

THURSDAY AGAPE

EVENING PRAYER (VESPERS)

THURSDAY, WEEK 4

Lent

Scripture Readings for Silent Meditation

1. “Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my arms for battle, who prepares my hands for war.”

Lent as “warfare”, “battle.” Time to be active, not reactive. To attack, not just defend. To be “displacent” rather than complacent. Not alone but firmly standing on God (rock). He trains me (example, teaching, grace, suffering). Do I bless Him?

2. “He is my love, my fortress; he is my stronghold, my saviour, my shield, my place of refuge.”

He does not just give me love: He IS my love. I love someone = I “God” someone. God is a verb, a plural because a Trinity. I love myself = I “God” myself = I am graced to live in the Trinity. Love en-Gods me. Hence He is my fortress: mutual “insideness.” I have as gift the strength of God. Shield = He deflects the arrows of temptation, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Place of refuge = my quiet retreat, my inner stillness.

3. “Lord, what is man that you care for him, ... man, who is merely a breath whose life fades like a shadow?”

Consider the precariousness of the human being. Compare him with the expanding universe. Concentrate on your breathing for a moment and how you are “merely a breath” (the ventilators needed for those suffering covid badly). If you are older, consider how your vigour and vitality have faded. Think of someone who was larger than life, then suddenly was gone. BUT, now consider the care of the Lord, what he has invested in each of us, in all of us. For us who are merely breath, He gave up His breath on the Cross, to replace the breath in us with the Spirit in us. From breath and shadow, He raises us to Spirit and Light, to be divine.

Lent is lost if we lower our expectations of ourselves and of God. It is won if we allow God’s expectations and desires and longings for us to become our own. Blessed be the Lord, our Rock!

Introduction (All stand)

Priest: O God, come to our aid.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

People: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

Hymn

As the deer longs
for running streams,
so I long, so I long,
so I long for you.

*Echoes meet
as deep is calling unto deep,
over my head, all your mighty waters,
sweeping over me.*

*A-thirst my soul
for you the God who is my life!
When shall I see, when shall I see,
see the face of God?*

*Continually
the foe delights in taunting me:
“Where is God, where is your God?”
Where, O where, are you?*

Psalms and Canticle (All sit)

Psalm 143 (144) For victory and peace

**“I can do all things with the help of the One who gives me strength”
(Phil 4:13).**

Priest: The Lord is my love and my refuge: in him I place my trust.

Women: Blessed be the Lord, my rock,
who trains my arms for battle,
who prepares my hands for war.

Men: He is my love, my fortress;
he is my stronghold, my saviour
my shield, my place of refuge.
He brings peoples under my rule.

Women: Lord, what is man that you care for him,
mortal man, that you keep him in mind;
man, who is merely a breath
whose life fades like a shadow?

Men: Lower your heavens and come down;
touch the mountains; wreath them in smoke.
Flash your lightnings; rout the foe,
shoot your arrows and put them to flight.

Women: Reach down from heaven and save me;
draw me out from the mighty waters,
from the hands of alien foes
whose mouths are filled with lies,
whose hands are raised in perjury.

Men: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,

Women: as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

All: The Lord is my love and my refuge: in him I place my trust.

Priest: Lord, unite bishops, priests and deacons more closely with Christ
through the mystery of the eucharist; renew in them each day the grace
of ordination.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Nourish the faithful with the food of Christ's word; feed them with
the bread which is his body.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Grant that we may respect the dignity of every person, redeemed
by the precious blood of your Son; let us never violate his rights or her
conscience.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Save us all from the blind pursuit of wealth; make us sensitive to
the needs of others.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Be merciful to those who have left our world today; give them
everlasting happiness.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Our Father

Priest: Lord, be the beginning and end
of everything we do and say.

Prompt our actions with your grace,
and complete them with your all-powerful help.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. *All: Amen.*

Priest: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to
everlasting life. *All: Amen.*

His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

Women: He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.

Men: He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.

Women: He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Men: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,

Women: as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.

All: If a man will lose himself for my sake, says the Lord, he will find his true self in life eternal.

Prayers and intercessions

Priest: God enlightens us with the grace of the Holy Spirit that our lives may be filled with justice and faith. Let us proclaim his mercy in our evening prayer.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Psalm 143 (144)

Priest: Blessed the people whose God is the Lord.

Men: To you, O God, will I sing a new song;
I will play on the ten-stringed harp
to you who give kings their victory,
who set David your servant free.

Women: You set him free from the evil sword;
you rescued him from alien foes
whose mouths were filled with lies,
whose hands were raised in perjury.

Men: Let our sons then flourish like saplings
grown tall and strong from their youth,
our daughters graceful as columns,
adorned as though for a palace.

Women: Let our barns be filled to overflowing
with crops of every kind;
our sheep increasing by thousands,
myriads of sheep in our fields,
our cattle heavy with young,

Men: no ruined wall, no exile,
no sound of weeping in our streets.
Happy the people with such blessings;
happy the people whose God is the Lord.

Women: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,

Men: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

All: Blessed the people whose God is the Lord.

Canticle

Apocalypse 11

The Judgement

Priest: Victory and empire have now been won by our God.

Women: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who are and who were,
that you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

Men: The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great.

Women: Now the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Christ have come,
for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before our God.

Men: And they have conquered him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they loved not their lives even unto death.
Rejoice, then, O heaven,
and you that dwell therein.

Women: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,

Men: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

All: Victory and empire have now been won by our God.

Short Reading

James 4:7-8,10

Give in to God: resist the devil, and he will run away from you. The nearer you go to God, the nearer he will come to you. Clean your hands, you sinners, and clear your minds, you waverers. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

Short Responsory

Priest: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Priest: 'Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.'

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Canticle *(All stand)*

Magnificat

My soul rejoices in the Lord

Priest: If a man will lose himself for my sake, says the Lord, he will find his true self in life eternal.

Women: My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

Men: The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!