

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

("O living flame of Love, how tenderly you wound my soul")

-St. John of the Cross-

*Our monastic mass will begin 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 emphasize the fundamental reflection of our prayers as we repeat it for emphasis.*

Celebrant: Let Us Stand and Pray

(Psalm 139)

Celebrant: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v.11)

All:

Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you. (v.11-12)

Celebrant: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v.11)

All:

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth
your eyes saw my unformed body. (v.13-15)

Celebrant: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light
around me become night (v.11)

All:
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand (v.16-18).

Celebrant: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light
around me become night (v.11)

**Everyone sits and a period of reflective silence follows as
we are reminded that evening approaches.**

(Psalm 104)

Antiphon:

Cantor: the sun knows its time for setting (v.19b); You make
darkness and it is night (v.20a).

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).

A period of reflective silence follows

Narrator:

We are in the midst of Lent. By observing the forty days of Lent, we can imitate Jesus' forty day withdrawal into the desert where he further prepared for public ministry. Let us withdraw and allow our desert to become a fertile field for justice as the result of the Spirit being poured upon us from on high.

Celebrant:

the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the desert becomes a fertile field,
and the fertile field seems like a forest.
Justice will dwell in the desert
and righteousness live in the fertile field.
The fruit of righteousness will be peace;
the effect of righteousness will be quietness
and confidence forever.

-Isa 32. 15-17-

Narrator:

Also, let us hear the words of St. John of the Cross whose writings are filled with descriptions of a life long journey towards a loving mystical union with God that includes desert-like withdrawn experiences like a dark night of the soul.

(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 delicious flame of love.

A period of reflective silence follows

The Lighting of the Incense

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

(Ps 141.2)

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

NOTE: Readers are needed so please join in by reading a passage of scripture as a reader.

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.

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-

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

Reader 2:

(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 heart with love.

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

Celebrant:

"O LORD, God of heaven, who keeps your covenant of love with those who love you and obey your commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you. O Lord, let your ear be listening carefully to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayers of your servants who delight in revering your name.¹

¹ Nehemiah 1. 5-6, 11.

Cantor: sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

O Lord Hear My Prayer
O Lord Hear My Prayer
When I Call Answer Me
O Lord Hear My Prayer
O Lord Hear My Prayer
Come and Listen to Me.

-Psalm 143.1ff-

A period of reflective silence follows

The Lighting of the Candles

Narrator:

Let us sing the **Phos Hilaron** (Φῶς Ἰλαρόν) or **O Resplendent Light** which is the earliest known Christian hymn recorded outside of the scriptures that is still being used today. It is generally sung during the lighting of lamps (or candles) so let us do the same.

Celebrant:

Let us be reminded that Jesus came “as a light into the world” and “that whoever believes in (Him) should not abide in darkness (John 12.46) and that we are the light of the world and we should “let (our) light shine before others” so that they may see (our) good deeds and praise (our) Father in heaven (Matt 5. 14-16).

Cantor:

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.

All: sing the *Phos Hilaron*

A period of reflective silence follows

Celebrant:

This is what the LORD says:

"In the time of my favor I will answer you,
and in the day of salvation I will help you;
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people,
to restore the land and
to reassign its desolate inheritances,
to say to the captives, 'Come out,'
and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'"

"They will feed beside the roads and
find pasture on every barren hill.
They will neither hunger nor thirst,
nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them.
He who has compassion on them will guide them
and lead them beside springs of water.

(Isaiah 49. 8-10)

Narrator: A Brief Homily

As we journey through the Lenten season, let us be reminded that Jesus used the expression "I am" during his public ministry to fulfill God's promises such as those stated by God in the passage of scripture that we just heard. God said "They will neither hunger nor thirst" and Jesus said "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

God also said "to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!' and Jesus said "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." And God also said in the above passage "They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill" and Jesus said "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep" and they will hear My voice.

Let us hear more what Jesus has to say to us about being the "I am" and fulfilling God's promises. Let several of us continue to read as readers.

Reader 3:

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the

last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

(John 6. 35-40)

Reader 4:

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I *am* with the Father who sent Me.

(John 8. 12-16)

Reader 5:

I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

(John 10. 14-16)

Reader 6:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

(John 11. 25-27)

Reader 7:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

(John 14. 1-6)

Reader 8:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

(John 15. 1-8)

A period of reflective silence follows

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-

The Nicene Creed

Celebrant: Let us stand and profess our faith together

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.

Eucharist Begins

Lectio Divina: A Dialogue with God²

Celebrant: At the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples, he gave a farewell discourse³ which included the following words:

Celebrant: the Spirit of Truth will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.⁴

All: We will listen to the Spirit of Truth so that he can take from what is yours and make it known to us.

Celebrant: You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain.⁵

All: We will go and bear fruit because you chose us to do so.

² 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.

³ John 14-17.

⁴ John 16.12-15

⁵ John 15.16

Celebrant: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.⁶

All: We will remain in your love and obey your commandments.

An Examination of Conscience: How Do Things Stand Between Me and God?

Narrator:

The Examination of Conscience is an ancient spiritual practice that was promoted by St. Ignatius of Loyola in order to help us reflect on God's daily activity in our life including today.

Celebrant:

Let us ask God to help us examine ourselves by listening and reflecting on the following questions:

Celebrant: God, what did you say to me today that I did not hear?

A period of reflective silence follows

Celebrant: God, what needs healing in my life?

A period of reflective silence follows

Celebrant: God, how best can I serve you tomorrow?

A period of reflective silence follows

⁶ John 15. 9-11.

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

“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’⁷

A brief period of reflective silence.

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 (Lord have mercy)

Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison

⁷ Matthew 22.37-39

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:

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 for ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

A period of silence is kept.

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.

NOTE: Everyone is invited to take communion.

Cantor: sings once before everyone joins in the meditation

Jesus remember me
When you come into your kingdom
Jesus remember me
When you come into your kingdom

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us stand

Celebrant:

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 into a designated “desert” as a place of preparation during Lent and 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 Psalm⁸ which was composed in the desert of Judah:

All:

¹O 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.
² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
⁷ Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
⁸ My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

⁸ Psalm 63

Celebrant: Benediction

During your Lenten “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

Acknowledgements:

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Everyone is Invited for Light Refreshments Next Door.

**Afterwards,
Everyone is Invited to a Local Restaurant for Dinner**

The Next Monastic Mass will be on
Saturday, March 21 at 5:00 pm

and every other Saturday through Pentecost
at Messiah Lutheran Church – Pasadena.

For more information visit www.urban-monk.org