

My best friend, as of these 55 years, the other day got around to sending me a copy of something he did for his parish four years ago. Almost never is an Elliott Think-sheet by anybody other than Elliott--so you know how I value Brother Francis' words, as put in the mouth of Mother Mary.

## PIETA

Ah, see! The night so strange is lifting now,  
The night which came at noon and sheltered him.  
Now Joseph comes with four strong men.  
With gentle might they take him down.  
I'll ask for him--a moment for my own.  
Come, rest him here before you go away,  
Before you put him in your new-made tomb.  
Ah, this is mine. I bore him. Now again  
He lies close whence he came so soon ago.  
The angels sang a chorus in the sky.  
The shepherds came and saw a brightness round  
A stable made into God's lowly home,  
And creatures large and creatures small his friends.  
Ah, Mary, so my other Joseph said,  
We have to flee an unkind creature's wrath.  
And riding nights and hiding day by day  
We found again our people's ancient home.  
He spoke to me about the prophet's word,  
"'Twas out of Egypt that I called my Son."  
He knew his name, he knew his mission, too,  
New Moses, called to set all people free.  
Then Nazareth, when Herod died--too late!  
And next Jerusalem, a gift to God,  
A holy sacrifice foretold another day  
When all the old is lost in all the new.  
And Anna, aged with fasting and with prayer,  
Spoke forth God's word: Jerusalem redeemed!  
Then Simeon, that righteous, holy man,  
He took my child into his trembling arms  
And boldly prophecied: A glory comes  
Upon God's waiting people, Israel!

Pieta, 2

But then to me there was a strange word:  
A sword some day would pierce my soul all through.  
Today the word of Simeon comes true.  
There in his side I see the sword's red mark.  
It pierced his heart and blood and water flowed.  
Ah, more! The same sharp instrument went on  
And pierced his mother's soul--my soul--clean through.  
What meaning's hidden in this mystery?  
I've pondered much these many, many years.  
I heard him preach. I saw him heal the sick.  
Amazed, I watched him feed a multitude.  
He raised the dead and stilled a beating storm.  
A sinful man set free to live again!  
A woman finds lost peace, lost purity!  
He spoke the word and it was done just so--  
In him the attributes of deity?  
God wounded here? Isaiah's word come true?  
There's much pondering yet for me to do.  
The men wait there. The litter's ready now.  
And I must let him go to earth's cold womb.  
He died today but death with him died, too.  
And all this day and all this vacant night  
And all the ancient order's seventh day  
He spends in worlds of twisted memories--  
And triumphs there as well.

An eighth day comes!

A new creation rises from the night.  
The Son of Righteousness breaks forth with Light!

Written by Francis Whiting for the Good Friday 1986  
service in All Saints Episcopal Church, Hillsboro, Oregon