beneath the cross that we may receive all the benefits of His suffering. That's how it is that Jesus can say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Freed by Jesus' cross from the crushing weight of sin's curse, we find it to be a light load that brings rest and peace to our souls.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

For the sins of His own nation,
Saw Him hang in desolation,
Till His spirit forth He sent

Leader: The Ninth Meditation - Jesus encounters the women of Jerusalem

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 23:27-31](#)

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

The faithful women mourn what is happening to Jesus, to their Lord and Teacher. They are powerless to stop it. But Jesus tells the women not to weep for Him but rather to weep for themselves at what is coming, great tribulation for the faithful. If persecution and suffering come when Jesus is present, how much more so

when He is no longer seen by the enemies of the Gospel! Weep for a world that is dry wood without the Gospel, that brings upon itself disorder and chaos and pain by its faithlessness, that invites God's judgment, even as Jerusalem was overrun in the year 70 A.D. and blood flowed in the streets. How much more easily the dry wood burns than the fresh green wood! Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Jesus' cross is green wood for us, flowing with life, bearing the fruit of salvation for us. Weep only for where that fruit is rejected. Weep only that the ingratitude for God's mercy finally brings judgment and death for those who refuse Him. Pray for those who are unrepentant, that they may be granted penitent hearts and be restored to God through Christ, and may eat of the green tree of life.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

O thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above;
Make my heart with thine accord.



Leader: The Tenth Meditation - Jesus is crucified

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

Luke 23:33-34

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Jesus is numbered with the transgressors, treated as a common criminal and worse, just one of three men receiving the death penalty. There He is, not above it all, distant, keeping His hands clean, but right in the middle of it all, being dirtied with our sin, that we might be cleansed forever.



Our Lord Jesus is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, even for the very ones who crucified Him. “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Sin makes us ignorant. We don't know what we're doing. Even when we do know we're doing something wrong, we don't grasp how deeply we are hurting others and ourselves. We don't know how we are slapping God in the face. But Jesus prays for us, anyway, “Father, forgive them.” Here is the ultimate picture of God's love for us, that He dies for sinners, even for His enemies, His persecutors. Before we could ever ask Him for help or seek His forgiveness, He was already there to save and redeem us. He doesn't require us to change before He'll love us. His forgiving love is the very power that changes us.

Jesus' prayer to His Father is surely heard, and so you are surely forgiven. He has borne the nakedness of our shame so that we may be covered with His garments of mercy.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ our Lord.

Leader: The Eleventh Meditation - Jesus promises Paradise

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

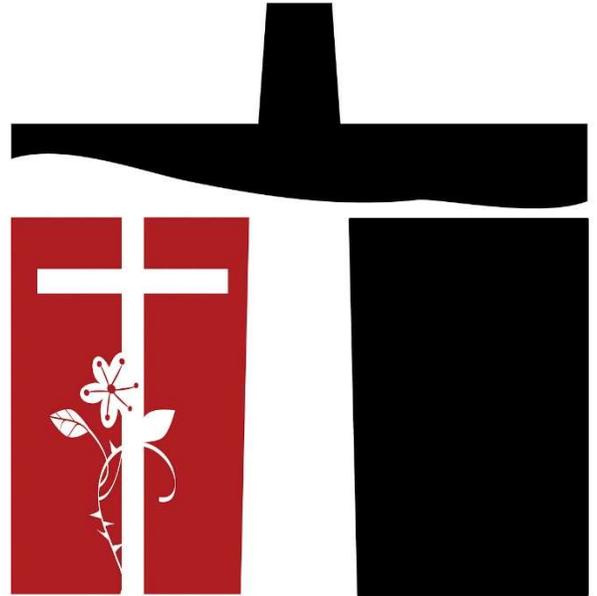
Luke 23:39-43

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Jesus was mocked so thoroughly that even one of those who was crucified with Him joined in, telling Him to save them if He was the Christ. Of course, that's exactly what Jesus was doing. But this criminal couldn't see that. Even in death he was not repentant for his sins but was full of anger and denial. He was a goat at Jesus' left hand.



But there is also a sheep at Jesus' right hand. Learn from this second criminal how to come before God. Do not complain in bitter anger at God for the crosses in our life, many of which are caused by our own foolishness; for those crosses are for the putting to death of our old sinful nature. Look to Christ in repentance; trust in Him. His steadfast love endures forever. Pray with the thief on the cross, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

How gladly the repentant thief must have received Jesus' reply, words that will apply to us and to all Christians on the day of our death, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise." Those two words, "with Me" define for us what Paradise is. It is to be with Christ. Where Christ is, there is heaven, where the curse of sin and death is no more, where there is no sorrow or pain or crying. It is to be restored to communion with God in a way that is even closer and deeper and better than what Adam and Eve knew in the Garden. To be in Christ's merciful presence is to have the fullness of life and joy and peace. As the Psalm says, "At your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Holy Mother! pierce me through;
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

Leader: The Twelfth Meditation - Jesus speaks to Mary and the disciple

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. John.

[John 19:25-27](#)

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

When we suffer, we tend to turn inward on ourselves, to meditate on our pain, even to wallow in it. We find it hard to get outside of ourselves and focus on others. But not our Lord Jesus. Behold His love! In His final hours He is thinking not of Himself, but is making sure that His mother is cared for properly. Jesus had other relatives who might have looked after Mary. But the Scriptures remind us that not even they believed that Jesus was who He said He was. And so our Lord places His mother into the care of John, who stood by Him with Mary in her hour of need, even as John is placed into her care as her son. It was important that Mary be placed into the hands of one who was faithful to Christ.



For Mary is a picture of the Church, which has given birth to us all in baptism as members of the body of Christ. And John is a picture of the Church's pastors, who in turn care for her in the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. These words of Jesus apply also to us, then, as pastor and congregation, "Woman behold your son." "Behold, your mother." Our Lord cares for us from the cross, setting the solitary into the family of the church and bringing comfort to those who mourn.

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torments died.

Leader: The Thirteenth Meditation - Jesus dies

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 23:44-46](#)

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Darkness covers the land at midday, in token of the darkness of judgment that Jesus was enduring. It's as if the sun itself could not bear to look at the death of the Son of God and hid its face.



Jesus's final words, though, are confident words of faith and trust in His Father. They are from Psalm 31. "In you, O Lord, I trust. . . quickly deliver me! . . . For you are my rock and my fortress . . . You will bring me out of the net they hid for me, for you are my stronghold. Into your hands I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth. . . I will rejoice and be glad in your faithfulness." After Jesus' other anguished words on the cross, here Jesus expresses assurance in His Father's love and faithfulness. He breathes His last, certain that the Father will deliver Him and raise Him up again.

As one who is not only fully divine but also fully human, Jesus has a spirit, a human soul. At this moment of His death He entrusts His spirit to His Father. He dies like a child falling asleep in the arms of his father. Remember these words of Jesus when the time comes for us to breathe our last breath. Remember that by entrusting Himself to the Father, Jesus has entrusted us to the Father. Our spirit even now is held safely in His hands. As the baptized we live in Christ, and He is in the Father. When we are experiencing affliction in our last days and last moments, we also are given to pray these words with peaceful trust and to breathe our last knowing that God will deliver us, too, and raise us up again. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourn'd for me,
All the days that I may live

Leader: The Fourteenth Meditation - Jesus is buried

Lector: A reading from the gospel of St. Mark.

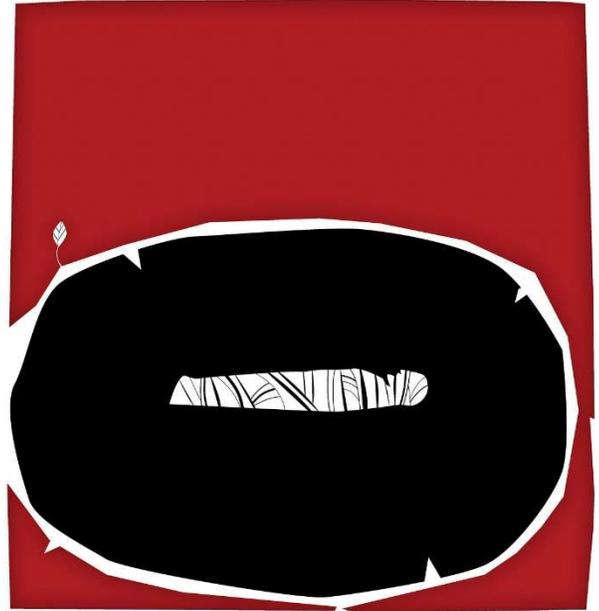
Mark 15:42-47

Lector: The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, the very group that had condemned Jesus to death. Perhaps he had spoken up but was greatly outnumbered at Jesus' trial. Perhaps he had not spoken up at all. But here he takes courage, and goes to Pilate the governor, and asks for the body of Jesus, that Jesus might be given an honorable burial, and not be left for the vultures.



It may be that you identify with Joseph, feeling outnumbered in your life when it comes to the things of Jesus, sometimes remaining silent for lack of courage. Let us then stand with Joseph now and take courage. In the light of Jesus' death, we see that nothing else is so important as our Lord and His holy cross, even in the face of untrustworthy civil authorities. Let us ask for the body of Jesus, seeking the Holy Sacrament of His body and blood every week, that we may honor His Word and be honored by the gifts that He gives to us in His Supper.

Jesus is buried in a new tomb hewn out of rock. For He has come to be Rock of our salvation by conquering the grave, bringing new life out of death. By being laid in the tomb, He has truly made your grave a place of Sabbath rest, of peace, from which you will awaken in the resurrection to everlasting life. And so we say with the Psalmist, "In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God."

Leader: My Jesus crucified,

All: Have mercy on us.

By the cross with thee to stay,
There with thee to weep and pray,
Is all I ask of thee to give.

Leader:

Our hearts should be made tender by these meditations. We must not leave the great spectacle of Calvary with dry eyes. There is no heart so hardened that it can see human blood spilled and not be moved. But the blood of Jesus gives our hearts the grace of compunction, which is the emotion of penitence. Those who remained near his Cross and watched him breathe his final breath, “returned home beating their breasts” (Luke 23:48). Jesus Christ, dying a cruel death and spilling his innocent blood, poured out a spirit of compunction and penitence upon the whole of Mount Calvary. We must not let our hearts be hardened. Let us make Calvary echo with the sound of our sobbing. Let us weep bitter tears for our sins and turn against ourselves with a holy anger. Let us break all our unworthy habits and leave behind our worldly lives. Then let us carry in ourselves the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as foretaste of our salvation.

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

