

## **A Monastic Mass For the Lenten Season: In the Spiritual Tradition of St. John of the Cross**

### **A Centering Prayer:**

"O living flame of Love, that tenderly wounds my soul in its deepest center!  
Since you are not harsh, perfect this sweet encounter!"

**-St. John of the Cross-**

**Cantor:** sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Bless the Lord, my soul  
And bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul  
Who leads me into life.  
-taken from Psalm 103-

*Our monastic mass will continue with the ancient divine prayer office of **Vespers**, which is a time when the heavens fade from light to darkness and when we transition from day to night. We will use the ancient monastic practice of the antiphon for our Vesper prayers in order to accentuate the fundamental reflection of our prayers as we repeat it for emphasis.*

**Celebrant:** Let Us Stand and Pray

### **Psalm 104**

**All:** The sun knows its time for / setting (v.19b);  
You make darkness and it \ is / night (v.20a).

**Celebrant:**

Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
O Lord my God, you are very great.  
You are clothed with honor and majesty,  
wrapped in light as with a garment.  
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,  
you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,  
you make the clouds your chariot,  
you ride on the wings of the wind,  
you make the winds your messengers,  
fire and flame your ministers.  
You set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it shall never be shaken. (vv. 1-5)

**All:** The sun knows its time for / setting (v.19b);  
You make darkness and it \ is / night (v.20a).

**Celebrant:**

the sun knows its time for setting;  
You make darkness and it is night.  
May the glory of the Lord endure forever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works—  
who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they smoke.  
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.  
May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the Lord.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul.  
Praise the Lord! (vv. 19b-20; 31-34)

**All:** The sun knows its time for / setting (v.19b);  
You make darkness and it \ is / night (v.20a).

**Everyone sits**

**A period of reflective silence follows**

**Psalm 113**

**Cantor:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / to \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**All:** Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord;  
praise the name of the Lord.  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
from this time on and forevermore.  
From the rising of the sun to its setting  
the name of the Lord is to be praised.  
The Lord is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens. (vv. 1-4)

**Cantor:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / to \ be / praised. (v. 3).

**All:** Who is like the Lord our God,  
who is seated on high,  
who looks far down on the heavens and the earth.

He raises the poor from the dust,  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes,  
with the princes of his people (vv. 5-8).

**Cantor:** From the rising of the sun to / its \ setting;  
the name of the Lord is / to \ be / praised. (v. 3).

## A period of reflective silence follows

### The Lighting of Candles

**Acolyte:** lights candles

**Celebrant:** (after the candles are lit)

Almighty God, we give you thanks for surrounding us,  
as daylight fades, with the brightness of the vesper light;  
and we implore you of your great mercy that,  
as you enfold us with the radiance of this light,  
so you would shine into our hearts  
the brightness of your Holy Spirit;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The **Phos Hilaron** is the earliest known Christian hymn recorded outside of the scriptures that is still being used today and is generally sung during the lighting of lamps or candles.

**Celebrant:**

O Radiant Light,  
O Holy Glory of God  
the immortal blessed Father in heaven,  
O Christ Jesus!  
Now as the sunset comes upon us  
and we see the evening lights,  
we praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!  
It is right at all times to sing your praise  
with all the universe,  
O Son of God:  
You are the life of the world.

## The Lighting of the Incense

**Acolyte:** lights incense

### Psalm 141

**Cantor:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God, the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation. (Ps 141.2)

**All:** O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me.  
Hear my voice when I call to you. (v.1)  
Like incense, may my prayer rise before you O God, the lifting of my hands like an evening oblation. (v. 2)  
But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD;  
in you I take refuge. (v.8)

**Cantor:** Like incense, may our prayers rise before you O God, the lifting of our hands like an evening oblation.

## A brief period of reflective silence follows

### Narrator: A Meditation on Silence

Silence has long been understood as an important step in spiritual development. The scriptures encourage silence. "Be still and know that I am God (Ps 46.10)" is a powerful verse when we understand these words as being personally spoken to us by God. "Listen to me in silence (Isa 41.1)" is another such verse as well as "Be still before the Lord (Ps 37.7).

Noting the scriptures, we can respond by saying "It is good to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it (Lam.3.27-28)" or by saying "For God alone my soul waits (Ps 62.1)" or "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits (Ps 130.5)" as ways of heeding to God's encouragement to be silent.

During our service, you will continue to be silently asked to be silent between prayers and chants in order to reflect on what was just voiced. So, let our sounds and silence be intertwined—let our sounds bring silence and let our silence bring sounds.

## A period of reflective silence follows

## Centering Prayer

### **Celebrant:**

"Be still and know that I am God (Ps 46.10)" are words that should encourage us to "let go" and surrender ourselves to a divine presence. Therefore, let us quiet our thoughts and desires and further center ourselves in God's presence. There is an ancient spiritual saying that quotes God as follows "You will never be able to hear my words if you cannot first hear my silence." Let this quote be a centering prayer and let our following periods of silence move us beyond conversation with God and into an intimate voiceless communion.

### **A period of reflective silence follows**

### **A Reading from the Scriptures**

A lesson from the Scriptures which is taken from 1 Kings 19. 4-13:

### **Homilist:**

(Elijah) went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD . . . The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the

earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

### **A brief period of reflective silence follows**

#### **Homilist:**

We are in the midst of Lent. Ash Wednesday, which occurred 10 days ago, marked the beginning of the forty day season of Lent that will end on April 23 on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter. Since the earliest days of the Church, Lent has been associated with the 40 days that Christ spent in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry. Also, since the earliest days of the Church, Lent has been a time when we, Christians, are called to go into the desert with Jesus prior to Holy Week for a time of soul searching and self-examination amidst responsibilities towards family, friends, community, and work.

Throughout the remainder of Lent, may we take "inner retreats" into our "inner desert" and imitate the withdrawal of Jesus into the desert and the withdrawal of Elijah as well. The story of Christ's retreat into the desert is familiar to us—though reading the gospel account during Lent can further enrich our spiritual lives.

Like Elijah, may we take "a day's journey into the desert" and pray. And if we are asked to go further into our inner desert until we reach "Horeb the mountain of God," may we do so.

Mount Horeb has a long history of encounters with God. It is the place where God called out to Moses from the burning bush and said "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" and "take off your shoes for the place where you stand is holy (Ex. 3. 1-5)." It is also the place where God said to Moses "I will stand before you upon the rock in Horeb and you shall strike the rock so that water will come out and the people shall drink" (Ex. 17.6)." It is also where Moses placed the 10 commandments into the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kings 8.9). Like Elijah, may you go into the cave when you reach your Mount Horeb and spend what St. John of the Cross would call a "dark night of the soul."

**Cantor:** sings three times and everyone meditates on the words

Wait for the Lord,  
Whose day is near.  
Wait for the Lord:  
keep watch, take heart  
(Ps 27.14)

### **A brief period of reflective silence follows**

#### **Homily (continues)**

And, like Elijah, if the Lord says to you “what are you doing here” may you also say “I have been very zealous for the Lord.” And, if the Lord says to you, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD for the LORD is about to pass by”—may you listen and listen very closely. You may think that the presence of the Lord is near if a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks, but only find out that the Lord was not in the wind. Or you may think that if an earthquake should follow after the wind that the presence of the Lord is near, but only find out that the Lord was not. Or you may think that if a fire should follow after the earthquake that the presence of the Lord is near, but only find out that the Lord was not.

However, like Elijah, after the fire you may hear a gentle whisper. And, if you hear that still small voice may you also go out of the cave and stand at its mouth. Then, may the Lord say to you a second time, like to Elijah, what are you doing here?

I am not sure what your answer will be. Right now you probably do not know what your answer will be. However, you will likely be able to answer the Lord when the time comes because of your inner desert experience.

### **A brief period of reflective silence follows**

#### **Celebrant:**

The writings of St. John of the Cross are filled with nighttime journeys that brings an individual into a secluded and loving encounter with God that helps answer the question “what are you doing here” when asked by God. For the answer, in part, may be to spend a “tender night,” or “in a place with no one else,” or “to lay your head on your loved one, or “to be “fused as one.”

You are invited to read a passage from the writings of St. John of the Cross.

**Reader 1:**

(taken from the Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross)

One dark night,  
fired with love's urgent longings  
I went out unseen,  
In darkness and secure,  
in darkness and concealment,

On that glad night,  
in secret, for no one saw me,  
nor did I look at anything,  
with no other light or guide  
than the one that burned in my heart.

**Reader 2:**

My flame guided me  
more surely than the light of noon  
to where he was waiting for me  
him I knew so well  
there in a place with no one else.

O guiding night!  
O night more lovely than the dawn!  
O tender night that tied  
the Lover with the loved one,  
loved one in the lover fused as one.

I abandoned and forgot myself  
Laying my head on my loved one;  
All things ceased, I left my being,  
Leaving my cares forgotten-

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:**

When God asks you "what are you doing here," the answer may be to allow God to "tenderly wound your soul" so that it may "swell . . . with love."

You are invited to read the following passage from the writings of St. John of the Cross.

**Reader 3:**

(taken from the Living Flame of Love by St. John of the Cross)

O living flame of love  
that tenderly wounds my soul  
in its deepest center!  
Since you are not harsh,  
perfect this sweet encounter!

How gently and lovingly  
you wake in my heart,  
where in secret you dwell alone;  
and in your sweet breathing,  
filled with good and glory,  
how tenderly  
you swell my soul with love.

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

**Celebrant:**

Let us pray in the words of St. John of the Cross:

(taken from the Spiritual Canticle by St. John of the Cross)

Although I endure a dark night in mortal life,  
I also know my distress is slight,  
for though I am in darkness without light,  
a clear heavenly life I know;  
for love gives power to my life,  
however black and blind my day,  
to yield my soul, and free of strife  
to rest in darkness with no ray.

Love can perform a wondrous labor  
which I have learned internally,  
and all the good or bad in me  
takes on a penetrating savor,  
changing my soul so it can be  
consumed in a lovely flame of love.

**A brief period of reflective silence follows**

## Lectio Divina

*The practice of Lectio Divina includes dialoguing with God in prayer by hearing scripture as God speaking and responding in similar thoughts and words to what God said.*

### **Celebrant:**

Let us hear what God has to say to us and let us respond in prayer.

**Narrator:** When you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart. (Jer 29. 12-13)

**All:** Dear God, when we call upon you and come and pray, we will seek you with all our heart.

**Narrator:** What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. (Matt.27.10)

**All:** Dear God, what you tell us in the dark we will speak in the daylight and what you whisper in our ear we will proclaim from the roofs.

**Narrator:** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut 6. 5-9)

**All:** Dear God, we will love you with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength. We will impress your commandments upon our children and talk about them when we sit at home and walk along the road and when we lie down and when we get up. We will tie them as symbols on our hands and bind them on our foreheads. We will also write them on the doorframes of our houses and on our gates.

## The Nicene Creed

**Celebrant:** Let us stand and profess our faith together by reciting the Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Everyone sits**

**Eucharist Begins**

## An Examination of Conscience

**Celebrant:** The scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves before Holy Communion. Let us reflect upon the following words of Christ and our desire to fulfill these words

**Homilist:**

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'"<sup>1</sup>

**Celebrant:** Let us pray

**All:** Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

**Cantor:** sings once then everyone joins in the following meditative petition  
Kyrie eleison/Christe eleison (Lord have mercy/Christ mercy)

Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison  
Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison, Christe eleison  
Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.

**Celebrant:**

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22.37-39

**All:** Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.

**Celebrant:**

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

**The Breaking of the Bread**

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

**Celebrant:** Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**All:** Therefore let us keep the feast

**Celebrant:** The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

**Everyone is invited to take communion.**

**The Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Celebrant:** Let us stand

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Celebrant:**

Let us continue to retreat each day during Lent into our inner “desert” as a place of rededication and further preparation for community service. And may we emerge as our savior did on Easter morning, so that we may further minister to God and others unlike ever before.

Let us pray the following Psalm<sup>2</sup> which was composed in the desert of Judah:

**All:**

<sup>1</sup>O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you,  
my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land where there is no water.  
<sup>2</sup> I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.  
<sup>3</sup> Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.  
<sup>4</sup> I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.  
<sup>5</sup> My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.  
<sup>6</sup> On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.  
<sup>7</sup> Because you are my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.  
<sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

**Celebrant:** Benediction

During your Lenten “inner desert” experience may your soul thirst for your God and your body long for your Lord each night while on your bed. And on Easter morning may your soul rise and be satisfied with the richest of foods and may your lips sing glory while in the shadow of the wings of your Risen Savior.

**All:** Amen

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 63