

# The Fellowship of Prayer

Lenten Season 1968



## FOREWORD

These Lenten meditations are designed to give a fairly connected account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and of the events of the last week of his life. Each Sunday the theme is that of the Sunday Bulletin Service used in many churches.

The aim of these meditations is so to recite the story as to involve the reader in the biblical narrative and to lead him to engagement with the persons and events out of which our faith has come. Particularly it is hoped that the person of Jesus Christ is so presented that we who read—and pray—will know better the meaning of discipleship.

*Alfred Schmalz*

Lent 1968

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# THE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

**Lenten Season 1968**

**ALFRED SCHMALZ**

with supplementary readings compiled by

**WILLIS E. ELLIOTT**

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## The Call Is to Repentance

*"Rend your hearts and not your garments."*—Joel 2:13. Read verses 12-19.

This day begins a lenten fast. The children will be asking one another, some playfully, some seriously, "What are you giving up for Lent?" We adults will feel pressed in conscience too, believing that our entrance into the season of penitence should call for some discipline. "What shall it be?" we ask.

The prophet Joel speaks the word for us. "Rend your hearts and not your garments." The true discipline must be an inward devotion not an outward display of piety. No one should know, really, that on this day there begins for me a new inner attention to God. I recall the admonishing words of Jesus, "When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret." Keeping my resolve to myself, I will make new steps toward change.

My own reform I know to be my chief contribution to the world's reform. I will honestly examine my personal life: my easy acceptance of conventional morality as good enough, my lack of respect and care for my neighbor, my pandering to my appetites and desires, my weak commitment.

PRAYER: Lord God, if I would only name one thing to do this lenten season that would express penitence, a door to your presence would open more fully. Give me the insight and the will to do this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The worship of God is not a rule of safety. It is an adventure of the Spirit.

—ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

A man who meditates, who tries to place his life under the attention of God, finds a life infinitely more fruitful, infinitely more harmonious, much less fatiguing and more profound.<sup>1</sup>

—PAUL TOURNIER

Nothing is secular to God. —WILLIAM TEMPLE

God is the absolute answer because man is the infinite question and questioner.

Christianity bids man recognize that he is vile, even abominable; and bids him desire to be like God. Without such a counterpoise this dignity would make him horribly vain, or this humiliation would make him terribly abject.

—PASCAL

[Man's relation with God is] the big subject behind all the little subjects. —EUGENE O'NEILL

The fateful question is not whether we have done well, or whether we are doing better than we have done in the past, but whether we are meeting the stern demands and unparalleled opportunities of the times. And the answer is that we are not.

—ROCKEFELLER PANEL REPORTS

## To Evade Not Even Death

*He set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Luke 9:51.  
Read verses 18-22.

"He set his face"—the words are grim, determined. We know what Jesus does not yet know, what he only suspects: he will die. This, Jesus can only sense. He has predicted suffering and death several times. Now he is on his way to that suffering, to that death. "He set his face"—he goes resolutely, unflinchingly.

Jesus' death, when it stands before him, doesn't surprise him, as if suddenly the totally unexpected has come. The darkness and the terror of it he anticipated. He knew it would have to be. His would be the role of suffering servant. "He set his face to go to Jerusalem."

How can I assess this kind of commitment, save in utter respect for Jesus? Jesus' decision to go to Jerusalem is fully a human choice. He knows all the human torment of anxiety and fear. And before his decision, which means he dies for his faithfulness, I stand humbled.

At the end of this journey to Jerusalem, which I now make with him, there is a cross. How does a man accept a cross?

PRAYER: Lord God, this death has a strange, intimate meaning for me. I know that what is done here is done for me. Give me the grace to respond by some new resoluteness in my own life, for Jesus asks me to bear the cross after him. Amen.

God has nowhere to hide himself from any sorrow or joy whatever, but must share in all the wealth and all the burden of the world.

—CHARLES HARTSHORNE

Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse.

—WILLIAM BLAKE

The Lord deals the cards; you play them.<sup>2</sup>

—*The mother of DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER*, quoted by General Eisenhower, as reported in "Dwight D. Eisenhower: 'What I Have Learned'" by Richard L. Tobin. *Saturday Review*, Sept. 10, 1966.

Good but intermediate purposes need a sovereign aim to organize and sustain them.

—VERNON A. LOESCHER

To be without a central purpose is to be free, free like a ship adrift, free from everything except rocks and storms.

—E. STANLEY JONES

If fools rush in where angels fear to tread, the trouble may be as much with the timidity of the angels as with the rashness of the fools.

—SYLVANUS DUVALL

Before the fact is the dream.

—*The father of* HUBERT HUMPHREY

Who stands firm? Only the one for whom the final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all these, when in faith and sole allegiance to God he is called to obedience and responsible action.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER



Friday, March 1

## The People Reject Him

*The people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. Luke 9:53. Read verses 51-56.*

All Jesus asked was lodging for the night. But Samaritans hated Jews, as Jews hated Samaritans. These villagers would not welcome a Jew going to Jerusalem and would provide no comfort for him. Let him keep on walking. It was a spirit to which the disciples responded in kind. James and John asked permission of Jesus to call down fire from heaven to wipe out these miserable Samaritans. But Jesus would not have it. He simply turned away, went elsewhere for the night.

Our compassion runs to Jesus. Everybody who had goodwill should have offered something to make him comfortable on this journey to death. So we say. Yet as soon as the words are out, we reflect upon the fact of exclusion and rejection in our own society. Every human being makes his journey through a world of people, each eventually to death. Why should not every man be moved by goodwill to make that journey comfortable and good for those about him? Why shouldn't I make it comfortable and good for those whose lives I can touch?

PRAYER: Lord God, who hast made us of one blood, so that having one Father we are all brothers, let not hatred and prejudice so divide us that we are set in passionate feeling against one another, and thus deny Christ, who commanded us to love one another. Amen.

For Further Meditation

Social problems may actually be problems of the spirit. Theological questions do not lie very deep beneath the surface of social issues. Man's cry for a gracious fellowman is actually a cry for God.<sup>4</sup>

—LOREN E. HALVORSON

There is no "them." Why do we always have to have a "them" to look down on? The religious issues of today are the racial problem, the population explosion, war and peace—not the silly little things we call religion.

—MALCOLM BOYD

Twice God has made himself a body. The first time, we call the result "the world." The second, "the Word." In three bodies God makes himself a saint: in the womb of flesh, in the womb of society, and in the womb of beloved community. Therefore, nothing—not the world or any of its wombs—is ever free of the burden and splendor of holiness, for through everything the Word struggles to be born. Creation and Incarnation are two visualizations and two indwellings of the one God. Who then is my neighbor?

The basis for the unification of the human race is not that all men believe in the same God, but that they act justly and lovingly.<sup>5</sup>

—ERICH FROMM

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. We must think anew, we must act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## Blessed When Men Revile You

"Bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" Luke 9:54. Read Matthew 5:38-48.

Jesus knew the time was approaching when the final act in his ministry would need to be made: the challenge to the authorities in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly long nagged by anxiety as to what his role was to be, he had now made the decision. The decision was to go, at whatever cost.

So they went through Samaria. The Samaritans wouldn't let him lodge there overnight, because he was on his way to the capital of the hated Jews. "Who are these Samaritans anyway?" James and John probably asked, with deep Jewish resentment. And in a request that matched their feelings, they asked Jesus to let them call down fire from heaven, to wipe them out.

Again, it is an occasion for Jesus to rebuke his disciples. Accept suffering, but don't give it. Take evil, but refuse to spread it. "Do not resist one who is evil. . . . Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . . . For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? . . . You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This hadn't got home to James and John! Indeed, has it got home to us?

PRAYER: Lord God, when I approve of Jesus without really wanting to follow him, when I call him "Lord" but will not do what he commands, when I commend him for what I will not do myself, rebuke me too. Amen.

The sun, with all those planets moving round it, can ripen the smallest bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else to do.

—GALILEO

Says a sage, "Human life is like the zebra: white with dark stripes, not dark with white stripes." Is this something the zebra knows? Or is it as I will? "God saw that it was good." A statement, an assignment, or both? As you will. As God wills.

Leisure is a form of silence, of that silence which is the prerequisite for the apprehending of reality: only the silent hear, and those who do not remain silent do not hear. Leisure is a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude, and it is not only the occasion but also the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation.<sup>6</sup>

—JOSEPH PIEPER

You may have a *doctrine* without having a *religion*. The first is an idea, the second a practice. To have a religion means to practice devotion to what I most prize, which thus defined is my God.

Truth must become *personal* or it does not move me. But if it becomes *private*, it is against me. My star must be also everyman's star.

Creatures are put in my path so that I, a fellow creature, by means of them and with them, may find the path to God.

—MARTIN BUBER

Sunday, March 3

## To Be Fully Alive

"Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."  
Matthew 16: 25. Read verses 21-26.

This is spoken to me. If I read it as spoken to other men, and don't recognize it as a word addressed to me, I misread it. Yet, isn't this how I do read it? The words evoke a picture of martyrs, men and women who yielded up their lives for Jesus' sake and who thus "found" their lives in rich joy. Or of persons who gave up promising careers to dedicate themselves to service as missionaries, seeking nothing for themselves but making an offering of their own lives, and in so "losing" themselves really discovering life in its fullness. They heard the word, and heeded it. It spoke to them. Should it not speak to me also?

I shall let it speak to me. As judgment. I am reluctant to give anything up. Any limitation on my life I see as a deprivation, not as a discipline leading to a deeper dimension of living. I take the short view of immediate satisfaction, not the long view of asking what will give my life most meaning in the end.

But it isn't only as judgment that I must hear this word. I must hear it as grace. God wants me to be fully alive. How can I really know life in depth except as I get concerned with my fellowmen, and so "find life"?

PRAYER: Lord God, whenever I have really given myself to some cause, or to some person, and have stopped thinking about myself, I feel fine and I know life to be good. Let this truth stay with me. Amen.

For Further Meditation

How far from heroism and from unselfishness is the plain and simple fact that a man has given himself completely to something he finds worth living for!

—DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

Happiness is a paltry goal. The thing is to be used, spent, squandered in the splendor of one of life's consuming causes.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

This is no time for fastidiousness, but one for boldness of stating what we can affirm and joyousness in acting it out. The church must speak to and act in the world it is in.

—JAMES A. PIKE

Profoundly true documents always come too late. Obedience, therefore, can hardly come too early.

—ALBERT VAN DEN HEUVEL

A new civilization, as Albert Camus saw in *The Rebel*, is rising on the rubble heap left by the Second World War, a civilization technical beyond any ever known, international in scope, and secularist in attitude. The Church has no time to worry about how deeply a bishop's feelings may be hurt. The question for her is whether the yeast of religious faith will be able to penetrate this technical world at all.

—MICHAEL NOVAK

FAITH is not an intellectual acquiescence in Being nor a rational conclusion about Reality, but a leap of total, even though momentary, self-commitment to the absent-present God.

## Name Dropping

*"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me.'" Luke 13:26-27. Read verses 22-30.*

The narrative recounting Jesus' journey to Jerusalem contains various teachings and events which will claim our interest this week. One is the story of the householder (Jesus) who turned out the people who knocked on his door, despite their protestation that they had eaten in his presence and that he had taught in their streets.

Why this seemingly arbitrary and unexplained rejection? Was this fair, to exclude people whose claim to be accepted was that valid?

But was it valid? They had been at tables where Jesus was guest, among the larger company. They had observed his teaching in the streets. They were, however, essentially outsiders, for they evidently were not willing to move into the circle of discipleship nor let the teaching of Jesus be more than something heard, or perhaps only observed. For them Jesus was a famous name, and they thought that to claim that they knew the name was enough. But not so. Discipleship is more than knowing about him.

PRAYER: God, let me not say, "Lord, Lord," and expect that Jesus' name needs only to be pronounced for me to be thought Christian, but let me honestly seek to follow him. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

In everything, God himself is hidden.

—BONAVENTURE

Life in the church pulsates with the rhythm of word and deed, of being and doing. This is the thrust of the term "meditation" as used in the early monastic movement. It did not mean some passive and withdrawn spiritual exercises. Meditation did not suggest flight from engagement. Rather the term had the meaning of steeling oneself for a particularly difficult task, of flexing the muscles and getting a firm foothold in order to spring into action like a sprinter in the split second before the gun goes off. Meditation is not a moment separated from the deed, but the initial step into the deed.<sup>4</sup>

—LOREN HALVORSON

Christians are more bound together than they ever have been. Sectarianism is no longer possible under electronic conditions.

—MARSHALL McLUHAN

To reestablish the gospel's credibility in this secular age, the church must put the emphasis on the ethical rather than the confessional, on *action* rather than on belief. —DONALD BENEDICT

Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men; and he will be this all the more perfectly the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.

—POPE JOHN XXIII



Tuesday, March 5

## "Nevertheless I Must Go"

*"Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."*  
Luke 13: 33. Read verses 31-35.

There is an inexorable quality to the claim God made on Jesus. No escape, no evasion—"I must." Jesus is warned that King Herod is seeking his life. No matter. Jesus knows that Jerusalem has to be the place of final confrontation with the authorities. Jerusalem that has always stoned and killed the prophets may kill him too. "Nevertheless I must go."

We don't say this is folly; it's commitment. What if Jesus had cautiously weighed the report of Herod's intention, and then had sought sanctuary in Gentile territory? What if he had decided that prudence is better than valor, life than death? Would he have become Lord and would we today be concerned to remember him?

Conscience often presses hard upon us, too. Things to do, persons to confront, causes to wrestle with, objectives to suffer for. To the outsider, my problem of conscience may not seem important beyond myself. For me it is essential to face up to my conscience. Otherwise my convictions are pallid as water, soft as putty, and I am nothing. At some point a stand has to be made. "Nevertheless I must."

PRAYER: Lord God, I prefer the comfort of casual acceptance of my way of life; but let me not refuse to meet life's demands squarely, lest I die inside. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

In the electric age, we wear all mankind as our skin.

—MARSHALL McLUHAN

Is it possible to be an optimist in a world which has turned most of its organized brain-power and energy into the systematic means for debasing life or mutilating it or scorching it or obliterating it? . . . It is possible to be an optimist in today's world—without having to strain or synthesize. It is necessary only to attach oneself confidently to a plan for accomplishing an essential purpose—and then to help bring that plan to life with advocacy and work. The only thing more dangerous than nuclear force in today's world is failure to perceive the lines of connection between the individual and the ideas and forces that shape his world.<sup>2</sup>

—NORMAN COUSINS, "Is It Possible to Be an Optimist?"  
*Saturday Review*, July 23, 1966.

Especially we thank thee for the stirrings within the Church toward a larger obedience and a renewed unity, that Christ may be manifest to all men and accepted and followed as the Lord of life forever.

—CONSULTATION ON CHURCH UNION

The questions "What, Whose, and Who am I?" lead to the profoundly religious question "Why am I?" At the very point of losing his life man may be closest to finding it. This is the paradoxical answer of the Gospel that comes as the radical answer to man's radical question. The answer to a man's quest for identity is most accurately given and most clearly grasped in the depths, in the dark places where despair and hope are unexpected companions.<sup>4</sup>

—LOREN HALVORSON



Wednesday, March 6

## Thanks, God

"Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Luke 17:18. Read verses 11-19.

Ten lepers were standing at a distance from the villagers, obeying the law that required them to stay out of reach of infecting the populace. They saw that it was Jesus who was passing through, knew his reputation as a healer, and called out to him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They were not denied, but were healed.

Off they went, all except one, and this man a Samaritan, a foreigner (to the Jews). The Samaritan, the one whom Jesus would least expect to do it, came back to thank Jesus. One grateful man, nine who didn't bother to express gratitude.

Jesus himself didn't want the thanks. Thanks to God is what he thought appropriate and necessary.

A lot of good things happen to us. Most every day something lifts the spirit, heals the troubled mind, touches our need somehow. We may get casual about the good that is done us. And God is forgotten.

This day—what would I select from the memories of its hours, about which I would really want to say thanks?

PRAYER: Lord God, I know you're not waiting for us to express thanks, yet when we are grateful we realize better what a wonderful life we are given by your precious love of us. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

I love you, Big World.  
I wish I could call you  
And tell you a secret,  
That I love you, World.

—PAUL, age 7

God has two dwellings; one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart.

—IZAAK WALTON

There is only one political problem in our world today: the unification of mankind.

—NORMAN O. BROWN

Everybody's got his own bag, but we all bleed the same.

—RICHARD KEAN

Men should not live their lives in so many civic republics, separated from one another by different systems of justice; they should reckon all as their fellow citizens, and there should be one life and one cosmos.

—PLUTARCH

If each of us, Christians and communists, takes stock of what is basic in his convictions, he will discover, the one in his faith in God and the other in his faith in the task of man, a mutual willingness to stretch man's creative energies to the maximum for the sake of realizing a total man, and he will become aware of the mutual enrichment which will flow from dialogue, cooperation, and rivalry between the Marxists' Promethean humanism and Christian humanism.

—ROGER GARAUDY, communist theoretician

Ecumenism is another name for Marconi.

—MARSHALL McLuhan

Thursday, March 7

## Life Could Mean More

*"They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built."* Luke 17:28. Read verses 22-30.

That's a pretty good description of all that life seems to mean to some people. "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built." These activities are all properly part of living. But in themselves they do not portray a man as having plumbed life's depths very far.

When you say of a man that he was concerned with his personal welfare, his business, productivity, commerce, have you said enough to describe him as a Christian? Doesn't there have to be some measure of divine extravagance in our aspirations, some search for new widening horizons, a thrust toward perfection?

The dimension of depth may be the criterion by which my life as a human being is to be judged. Judged by me, as well as by God. Everybody has to eat and drink, earn a living, be productive. But what do we do beyond providing for ourselves a material base? This heart that beats sensitively for my neighbor, this hand that needs to grasp the hand of the man beside me, this search for my personal meaning, does it not all require that I see life as requiring a "something more"?

PRAYER: Lord God, my life doesn't always add up to more than looking out for myself, and I know this isn't right. Maybe my speaking about it in prayer will help me to do something about it. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am for myself alone, who am I?

—HILLEL, a rabbi contemporary with Jesus

The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely to You.

—WALT WHITMAN

Fashions are the autumns of ideas.

—TIME essay

We are witnessing a massive failure of both domestic and foreign policy, simply because we are insensitive to human rights, and therefore powerless to promote them.

—PHILIP BERRIGAN, Catholic priest

Electronic brains can reduce the dead ends in vital research, but they can't eliminate the foolishness and decay that come from the unexamined life. Nor do they connect a man to the things he has to be connected to—the reality of pain in others; the possibilities of creative growth in himself; the memory of the race; and the rights of the next generation.<sup>2</sup>

—NORMAN COUSINS, "The Computer and the Poet." *Saturday Review*, July 23, 1966.

In the life of men together there are laws which are stronger than everything which believes it can be superior to them, and it is thus not only unjust but also unintelligent to treat these laws with contempt.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Friday, March 8

## Well, What Do I Want?

"What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." Luke 18: 41. Read verses 35-43.

The blind man's need was very evident. Blindness was a terrible handicap. "Lord, let me receive my sight."

Did you ever think what you'd say if Jesus were to approach you to ask what you wanted most? If you had a disability that plagued you, or if you were enduring a hard limitation because of anxiety, or if any other obvious restriction upon your freedom to enjoy life was a hard burden, you'd know immediately how you'd respond. We all want burdens lifted. But is there no other need beyond these?

Other needs may be less obvious and may cause us less worry. Like greater generosity, a readier response to charitable appeals. Maybe we need a more tender and compassionate heart, less hardness toward human misery. Maybe we need a better discipline in appetite, a greater desire to serve in voluntary agencies, a mind that puts itself to work on ideas without soft avoidance of intellectual exercise. Maybe religious devotion is what we need, just a willingness to do better with these Lenten meditations! What is it you want?

PRAYER: Lord God, we ask for ease and relief, for comfort and strength, not often for challenge and for causes that test our powers. Why don't we pray more religiously? Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Nothing is the search for something.

—JAKOB BOEHME

The greater part of the human race has lived until relatively recent times without belief in the possibility of a total salvation in the sense in which the New Testament portrays it. There has been indeed belief in the possibility of salvation for the *individual* by withdrawal from involvement in the affairs of the world, but there has not been belief in the possibility of a *corporate* salvation for mankind as the goal to which human affairs move. This is a new and revolutionary belief. The effect of it is to disrupt forever the ancient cyclical conceptions of time in which the majority of men have lived, and to set men thinking in terms of advance towards some kind of new order in the future.<sup>8</sup>

—LESLIE NEWBIGIN

When I was a child, I could paint like Raphael. It took me many years to learn to paint like children.

—PICASSO

Understanding and concern are based on shared experience. Our rapidly changing world today tends to minimize opportunities for sharing experiences with each other. It is little wonder so much misunderstanding exists.

—BERTON E. BERGER

Goodness is something so simple: always to live for others, never to seek one's own advantage.

—DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

## Little Fellow, Big Heart

*And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor."*  
Luke 19:8. Read verses 1-10.

We are amused by Zacchaeus, probably also thrilled by him. Amused, because being a little fellow he had to climb up into a tree to see Jesus above the heads of the crowd lining the street. Thrilled, because, in response to Jesus, he began to practice financial honesty and generosity.

Jesus was more successful with Zacchaeus than with the rich young ruler, who went away sorrowing, unable to meet the challenge Jesus put to him. Each apparently was challenged differently. Jesus didn't suggest, as he did to the rich young ruler, that Zacchaeus give everything to the poor, but he commended Zacchaeus for large gifts to the poor.

We aren't all challenged the same way. Furthermore, our problem may not be that the challenge is too great, but that we feel no challenge at all. The salary check is banked, expenses are paid, savings are determined, we make our routine charitable and church gifts, and think no more of it. But have we expressed in any way the claim upon us to be good stewards, using our money as an instrument of witness, letting it work for Christ?

PRAYER: Lord God, I don't often enough wonder about my money in terms of using it as a Christian. My prayer now may be simply to raise a question where none had been asked before. Amen.

There are times when a man has to push his principles aside and do the right thing.  
—A St. Louis cabbie

It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present in us: it is the very sign of his presence.  
—C. S. LEWIS

There is need for a new piety of awe and faithfulness in the presence of Jesus Christ: for a human rather than a natural piety, evoked not by power but by love, not by goods but by communion; a piety that fears infidelity before it fears evil, and hopes for forgiveness before it hopes for peace and plenty; a piety of gratitude and dependence in the Church, and of freedom and joy among God's people under the covenant of grace. But such piety is a gift of the living God and can be practiced only in repentance.<sup>9</sup>

—EDWIN H. RIAN

In being limited to what accords with duty, one never comes to the boldness of a deed that leads to personal responsibility that alone can strike at the center of evil and overcome it. The man of duty will finally be obliged to fulfill his duty even to the devil.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

It will be a strange event if Christians and Communists in dialogue call a post-ideological civilization—hypnotized by the lure of affluence—to faith and to aspiration for liberation from human alienation. A decade ago we might have thought such an occurrence as unlikely as a trip to the moon.<sup>10a</sup> —ROGER L. SHINN



Sunday, March 10

## This Life We Shared

*And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.* Luke 22: 61. Read verses 54-62.

Peter watched Jesus, as slowly, painfully, the stairs were mounted. It had been hours since Peter had slipped into the courtyard of the high priest's house, warming himself with others at the fire. He had hoped to be there unnoticed. Yet, three times he had been spoken to, three times asked was he not a Galilean too? And now, for the third time he had denied knowing Jesus. At this moment Jesus turned and looked at Peter.

"You and I," Jesus might have intimated by that look at Peter, "have a bond between us. We saw life clearly, together, at the Sea of Galilee, and you dropped your nets and came with me on this hopeful but now tragic journey. We walked the dusty roads together, in strange, exhilarating joy because of God. We slept under the star-pricked canopy of the skies, secure in God. We pledged our hearts to God's kingdom. And now we face each other in a moment of sudden and perhaps final recognition. Who are we, we two? What will come of all this—for you, for me?" Jesus moves inside. Peter stands outside, bitterly weeping.

PRAYER: Lord God, we cannot stand the look in the eyes of those who make bigger demands of us than we have wanted to accept. But when we have finished our weeping, turn us again, and restore our honor. Amen.

*For Further Meditation*

God carves the rotten wood and rides the lame horse.

—MARTIN LUTHER

In Jesus' teaching, "the world" meant mammon, anxiety, and self-righteousness. He asks us not to flee these, not to proclaim them already conquered, but to destroy them.

—ADOLF VON HARNACK

No one can look the present straight in the eye, and at the same time have strength for future tasks, who does not believe in the Creator—and the Redeemer.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Two ways are open for every man: to be an enigma, with all the anxiety and defensiveness that it implies, or to be an open, trusting, spontaneous, and transparent self.

—MACON COWLES

The so-called social conscience, unsupported by the concept of personal honor, will create a corrupt society.

—JOSEPH WOOD

The transcendence of God is no separation in the sense of a great divorce between the Almighty and his people. Instead, it is perfect righteousness and love maintaining integrity in the face of lesser loyalties and self-centered commitments.

—GORDON PRATT BAKER

The power of a good man willing to die for his brethren is an unquenchable power. When that kind of commitment is translated into a movement, it can make changes that every wise observer would say are impossible.

—ROBERT W. SPIKE



## The Sacramental Table

*There they made him a supper.* John 12: 2. Read verses 1-8.

How simply this is said: "They made him a supper." And how warm and comfortable it feels, friends at table. Jesus must have known these two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, a long time. When he was in Jerusalem that last week, he evidently spent nights in Bethany. So now he is in the familiar home of friends who "made him a supper."

Luke also tells of the same meal but only the two sisters were present. In Luke's story Jesus criticizes Martha for being "distracted with much serving," and commends Mary for choosing "the good portion," that is, quiet attention to Jesus. In John's story no criticism is voiced of Martha. The story just says, "Martha served." She prepared the supper. She fulfilled the part of host.

The table is the place of warmth for any household. Where it stands is of no concern, in kitchen, dining room, alcove. Every table is a sacramental table, on which the bread and the cup stand, symbolically, and we eat a common meal in fellowship, whether among family, friends, or fellow Christians. The shared meal is the shared "bread of heaven," the nourishment of God's love.

PRAYER: Lord God, bless this house, this table, this household, and let a fulfilling love for one another make rich our lives, in Christ. Amen.

The only fruitful relationship to men—especially to the weak—is love, that is, the will to be in fellowship with them. God himself did not regard man with contempt, but became man for the sake of mankind.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Each of us is a little lonely, deep inside, and cries to be understood.<sup>2</sup>

—LEO ROSTEN, quoted in "Behind the Advice Column" by Ann Landers, *Saturday Review*, Nov. 12, 1966.

The more *abstract and detached* man's mathematics and pure science have become, the more useful in the structuring of his technology. The more *concrete and involved* man's theology has become, the more relevant to his needs and hopes. But vision, intuition, and the building of models are of the essence of both the technological and the theological revolutions. "We believe in one God. . . ."

We have faith that Christianity will influence Marxism if we do not lose hope and turn our backs on the world.

—MIROSLAV MENSIK

In our desire to improve the *material* condition of the world, we are forgetting that the standard of living is not an end in itself but a *means*. We analyze societies to see whether they are capable of rapid economic growth, rather than examining them in order to see how the necessary economic growth can be used to preserve the values of the countries.

—ROBERT THEOBALD, *economist*

Tuesday, March 12

## A Beautiful Thing

Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus. John 12:3. Read Mark 14:3-9.

"She has done a beautiful thing to me," Jesus said, after Mary's extravagant act in pouring the precious perfume upon his head.

Extravagance is part of the Gospel, carefree abandonment, uncalculated self-giving. Caution and prudence are put aside, and in one wild gesture the complete commitment to God is witnessed, as here in Mary's "waste" of the perfume. Or, in the story of the widow who, contributing her two mites to the temple treasury, "put in everything she had." Or—the cross! "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."

The saints reflect this quality in the Gospel, hazarding their lives without counting the cost, ignoring danger, throwing caution to the winds. They have an abandon which amazes and intrigues us. They are fools for God. And it seems so right.

Right for me too. My own plodding and pedestrian faith, with its prudential weighing of the cost of obedience in inconvenience and discomfort, seems like a shoddy betrayal of the Gospel. I look for someone to do the surprising, extravagant act, which will once again bring the Gospel to life. This could be me.

**PRAYER:** Lord God, awaken the longing to respond with joy to the command to be a disciple, that I may give myself with a new freedom of action to serve Christ. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Send down upon us the free gift of your Holy Spirit so that with a clean heart and a good conscience we may kiss one another with holy love, not deceitfully nor hypocritically nor to control each other's freedom, but blamelessly and purely in the bonds of peace and love.

—THE BOOK OF CATHOLIC WORSHIP

Water can be held only in a watertight container, but love can exist only in an open heart.

—HARLAND G. LEWIS

I don't think God is dead at all. It's to His glory and praise, and our common joy, when there is beauty, order, meaning, discovery, enlightenment.

—JAMES A. PIKE

Love of neighbor is not radical enough unless it occurs as love of God; and love of God does not happen, nor does man know who God is, unless he loves his neighbor.

—KARL RAHNER

Before you can love, you must know how to walk in the snow leaving no tracks.<sup>2</sup>

—KARI, a sixteen-year-old girl, quoted in "Kari's Handicap—The Impediment of Creativity" by Robert E. Samples. *Saturday Review*, July 15, 1967.

Love accepted becomes love incarnate.

Love incarnate becomes love expressed.

Love expressed gives all of life

Meaning and beauty and purpose.

—PHILIP AND PHOEBE ANDERSON

## "The Day of My Burial"

"Let her keep it for the day of my burial." John 12: 7. Read John 19: 38-42.

John looks back to this incident of the anointing in Bethany from the perspective of later years, long after the death of Jesus. In loving recollection he recalls the extravagant gesture of Mary, and links it with Jesus' death. She has poured the "ointment of pure nard" on his feet, the house is filled now with its wonderful fragrance, and when Judas objects to the waste of such expensive perfume, Jesus honors Mary by saying, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial." She has, in anticipation, without knowing it, participated in the last loving act of preparing his body for burial.

Mary did not know the full beauty of her act. She seems to have acted impulsively, out of great love. It evidently was an hour when Jesus was full of thoughts of his impending death. He saw her act as a loving gesture.

How little we sometimes know of the appropriateness and the effectiveness of particular generous acts impulsively done. A man reminds us in later years of a helpful act that was done just out of love, yet at the time we never knew how much it would mean. It was for him a gracious, sustaining support when he needed it most.

PRAYER: Lord God, for goodness generously done, without knowledge of its full effect or even awareness of what it can mean to another, we give thee thanks. Amen.

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Thus everyone's task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.<sup>12</sup> —VIKTOR FRANKL

Everybody nowadays is closed up—the put-ons, the put-downs. It's tough to come on with your arms wide, knowing you may get kicked in the groin. That's why I can look at Lyndon Johnson one day and despise him and another day I'll love him. Like that time he pulled up his shirt to show his scar—that was so human! I loved him for that.

—PAUL SIMON, age 24

When we talk to each other, what have we meant? Anything? When we touch, when we promise, and say . . . yes, or please . . . have we meant, yes, but only if . . . if there's any condition, Agnes! Then it's all been empty.

—EDWARD ALBEE

The God of Judeo-Christian revelation manifests himself in what men *know* in the universe, not in what they do *not* know.<sup>13</sup>

—WALTER J. ONG

Free time exists. It will increase. But the question whether *leisure* exists is addressed directly to each individual.

—STEPHEN C. ROSE

There is no adequate analogy for God. Only in worship and reverence can we acknowledge the mystery of God and the pretensions of any human system that claims to have mapped out his ways.

—LAN G. BARBOUR

Thursday, March 14

## The House Church

"Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?" Mark 14:14. Read verses 12-16.

We move today from Bethany to Jerusalem, to the upper room in the inn. Here Jesus is host, at table with his disciples. It is the Last Supper.

"Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?" was the word carried to the innkeeper, and they were shown to the room prepared for them. This was simply a room, but it became a church. It became a church when Jesus and his disciples shared the sacramental meal, the bread, the wine. It is significant that this instituting of the sacrament, celebrated now mostly in a church building, originated in the upper room of an inn. That room became a sanctuary.

Church is not a building, it is the people of God. So we too are a church, when we gather at our tables, in Christian love, acknowledging Christ to be Lord of our homes. In certain old-fashioned homes we can still find embroidered samplers proclaiming Christ Lord of the home.

Christ is wherever we are gathered together in conscious awareness of our common life in him. Where is this more true than in our homes?

PRAYER: Lord God, we thank thee for our family, for the love that draws us warmly to one another, and pray thy blessings upon our home. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

He who gave us teeth will give us bread.  
—the indigent mother of SAM LEVENSON

Your position never gives you the right to command. It only imposes on you the duty of so living your life that others can receive your orders without being humiliated.

—DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

What would it be like to participate in the story and game of the adventure of God in Christ? At Holy Communion what would it be like to kneel, sing, taste, and become a child of God in God's world in the spirit of peace, freedom, delight, and unworldliness? Consider the play of the child, and the nature of the Kingdom will be revealed.

—ROBERT NEALE

There is that near you which will guide you; O wait for it, and be sure to keep to it.

—ISAAC PENNINGTON

We are so made that we are able to perceive a good which is utterly beyond us; and when we see it we must long to do something about it, to have a share in it, if that could be. We must love the highest when we see it, and love is always active. Faith in Christ is awareness of his perfection, comprehending the utmost of selfless compassion and love, infinitely past our power to reach, yet insistently driving us to reach it.<sup>14</sup>

—EDITH HAMILTON

The will of God must become every man's North Star.

—SAMUEL M. SHOEMAKER



Friday, March 15

## Basin and Towel

*"I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."* John 13:15.  
Read verses 2-15.

Jesus, having been servant to his disciples in the ceremonial washing of their feet before supper, calls upon them to follow his example. And so we call ourselves "the servant people of God."

"The servant people!" No sooner do we say the words than we question our honesty. Are we not saying too much when we speak of ourselves as servants? We speak boldly, yet our intention may belie our assertion. We're not sure we want to be servants.

Servanthood works best in the family circle—here we do minister to one another in our needs—but beyond the family, how hard it is to do the good deed just because it needs doing.

We're geared to calculated goodness—doing good where there's a return to us. How can I break the habit of wanting people to do things for me, and begin to take some initiative in doing things for others? And without wanting an equivalent return?

We get so confined to customary relationships to people based on pride, position, prestige, power, that we lose the vision of ministering to others—as Christ did.

PRAYER: Lord God, don't let me stand outside another's need, looking in as a spectator; but help me to do something for him, because of Christ. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

The saints prized the uncommon. Christ saw the dignity and worth of the things that are common to all.<sup>14</sup>

—EDITH HAMILTON

You've got to live with the nitty-gritty, man.

—SANFORD GREENBERG, age 25

None of us can have clean hands in a dirty world, but each of us should do what he can to leave behind him a cleaner world, however absurd his actions may appear to other men.<sup>15a</sup>

—A CHRISTIAN CENTURY EDITORIAL

Almighty Father, known in our silence, and entreated in our hunger for thee, nourish us now with the common bread of thy grace. Shape with thy hands the witness of this quiet company, that our ministry may be Christ's own life in our day. Bestow thy serenity and clean strength on each friend, granting us honest work and steadfast friendship in Christ. Deepen, O God, thy intention for our life in thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—THE KIRKCRIDGE PRAYER

The headlines of tomorrow are already being written in the vast realms of today's neglect.

—ALAN GEYER

The Church is called to be both a house of hospitality where the divine acts of healing occur and a servant on the move along the highways of need that honeycomb our world.

—GABRIEL FACKRE

A man's true wealth is the good he does in this world.

—MOHAMMED



## The Supper in the Upper Room

*They were at table eating.* Mark 14:18. Read verses 17-25.

Jesus and the twelve disciples came to an upper room which had already been prepared for their Passover meal. That meal is etched in our minds by Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper. This is how we probably shall always see it, the long table, the bearded disciples seated and looking at Jesus as he shares the meal, John "the beloved disciple" close beside him, Judas about to leave on his tragic errand.

The previous days have been a last confrontation with the Jerusalem authorities, days holding the dark threat of death. And further back, the months of hurrying witness to God's kingdom, up and down the land. All at the table sense a coming climax. An end of some sort is near. What will come tomorrow?

We would like to feel this was a joyous meal. Maybe so. They did join in singing before going to Gethsemane. But the feeling is one of sadness, sorrow, heaviness. Here the betrayal of Judas takes final shape. Here the bread and wine suggest the broken body and the shed blood. The blow seems soon to fall, and the wonderful passionate journey for God and his kingdom is running into a narrowing close. We feel the imminence of a last day.

PRAYER: Lord God, the story is old, but the remembrance still brings sadness and yet, a strange joy. It is the story of your love for us. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Together, full of grief, let us remember the victims [of Nazism], and then let us walk together into the future to seek again and again a new beginning—maybe far away, yet ever-present; let us try to find the good dream that wants to be realized in our hearts.<sup>2</sup>

—NELLY SACHS, *Jewish poetess, to young Germans*. Quoted in "Nobel Prize-Winners, 1966: 2) Nelly Sachs" by Gertrude C. Schwebell. *Saturday Review*, Dec. 10, 1966.

In the Christian tradition, idolatry is the most heinous of sins, [whether the idols are] golden calves or intangible abstractions such as the profit-and-loss principle. Our idolatry comes when we take this measurement, which is so useful in the *private* sector, and apply it blindly and irresponsibly to the *public* sector of society.

—HARVEY C. BUNKER

Whatever evil God sends upon me in this troubled life he will turn to my good, for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and is determined to do it, being a faithful Father.

—HEIDELBERG CATECHISM (1563)

Voltaire hated injustice, cruelty, senseless repression, hocus-pocus. In these virtues he was typical of his century on its better side. But if men cannot live on bread alone, still less can they do so on disinfectants.

—ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. —EMERSON

[God] promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

Sunday, March 17

## Who Do You Say He Is?

"If you are the Christ, tell us." Luke 22:67.  
Read Luke 9:18-22.

"If you are the Christ, tell us." This from the priests and scribes, that dawn of Friday, when Jesus was haled before the Sanhedrin. "Yes, or no—tell us!" Compare Peter's response to Jesus early in Jesus' ministry, "the great confession." Jesus had rejoined the disciples at Caesarea Philippi. He asks them, "Who do the people say that I am?" The answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, perhaps another of the prophets come back to life from death. Then Jesus asks, "But who do *you* say that I am?" And Peter blurts out in strong affirmation: "The Christ of God."

It is the powerful effect of Jesus' person upon me which requires me too to declare him to be "the Christ of God." I have no way of validating this claim when some person asks me why I affirm him to be the Christ. Yet because of him my own life has a deeper dimension, I see more clearly, I touch bottom more securely. I see no one who has a greater comprehension of its meaning. I need to affirm that he speaks to me of God.

PRAYER: Lord God, when I think of how I have come into the Christian faith and into a joyous knowledge of what your presence means, I know that the decisive fact has been the person of Jesus Christ. I am thankful for the gospel and the church which have led me to him. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Faith is worked by God and willed by man.

—ADOLF SCHLATTER

In reality nature is neutral. But we view the spectacle it presents to us through the colored glass of our own philosophy. This is why we always find in it the confirmation of our view of the world.<sup>24</sup>

—PAUL TOURNIER

Most of mankind is full of doubts and has few assurances, unable to zero in on many real convictions.

—ERICH FROMM

Agnosticism, when it becomes an ear-stopping dogma, may be as bad a mental handicap as superstition. There has never been any decisive proof either way about God's existence. Religious people tend to encounter among those who are not, a cemented certainty that belief in God is a crutch for the weak and the fearful. It would be just as silly to assert that disbelief in God is a crutch for the immoral and the ill-read.<sup>16</sup>

—HERMAN WOUK

The only real corrective for bad theology is better theology.

—JOHN MACQUERRIE

Where the Spirit rules, words and actions bear witness to the hidden and hoped-for reign of Christ in the terms of the ordinary affairs of secular history—because the Spirit is one with the Father who rules all things, and with the Son in whom all things are to be consummated.<sup>3</sup>

—LESLIE NEWBIGIN

Monday, March 18

## The Meal Becomes a Sacrament

*As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Matthew 26:26.*  
Read verses 26-29.

That night when Jesus ate with his disciples in the upper room, it was a whole meal that they ate. They had come not to observe a sacrament—as we know it now—but to eat supper. The bread would be crusty loaves. The wine would come in jugs. No tiny wafers or squares of bread, no communion cups in trays; it would be a solid meal.

In the very heart of that satisfying meal Jesus arose to say the words which forever after have led us to remember his amazing life with gratitude. He took a loaf, broke off pieces, gave some to each disciple, with the words: "This is my body."

In church at the communion table I receive this bread, the symbol of a life given for me. No observance in the church is older than this sacramental meal. Early after Christ's death the Christians were sharing the bread and the wine, with these words of memorial: "This is my body . . . this is my blood." The body broken on the cross is broken for us, the blood shed is shed for us, and because of this amazing gift of his life for the world, we are given life and love and joy in God.

PRAYER: Lord God, I am empty except thy Spirit fills me. I am nothing except thy life indwells me. I am useless except I am given thy will to do. Amen.

For Further Meditation

He calls us into his Church . . . to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

One word is a spring to action. Another, a quiet pool reflecting time and eternity. Yet another, a cloud of unknowing but dreaming. Another still, a lightning flash of recognition. The Word is a sacrament of reality and a paradigm of life.

All transcendence is now immanence since Christ has come.

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Is responsibility something which man himself has conjured, or is it *given* to him? The biblical answer, of course, is that it is given to him. For the Bible, after mythological and metaphysical overlay has been scraped away, God is not simply a different way of talking about man. God is not man, and man can only be really "response-able" when he *responds*. One must be responsible *for* something *before* someone.<sup>17</sup>

—HARVEY COX

Where do the secular and the religious converge and unite? On concern for the future of mankind.

—BARBARA HUBBARD

Everything that is, is holy. —WILLIAM BLAKE

A religion without Revelation is a religion without History, and it is just the historical element in Christianity which gives it its peculiar character.

—CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

Tuesday, March 19

## Is It I?

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, . . ." They began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" Mark 14: 18-19. Read verses 43-50.

They had been at the table for quite a while, when suddenly Jesus looked around, said that one of the twelve would betray him! Yet these were his friends, his disciples. He had chosen every one of them to be with him. Together they had endured the hardship of the open road, the deprivations of voluntary poverty, the opposition of the authorities. Yet despite the close-knit fellowship, one of them, Jesus said, would betray him.

His accusation unsettled every one of them. Each, aware of his potential weakness, trembled. In turn each asked sorrowfully, "Is it I?"

It might have been any one of the twelve, is the implication of the Gospel account. And to each one of us who now reads this account today there comes an anxious thought, "Could I betray him too?" Am I strong enough to withstand the test, willing to stay with him to the end, or do I also cave in when the pressure is heavy and my own gain is more important than fidelity to my Lord?

PRAYER: Lord God, let me never be too confident that I can stand fast against evil, for in an unguarded moment I may forget my loyalty to Christ and do what I never thought could be possible as a Christian. Keep me alert. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

A man who bows down to nothing can never bear the burden of himself.

—FEODOR DOSTOEVSKY

I take great comfort in God. I think he is considerably amused with us sometimes, but that he likes us, on the whole, and would not let us get at the matchbox so carelessly as he does unless he knew that the frame of his Universe was fire-proof.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

"The fundamental project of man is to be God," says Sartre. The fundamental project of religion is to *thwart* this project.

—TRUMAN DOUGLASS

Rudolf Bultmann once observed that "the question about God and the question about myself are the same question." This does not mean, as Jean-Paul Sartre would have it, that it is enough for each man to be his own god; nor does it mean, as Ludwig Feuerbach would have had it, that God is to be made in man's image. Rather it means that I do not know who I am until I know who God is, and confusion about one leads inevitably to confusion about the other.<sup>18a</sup>

—LLOYD J. AVERILL

Technology and the city belong; and the Church, while appreciating them, needs also to remain on guard against many of the concrete ways in which men's lives are distorted by them.<sup>19</sup>

—JOHN C. BENNETT



## Not Spared the Hour of Testing

*"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."*  
Luke 22: 40. Read verses 39-46.

The place is Gethsemane. The supper over, Jesus and his disciples sought shelter for the night in this garden, an olive grove. Drawing several of the disciples aside, he went apart to pray. They fell asleep while he was praying, and when he returned he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Jesus was speaking not of temptation as we ordinarily use the word, but of testing. The experience of Gethsemane was similar to that of the wilderness, where commitment was at stake. The New English Bible properly translates the verse: "Pray that you may be spared the hour of testing."

Jesus was not spared this hour. Sorrowfully and sympathetically the church remembers this. Three times he prayed that the cup of suffering be removed from him, yet three times this was denied him, and he said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Tested, he was rigidly faithful, obedient even to death.

Not even Jesus was spared the torment of moral struggle, the testing of his commitment. Shall we ask that it be otherwise for us? We too shall know the temptations which test our integrity, our faith.

PRAYER: Lord God, we fail thee so often, we deny what we ourselves most deeply cherish. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Every single individual maintains a struggle of some kind with the forces of good and evil, and in the silence of his soul holds some secret intercourse with the universe.

—HAROLD BEBBIE

I expect committed Christians to be, by the end of the century, a conscious minority, surrounded by a militant and arrogant paganism, which is the logical development of our secularist trend.

—ELTON TRUEBLOOD

You cannot hold together what God has not joined.

There is a Christian way to get the idea of God to work; one reaches it via one's need for integrity and purity, one's sense of failure at self-perfection, one's continuing dismay with his faults—in short, one's impotence, evil and need. The elements of the Christian's idea of God are thus achieved very slowly, and the minimum means are the help of the Scripture and a life of questing and continual striving.<sup>20a</sup>

—PAUL L. HOLMER

[God] promises to all who trust him . . . courage in the struggle for justice and peace.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

God does not threaten the humanity of man. On the contrary, the humanity of man can be threatened if the final word is that he is alone, that he is unknown to any being other than his fellows, that he is responsible to no authority above the state or the other powers of the world that claim his allegiance. The deepest source of his freedom may still be that he knows that he must "obey God rather than men."<sup>7</sup>

—JOHN C. BENNETT



Thursday, March 21

## Being in an Agony

*Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. Luke 22:44. Read verses 39-46.*

Nowhere else in Luke's account of Jesus' life is there a more pitying and compassionate word than we read here in the Gethsemane experience. Even when he writes of the crucifixion, he doesn't stress the racking pain of iron spikes in hands and feet. But in Gethsemane the agony is exposed, for the raw, terrifying thing it was. Sweat dropped like great clots of blood from his face; "in an agony he prayed more earnestly."

To look in on another's raw pain, to see the face of suffering, is to know again to what a terrible hour a man can come because of commitment. Not of Jesus' own choosing was this night in the garden of Gethsemane. But Jesus accepts it. "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

In recalling Gethsemane, no one of us can come save in a plea to be forgiven his own weakness, his own lack of commitment, yet thankful for the example of our Lord.

PRAYER: Lord God, we hold within our prayers all who have hard decisions to make, praying that in their struggle to find the truth and to do it they may know a strengthening presence in thee, whose grace is always sufficient. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

What characterizes our century is not so much that we have to re-build our world as that we have to re-think it. We need a profound questioning that will not separate us from the sufferings of men. —THOMAS MERTON

The man who cannot form himself but can only disguise himself in forms is under the dominant delusion of our time, that creativity is the criterion of human worth. —MARTIN BUBER

We care not alone, and if we look after the seconds, the years will take care of themselves. . . . [We cannot] decree today what can only be born tomorrow.

—LAURENS VAN DER POST

O Thou who transcendest all thought of Thee as the heavens are higher than the earth; we acknowledge that we cannot search Thee out to perfection, but we thank Thee that Thou, the Invisible, comest to us in the things that are seen; that Thy exceeding glory is shadowed in the flower that blooms for a day, in the light that fades; that Thine infinite love has been incarnate in lowly human life; and that Thy presence surrounds all our ignorance, Thy holiness our sin, Thy peace our unrest. Give us that lowly heart which is the only temple that can contain the infinite.<sup>21</sup>

—W. E. ORCHARD

We meet Christ in those moments which are most actual, most real, most immediate—not in those moments which are seemingly most holy, most isolated, or most heavenly.<sup>22</sup>

—THOMAS J. J. ALTIZER

## "Remove This Cup From Me"

"Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me." Luke 22: 42. Read Mark 14: 32-36.

Jesus' struggle to know and to accept the will of God ended only when he finally rose from prayer and woke his sleeping disciples, and then the soldiers came with Judas. Nowhere is his full humanity better evidenced than in the struggle in Gethsemane to accept what was willed for him and became inevitable, his death. This is no supine sacrifice of life. Jesus doesn't want to suffer. He doesn't want to die. Yet he will not evade suffering and death. "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me."

We who have hard decisions to make, which could mean costly sacrifice, will take comfort from knowing that Jesus also resisted suffering. He was no automaton, simply push-buttoned through unfeeling pain. Fully man, with all the hopes that can be dashed, all the fears that must be faced, all the nerve ends that shudder with pain, he wanted what we all want: life, health, a future. But above all he put obedience to God's will. At whatever cost. Even death. For us, this is something to recall today, something to give us pause, as we reflect on what God may require of us.

PRAYER: Lord God, when we look for a way out, lest we have to suffer for our convictions, prevent us from accepting the subtle compromises and self-deceiving conformities by which we deny our discipleship. Amen.

The love that matters is his for you—yours for him may at present exist only in the form of obedience. He will see to the rest.

—C. S. LEWIS

Moral indignation expressing itself in action (even if the action may seem occasionally misguided) is a far healthier and more encouraging index of the success of the educational venture, than is the moral apathy exemplified in lack of concern.<sup>11</sup>

—ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

If man were limited to the evidence of nature, the contradictions of history, or the reach of reason, his context of knowing, for all its exciting variety, would exclude the grounds upon which the Christian assurance of survival is built. Beyond nature and history is the realm of grace, of God's action on man's behalf; the power that can overcome man's finitude and the love that can heal his sin. It is this context of knowing and trust that undergirds his life here and makes possible his hope of a hereafter. It is a knowing and a not-knowing; the unknown element in the God he trusts is matched by an unknown future in what is to be. The mystery of what shall be then is not greater than the wonder he feels when he accepts the divine love now. To receive that love now is to trust it then; it is to affirm that nothing in all creation, neither death nor life, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—RAYMOND E. GIBSON

Vocation is the absolute claim of God upon the whole of life.

—JAMES A. PIKE

## Nevertheless

"Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."  
Luke 22: 42. Read Matthew 26: 36-46.

This word *Nevertheless*—it's like a dyke raised to keep the sea out, like a wall of defense, a bulwark. No matter what happens, we stand by what we believe.

Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that the cup of suffering might be removed. Not, however, at the cost of disobedience. God had to be willing to remove the cup. It was not to be removed. When this became clear, there was no alternative to obedience. "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

"Nevertheless!" In speaking the word we need to ask whether it's in our own vocabulary of faith too. I try every way out. I run to every door in the hope that an escape from duty and obligation will be opened for me. I put many alternative possibilities before myself and am tempted to choose what is less than honorable and responsible.

Do I really stand firm and cry "Nevertheless," and accept whatever sacrifice is required by responsibility? God's will and my will are often at variance. What I want may be inconsistent with God's purpose for me, as servant of his will. And am I prepared to yield to this primary will?

PRAYER: Lord God, it would be dishonesty to say with sure voice that I want to do your will. I know my evasions and my hypocritical dishonesties. Yet I hope for firmness in decision. Help me to stand fast. Amen.

True resignation consists in this: that man, feeling his subordination to the course of world-happenings, wins his way to inward freedom from the fortunes which shape the outward side of his existence. Inward freedom means that he finds strength to deal with everything that is hard in his lot, in such a way that it all helps to make him a deeper and more inward person, to purify him, and to keep him calm and peaceful. Resignation, therefore, is the spiritual and ethical affirmation of one's own existence. Only he who has gone through the stage of resignation is capable of world-affirmation.<sup>23</sup> —ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Our Father in heaven, your name be honored. Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need; and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have wronged us. Keep us clear of temptation, and save us from evil. For the kingdom and power and glory are yours forever. Amen.

—SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

All the generations of men, following each other in the course of so many centuries, must be considered as one man who continues always to subsist and is constantly learning.

—PASCAL

Law itself does not create order. It is *just* law which creates order. That is a lesson we have learned in our domestic experience; it is equally applicable to our international experience.

—ARTHUR J. GOLDBERG, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N.

## The Shared Bread of Heaven

"I am the living bread." John 6:51. Read verses 47-57.

Strange, vitalizing sustenance we draw from Christ. We hear about him, the sound of his words, the report of his life, death, and resurrection, and our souls are fed. How can it be that he becomes for us "the living bread"?

There is a hunger for God—a hunger which is not satisfied in the seeking, as the hunter finds sufficient satisfaction in the hunt itself. We need God himself! Yet we cannot engineer this encounter, we can only respond to it when it is offered us. Offered in Christ, "the living bread," whose "flesh" is given us for the soul's hunger. And we are fed.

Fed so fully that through us this bread can be shared with our brethren. "The living bread" of the Spirit takes on tangible form; it becomes "loaves and fishes," the physical food which feeds the mouths of hungry children, fills out their bodies in health, bread which means life and well-being for the multitude.

Through our gifts today in the One Great Hour of Sharing we express our gratitude for God's gift to us of Christ, "the living bread." As we share our food with a hungry world, we remember that as we did it "for one of the least of these," we did it for him.

PRAYER: Lord God, let our heart which responds to the gift of thyself in Christ move our hands now to clasp the neighbor in love, sharing with him both "the living bread" of the Gospel and the bread of our tables. Amen.

To give support to a man is complete only if one leads him to a certain autonomy and if one leads him to the point where he himself can become a support for others. Often the supreme support for us ourselves is that we are able to give support to others. God is both behind us and before us, and it is in that support that we can become persons and help others to become persons and be authentically Christian.

—PAUL TOURNIER

To be in a state of poverty is to be entrapped: that is, to be in a situation without choices, an environment without options. Poverty produces the sense of being shaped by forces beyond one's understanding and control, which renders the self insecure in all its aspects. Poverty is a feeling of personal unimportance. The conviction that the self is worthless is what distinguishes modern poverty from the "honest poor" of old or the ascetics of religious tradition. America is increasingly an "impoverished society."<sup>2</sup>

—WILSON C. McWILLIAMS, "Poverty: Public Enemy Number One," *Saturday Review*, Dec. 10, 1966.

Youth may drift in conformity to the tradition of their elders or to the tastes and whims of their peers, or they may creatively cope with today's challenges and discover a faith that transforms and renews them.

—CHARLES WILLIAM STEWART



Monday, March 25

## "You Will Deny Me"

"*You will deny me.*" Luke 22:61. Read verses 31-34.

The apostle Peter, so big a figure in the early church, after whom the most impressive church in all Christendom was to be named, is known to all Christians indelibly as the disciple who denied his Lord. St. Peter, yet also Peter who denied Christ.

Peter himself must have reported his cowardly weakness, for how else would the Christian community have learned of it? Did the telling of it soften his guilt? Or add to his self-punishment? Or was it a redemptive fact for the church to remember: Peter defeated, yet Peter victorious! And in our remembering of it, it is for us to say: I too can win the victory!

Earlier, before the actual denial on that Thursday night, Peter had been told by Jesus that Satan would sift him like wheat. In response to Jesus, Peter cried out the more loudly, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." A facade of courage, this was. And later it didn't stand up. The denial was made, and to this day is part of the record.

We remember Peter, with pity and compassion. The depth of his failure, the glory of his recovery. If we too have fallen, we too shall arise.

PRAYER: Lord God, there is no depth of denial from which a man cannot arise. For this grace in our weakness we give thanks. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

I owe this to God, that my every word and sense may speak of him.

—HILARY OF PONTIERS (315-367)

The deepest Christian duty in the modern, confused world in which we live is to work hard at freedom.

—LUIS MUNOZ MARIN, former Governor of Puerto Rico

Each choice we make is a step into the future, but let the step be a creative dance. Let the dance develop out of the continuities we inherit, rejoice in the complexities of the present, and be open to the possibilities of the future. Each step can be a selective decision, but no step will be final. Let us choose, and choose again, but always in the context of the mystery which is on both sides of generation and corruption, and infuses them. When we acknowledge that only God can transcend nature, our decisions to use the power we have over our own nature will be a continuous exercise in the practice of eliminating the negative and accentuating the positive, kept from the temptation to play God in making the final choice.

—GEORGE M. SCHURR

Lord, may I be at the right place at the right time with the right convictions. Where am I *now*, and what do I believe *here*?

Our mistakes and errors are not in vain, and it is no harder for God to deal with them than with what we regard as our good deeds.<sup>3</sup>

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

## Followed at a Distance

*Peter followed at a distance.* Luke 22:54. Read verses 47-54.

Peter alone followed, no other. Only Peter. The soldiers had come to arrest Jesus and with the connivance of Judas he was identified and taken into custody. The frightened disciples fled. Only Peter, whom we speak of as cowardly, he alone had the courage to follow. "At a distance," yes. But he stayed with Jesus, knew where they took him, couldn't leave the yard outside the high priest's house for anguish of heart.

We see ourselves in Peter. Impelled to follow Jesus, yet, burdened by our self-concern and fear, we follow "at a distance." We can't get away from him, yet we dare not be with him. We are drawn to him as by destiny, yet cling to our safety "at a distance."

Strange power of Jesus that, fearful as we may be about the cost of following, we still follow! Concerned as we may be about what lies at the end of the road, we still walk it! This is not alone Peter's story, it is our story. The story of a love and devotion we feel ourselves, which moves us too toward the strange events of Good Friday and Easter. We follow, even if "at a distance."

PRAYER: Lord God, there is a way we take hesitantly, oh so cautiously, following, yet not too close, him who walks before us, Jesus our Lord. Forgive us our hesitancy fully to commit ourselves; yet accept, we pray thee, the love which draws us to him, even if still "at a distance." Amen.

Majorities are only the evidence of what is, whereas minorities are often the seed of what will be.

—ALEXANDER DUMAS

There is a compelling need in our troubled world for men of concern and compassion to demonstrate the courage to relate Christian morality to the everyday problems that beset us.

—WALTER REUTHER

A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he has toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the *why* for his existence, and will be able to bear any *how*.<sup>12</sup>

—VIKTOR FRANKL

No communist has the right to be a mere onlooker.

—NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

If humanity is outraged by every kind of torture, is it not perhaps because it is clinging to the message of love? And is not this fidelity, in spite of all the faults of the church, the best proof of the truth of Christianity? Thus modern man appears to be disgusted with the religion for which he nevertheless feels a homesickness. He has repressed it, banished it from his life, proclaimed the exclusion of everything beyond the reach of the senses. He has consummated a great rift between the spiritual and the temporal world. And ever since, he has lived in a tragic duality.<sup>24</sup>

—PAUL TOURNIER

When we listen, God speaks; when we obey, God acts.

—ANONYMOUS

## He Sat Among Them

*When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Luke 22:55. Read verses 55-60.*

Peter was standing in the courtyard, where obviously many people, strangers to each other, might customarily gather, since he didn't apparently expect to be noticed. This must have been a very public place, where hands were warmed at a fire, talk exchanged, the news of the day discussed. That the big news was the arrest of Jesus and his detention inside the high priest's house is evident from the conversation a woman began about Peter, whom she noticed suspiciously. "This man also was with him," she remarked to the group around the fire. People look at Peter inquisitively, searchingly.

How would any one of us have responded? Peter had come to the courtyard hesitantly, frightened, wanting to see what would happen to Jesus, yet not courageous enough to get too close. How could he know what might be his own fate if he owned up to being a disciple? So Peter avoided involvement by denial. And what do we do when we're among those who have no interest in, or who show opposition to, our faith, or to our Lord? Do we speak up? Do we say, "Yes, I am a Christian"?

PRAYER: Lord God, we let others create an image of us, often of a bland, conforming person. Help us to declare for ourselves, who we are and in whom we believe. Amen.

Christianity sees salvation occurring not only in the sector of the explicitly religious, but in all dimensions of human existence, even there where man does not consciously interpret his action as religious, but where he loves in absolute responsibility, serves man, and accepts the inscrutability and disillusion of his existence willingly, i.e., with an ultimate hope in a meaning that he has not yet comprehended. The totality of the "human" is religious and the totality of the "religious" is human.

—KARL RAHNER

This day I shall have to do with God's persuading of his world. How shall it be? A tender and gentle, or furious and violent persuading? He will sing. He will scold. But by all means he *will* persuade. He will persuade *me*. The miracle is that he wants to.

[Lara went to church because] she needed the accompaniment of an inner music. She could not always compose such a music for herself. That music was God's word of life.

—BORIS PASTERNAK

Keep me sound of heart in spite of ingratitude, treachery, or meanness; preserve me from minding little stings or giving them; help me to live so honestly and fearlessly that no outward failure can dishearten me or take away the joy of conscious integrity; open wide the eyes of my soul, that I may see good in all things.

—PHILLIPS BROOKS

## Three Chances

*A maid, . . . a little later some one else . . . after an interval of about an hour still another.* Luke 22: 56-59. Read versus 34-62.

Peter had three chances to find courage to declare his loyalty to Jesus. First, a maid asked him if he was not among Jesus' followers. A little later, some one else asked. And a whole hour later, still another commented even more strongly on his possible association with Jesus. Only then did the cock crow, and Peter remembered the words of Jesus about his predicted denial. Peter left, weeping at his weakness.

Three chances. Many a man would have left the scene after the maid had first cast suspicion on him. If Peter had great fear, he would have waited for no further accusations. So then—perhaps he wasn't the arrant, frightened coward we have made him out to be? Perhaps, then, he hoped still that he'd stand fast in loyalty if the question should come at him again? It did come. Twice more. But he couldn't say the faithful word of conviction. He still denied.

How many chances before the last chance comes, to say what we believe? At some point there is no further chance. The denial stands. And we can only weep bitterly.

**PRAYER:** Lord God, in whom is forgiveness, how often you come, yearning for us to speak the word of loyalty and honor, and we deny you, hoping for one more chance. O Lord, give us courage to say yes. Amen.

Belief obliges those who hold it to put it to the utmost test of exposure to, and involvement in, all that is going on in the world and all that happens to each of us. One of the things that is always going on in the world is a debate, on theoretical, practical and emotional levels, about the existence and nature of God.

—DAVID E. JENKINS

A truly educated person *must* be a dissatisfied person. He will have been exposed to enough of the greatness of the past, and of the possibilities of the future, to remain permanently dissatisfied with the present. His vision may have come from the Old Testament prophets, or from the moral passion of Albert Camus, or from that prophet least honored in America, Karl Marx. He may have learned of the true, the good and the beautiful from Greek philosophy, or of sin and grace from Paul and Augustine. Wherever he has gotten it, such exposure gives him a sense of perspective in terms of which he must be willing to endure a state of permanent dissatisfaction. It is not a hankering for the past, but a creativity toward the future.

—ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN

It is time to build highways for the complete man. Man is more than a motorist. When highways are built, let them be built by people who care about man, not just about motorists.

—NEW YORK TIMES editorial

Because we are present to a world, we are condemned to meaning.

—MERLEAU-PONTY



## The Cock Crowed

*Immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.* Luke 22: 60. Read verses 31-34.

The crowing of the cock shocked Peter into the truth: he had denied his Lord. No further chance to do anything at all. Only to leave now, and to weep bitterly. So he went away.

At this point, came the realization of abject failure. The feared weakness had shown itself. The denial, so possible, had now been made. In remorse, he went away. The thing had been done.

What finality there is, when the die has been cast, when the decision is made, and we see with tragic clarity what the result of our choice is! We fool along, deluding ourselves that ahead of us still is the real choice. We put off saying where we stand, what we will do, hoping that somehow the real choice will never have to be made, or that it's so far ahead of us that we don't need to make our stand yet. And then suddenly the option is no longer ours. Doors close. The choices are ended. The road has no further turning. The cock crows. And we go away, remorseful, in tears. We have denied our Lord.

PRAYER: Lord God, the road is not endless and the choices do not always remain open to us, and today we must say what we are to do and who we are to be. The question before us needs answering. You have set before us the way of life and the way of death. Now is the time. Help us to see this. Amen.

In his weakness and sin, man tends either to seek to be more than man or less than man. It is enough for him to be man. We find Bonhoeffer saying: "While we are trying to grow beyond our manhood, to leave the man behind us, God becomes man and we have to recognize that God wishes us men too to be real men."

—JAMES K. MATHEWS

God did not wish us to be coerced, but persuaded. For that which is not voluntary is not enduring.

—GREGORY NAZIANZEN (330-389)

Mr. Feeblemind of Bunyan felt it inexpedient to attack Giant Despair except from hallowed ground. All ground is holy to the man of faith, and the wideness of God's mercy welcomes help from the least of his creatures. When we consider holy all the ground that God has made, many difficulties vanish. Conquest of the specters of the mind cannot come from any standpoint that begins by fettering opinion, whether of orthodoxy or of unorthodoxy. Mental cowardice is fatal to the progress of the soul.<sup>25</sup>

—RALPH TYLER FLEWELLING

The opportunity of church and university today is to live with change—never simply riding or resisting the wave of the future, but stimulating, criticizing, learning from, and sometimes directing revolution.

—ROGER L. SHINN

Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

## Peter Remembered

*And Peter remembered the word of the Lord. Luke 22:61. Read verses 31-34, 54-62.*

What Peter remembered was that Jesus had warned him about this denial. "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me." This was spoken on Thursday, after the supper. Then came the return to Gethsemane for the night. Later, when most of the disciples were sleeping, the soldiers arrived. The arrest was made. Jesus they took away, Peter following at a distance. In the courtyard of the high priest's house Peter three times denied knowing Jesus. It is near dawn. The cock crows. And Peter remembers.

Peter goes away, weeping bitterly. He has denied his Lord. And now he remembers Jesus' prediction: Satan would sift him like wheat.

From now on Peter's whereabouts are not exactly known. In Galilee, he is among those to whom the risen Christ appears. Then when Pentecost has come Peter is there, the leader! It is he who is in charge. It is he who preaches to the curious crowds. Strange? Not at all. This too was part of what Jesus had foreseen: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

PRAYER: Lord God, let me never think myself lost when remorse overwhelms me, but help me too to remember that out of death comes new life, for me too. Amen.

I believe in a God who is outside ourselves and who confronts us in history, a God of terrible vengeance who hears the cry of the helpless. It is *this* God whom American Christians and Jews would do well to remember these days. One of the most "relevant" things the churches could do today is to encourage the fear of this fire.<sup>10b</sup>

—PETER L. BERGER

He calls us into his Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in the service of men.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

In the Bible, in church history, and today, it is obvious that religion is often the device by which men protect themselves from God. Much of the work of the prophets and of Jesus was a breaking out of the religious ghetto, a concern for the full life of mankind. Often this meant an entrance into political life. Sometimes the test of biblical faith came in the political arena, as Elijah confronted King Ahab or as Jesus confronted Pontius Pilate. We know how politics was a test of the American church in the period of slavery, of the German church in the Nazi era. Sometimes it is the test of our church today.

—ROGER L. SHINN

In this, only God is God: his absence is news, and the rumor of his death reveals in every heart the anxiety of change.

## The Glory of the Lord

"Now is the Son of man glorified." John 13:31.  
Read verses 31-35.

This is, strangely, a high moment for Jesus. Strangely, because with the supper ended on that Thursday night, Judas, who shared the meal, "went out." The somber words, freighted with sadness, follow: "And it was night."

The Gospel of John is written uniformly in a high, mystical elevation of thought. John sees the whole sad drama of the arrest, the crucifixion, then the resurrection as a predetermined unfolding of God's will. For him, Jesus, in his own feeling for himself, is Messiah. Plainly then Jesus would know the time of God's most significant self-disclosure, the appearance of his "glory." This time is now—in the sacramental Passover meal and in these final hours with his disciples, before he leaves them.

We, looking back, see a glory too in this complete obedience of Jesus. He accepts God's will, knowing his life now must be a sacrifice and a witness. Offered in suffering it must end in death. To enter into this experience is not possible for us. We can only come thankfully, and in awe of its grandeur. What is happening here is for our salvation.

PRAYER: Lord God, there is a glory here beyond our understanding, a holy place we cannot enter. We come content if only we can touch a bit of this holiness, knowing it will be sufficient for today. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Jesus makes himself one with the world's wounds. These wounds—his and the world's—are the only context for proclaiming and understanding the text of the world which he is and brings.

The believers say, "We have seen the Lord!" The world says, "Unless I see the wounds, I will not believe."

My prayers, my sacrifices, my life and my death [are all for Allah].

—five-times-a-day prayer of the BLACK MUSLIMS

The divine process is first manifest as Father, Lord, Creator; then it is manifest as sacrificial Son in Jesus Christ; then it is manifest in the universal form as Spirit. But it is one Lord, one God who is manifest in these successive and progressive forms.<sup>22</sup>

—THOMAS J. J. ALTIZER

Let the world know this: The church looks at the world with profound understanding, with sincere admiration, with a sincere intention not of conquering it, but of serving it; not of destroying it, but of appreciating it; not of condemning it, but of strengthening and saving it.

—POPE PAUL VI

The enriched faith that results from combining scientific and biblical insights may demand richer concepts and symbols of God than present ones. The search for these will require using both the speculative and the biblical modes of thought.

—HAROLD K. SCHILLING, physicist

## Rejected by the Leaders

*The elders of the people . . . both chief priests and scribes; . . . they began to accuse him.* Luke 22: 66-23: 2. Read Luke 22: 66-23: 2.

Nowhere was there anyone to defend Jesus. Only one person is reported even to have disagreed with the action of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea. Who has ever stood lonelier, more unbefriended, before his accusers?

The trial before the Council sounds at first like a heresy trial, Jesus claiming, as we hear the report, to be the Son of man and the Son of God. "Blasphemy!" the priests and scribes shouted. But when they brought their quarry before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, no longer did the priests lay accent on Jesus' alleged blasphemy, now they intimated treason. A better charge on which to secure a wanted death sentence: "perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king." Never mind the honesty of the matter. Stack the cards. Get the death sentence, no matter what the truth.

Can people in high places cave in, too, choosing another man's death rather than to face the judgment expressed in his word and in his life? These did.

PRAYER: Lord God, when men are given great responsibility in high office, empower them to see the truth and to stand firmly for it. And if this is our personal duty, help us to do it ourselves. Amen.

In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.

—DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

The New Testament writers constantly exhorted their readers not to be anxious about what to say. They were repeatedly assured that if they were obedient, if they did what they were supposed to be doing, the right words would be supplied them when the moment came. Speaking about God in a secular fashion requires first of all that we place ourselves at those points where the restoring, reconciling activity of God is occurring, where the proper relationship between man and man is appearing. This means that evangelism, the speaking about God, is political, and Phillippe Maury is right when he says that "politics is the language of evangelism."<sup>17</sup>

—HARVEY COX

"Why did you leave your temples and come out into the world of politics?" "We didn't. The world came into our temples."

—HAROLD BOSLEY, to a Vietnamese Buddhist monk

Till you have learned to serve men, how can you serve spirits [i.e., God]? —CONFUCIUS

Much that passes as Christianity is tribalism, pure and simple. —DAN DODSON, sociologist

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." So?

—WATTS RIOTER, a 21-year-old high-school dropout



Tuesday, April 2

## Blindman's Buff

*The men who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and asked him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?"* Luke 22: 63-64. Read Luke 6: 27-30.

The soldiers set Jesus in their midst, standing in a mocking circle about him. One tied a rag around his eyes, then twirled him until he was dizzy. A blow from one, then from another, as he staggered, unable to escape the next unseen hand. They taunted him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?"

He spoke no word, suffered in silence the immediate pain. "Love your enemies," he had said, "do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." This his disciples remembered, and in his fortitude in the events of the night of his arrest they had learned that he meant it.

What minor pain we his followers suffer for our convictions, we who know no mocking, no beatings, no sport made of us, as we go safely about our community as Christians. But we have brethren in Christ in other countries, where to stand for one's faith is to know loss, torment, even death. Let us pray for these who "for Jesus' sake" accept suffering.

PRAYER: Lord God, there is a stain upon all mankind in this tragic mocking and beating of Jesus, for the guilt is ours too. Forgive us. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

We are human beings. Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate.

—A TEEN SLOGAN

A group of anthropologists has finally discovered the missing link between the apes and civilized man. It's us.

—GEORGE DESMOND

We live in a time when nonbelief is in fashion; it has been for about a hundred years. Sheep are sheep, whether they are all leaping over the fence or all huddling in the fold.<sup>16</sup>

—HERMAN WOUK

A kite gives visibility to the wind.

What can give visibility

to the psyche? Painting, sculpture, architecture.

To the mind?

To the spirit?

It is catastrophe when evil triumphs, but it is an even greater catastrophe if it compels the just to resort to injustice in order to combat it. Unless the world returns to moral conscience, to the value of the spirit and to its primacy over force, power is only a source of destruction.<sup>24</sup>

—PAUL TOURNIER

Lord, touch my agony, apathy, and absence, and make me present to the agony, apathy, and absence of the world, my neighbor, my brother.

[God] calls us into his Church to resist the powers of evil.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

## King of the Jews

*And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"* Matthew 27:29. Read verses 27-31.

It was on the charge of treason, never substantiated, that Jesus was crucified. Over his head on the cross the words of the charge were nailed—we still see the letters: INRI—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Jesus died on a faked political charge, the charge that he sought kingship and thus countenanced revolt against Rome.

The charge is long lost in the subsequent elevation of Jesus to a different kingship. "King" is one of the titles we ascribe to Jesus, who, we say, possesses a royalty which makes us all his glad subjects. In cathedrals and high liturgical churches are the mosaics and paintings and tapestries on which appear the enthroned Christ. Even in the churches of simpler architecture, without the adornment of ecclesiastical art, we sing of him as King, in our hymns.

He never sought kingship, of any sort, only servanthood. He came not to rule, but to serve. But in our devotion we could not but ascribe to him a majesty and honor for which the title "King" alone expresses our faith. Let us serve him.

PRAYER: Lord God, who hast bestowed on Jesus the name which is above every name, let now the tongue confess him Lord, who humbled himself even to death on the cross, and now is exalted on high. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

In order that I respect a man, I require that he has in some way participated in the passions of his time. —OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

I expect that all those will gather together who do not want to be dogs and who are determined to pay the price that has to be paid if man is to be something more than a dog. —ALBERT CAMUS

The way to the creative frontiers lies through the heart of traditions.

All nations live under the providence, the judgment and the love of God.

—JOHN C. BENNETT

[God] judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles. In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself. —STATEMENT OF FAITH

The work of Christian missions has been the great instrument of secularization in the midst of the ancient religious societies of Asia and Africa. The preaching of Jesus Christ as the sole Redeemer, liberating men from the hitherto unbreakable grip of the old sacral order in family and tribe, has been itself the great revolutionary force.<sup>3</sup> —LESLIE NEWBIGIN

## The Crowd's Choice

*"Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus . . . ?" Matthew 27: 17. Read versus 15-23.*

Two men were prisoners on that morning when Pontius Pilate had to make his decision about Jesus. Two. One had been jailed some time before, an insurrectionist, a man charged with violence against the government. He was well known to the crowd, Barabbas. The second, Jesus, had just been brought in, after a night in the custody of the high priest's guard. One was to be freed, the other would be crucified.

The crowd made the decision. On this day, by tradition, one prisoner was given freedom, as a sop to the people. Pilate would let the people declare whom they wanted. They spoke. Let Barabbas be freed. Let Jesus be crucified.

One more door to Jesus' release was closed, a final door. Closed by a clamorous, blood-thirsty crowd which could easily be swayed. "Let him be crucified." So Jesus goes to his death on Calvary.

There is a terrible sadness that men, moved by prejudice, hate, fear, can do this evil. And we are not exempt.

PRAYER: Lord God, we are too prone to excuse the evil we do together, too slow to stand fast where we stand alone; grant us the firmness of conscience we need to do what is right, despite the pressure of the crowd. Amen.

The world is round. Only one third of it is asleep at a time. The other two thirds is wide awake making mischief.

—DEAN RUSK, U.S. Secretary of State

It is still true that only God can make a tree, but it is no longer true that only God can end the world.

Men, said the Devil,  
are good to their brothers:  
they don't want to mend  
their own ways but each other's.

—PIET HEIN

In the world, things are only within severe limits within my power. But in my assignment—in what God has for me to do today—things are wholly within my power and are the size I make them under my authority. This by definition is my entire responsibility. In my sphere this day, even God will be the size I make him: that is the divine self-effacement. But I shall be the size of the issues I face and do not evade: that is the divine judgment. And He Who Assigns will be with me and for me: that is the divine grace.

Peace and progress have come only as truth has gained over superstition, prejudice, hate and dogma.

—CHARLES A. WELLS

Faith is the lack of resistance to that which you hope to receive.

—AMBROSE WORRALL

Injustice must be opposed, however difficult or unpopular the issue. —LYNDON B. JOHNSON

## "What Evil Has He Done?"

And he [Pilate] said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified." Matthew 27: 23. Read Luke 23: 13-25.

A rational answer is never possible in a highly emotional situation. What mob ever listened to reason? Feelings run high, and feelings determine the outcome. It was so when Jesus was brought before Pilate. The time for reason was past, as Pilate discovered. "Why, what evil has he done?" he asked. But no rational reply was given.

How justice trembles when mobs rule! Only in an ordered court can a fair trial be held. And when the mob takes over, the governing power in the community must take decisive action. This Pilate failed to do, thus abdicating his political responsibility. He let the action rest with those who were noisiest and whose loud cries he let be assuaged by a sacrificial victim, Jesus.

Do we feel, or do we think? We. Will we rely on reason or give way to emotion? How much this comes up, in the family where we will not hear a child out; in the city where the mob seeks blood; among the nations where we react instead of think, and the soldiers march. We may not command others how to respond. We can, however, determine how we ourselves will respond.

**PRAYER:** Lord God, give backbone to all who must stand firm if our communities are to be safe and justice is to be done; and give me the grace to support right action. Amen.

Nobody's answers are any better than his questions. —JACQUELINE GRENNAN, college president

I verily believe that in the end the truth is might and will prevail, but the end sometimes seems a long, long way off.

—ROBERT MOSES

If only one man knew the secret of atomic energy, we would admit readily the immensity of his power. But consider the possibility of one man's having the secret of making *all* people believe what he wishes them to believe? *That* would dwarf all other powers, for good or evil. Consider two minor examples: the almost psychotic George Fox's convincing the English people to abolish slavery; the truly psychotic Adolf Hitler's convincing millions of sober Germans that they belonged to a Master Race entitled to wreak vengeance and torture on helpless people whom they considered inferiors.<sup>2</sup>

—JOHN F. WHARTON, "What I Have Learned—IX: 'Does Anyone Know Reality?'" *Saturday Review*, Dec. 3, 1966.

A nation is known not just by its songs, but by its concerns. It is disquieting to learn that some government officials seem more concerned about the fact that other nations may not respect our strength than they are about the fact that other nations may not respect our wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

—NORMAN COUSINS, "The Trouble Beyond Vietnam." *Saturday Review*, May 21, 1966.

Let us pray for peace—but for justice more. Let us pray for reconciliation—but for truth, more.



## Pilate Claims Exoneration

*Pilate . . . took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood." Matthew 27:24. Read verses 24-26.*

Pilate washed his hands of the matter. He took a basin of water, publicly washed his hands, declared his innocence of Jesus' death. And then he turned Jesus over to the soldiers, to be crucified.

He hadn't wanted him crucified. "Why, what evil has he done?" he had asked, and he had received no answer! But they insisted. "Yours is the guilt," he seemed to say to the mob, "see to it yourselves." And the mob agreed that this was all right, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Where is the guilt, really? With Pontius Pilate? With the priests and elders? With the incited mob? With the silent public? . . . Where?

You and I were not there. Yet, strangely, we feel the taint of guilt, as if the stain of this blood has colored every man's life since that time. Who is really innocent of the kind of betrayal, the kind of corruption, the kind of vengeance and brutality, the kind of silence, because of which the Christ in other men is crucified? Who dares wash his hands of this guilt and claim innocence?

PRAYER: Lord God, still today the good man suffers the rejection of those who should honor and support him, wherever he is controversial and struggles for unpopular causes. Forgive us our refusals, our silences. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Because men do not fortify justice, they justify force.

—PASCAL

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

Christians should not be deceived into believing that issues of war and peace, planning for peace, a program for peace are all so complicated that they can be handled only by experts. Of all things, man's inhumanity to man is most easily understood by the individual man.

Christians who want peace should demand answers from the governmental leaders of the world as to why there is war and not peace. Christians should study to learn for themselves the issues of war and peace and the way to solve these problems. Then, Christians should speak out firmly, demand that solutions be arrived at that they know are possible.

—BEN M. HERBSTER

We have personally experienced the dread which has kept many people from freely exploring and discussing the development of global safety systems. . . . We believe there is still a tradition of freedom for the pro and con public discussion of man's emerging new technical management power to gain dominion over the man-made dangers of war.

—HOWARD AND HARRIET KURTZ

Democracy is the worst form of government except all others.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

Sunday, April 7

## Your King Comes

Rejoice greatly, . . . Shout aloud, . . . Lo, your king comes to you. Zechariah 9:9. Read verses 8-12.

The title "King" seems so out of place. What king enters a city riding an ass, when kingship deserves a horse armored in shining metal and bedecked with brilliant harness? What king enters with a few roughly dressed companions, when his royal dignity calls for soldiers marching in cadence, to the sound of trumpets? This is no kingly entrance. And yet—do we not want to say "King," because no less honor should be given to Jesus the Christ than to a political ruler?

He enters Jerusalem truly a king. Not in the splendor of kingly robes, nor demanding servile homage. He comes meek and lowly, yet sovereign because of the regal splendor of his witness to God, who has "bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Not just "Lord" but "my Lord." The knee that bows is mine. The tongue that confesses his preeminence as the Son of God is my tongue. It is I who rejoice. It is I who lift up my voice. It is my king who today has come.

PRAYER: Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Amen.

For Further Meditation

A layman who has learned to see the marks of Christ's presence in the world said joyously: "Every day is now Palm Sunday, for there isn't any day when I do not see my Lord riding by. It is a great experience to hail him in the world during the week and not only in the church on Sunday. Every morning when I go to work I ask myself, 'Where will I see him?' It is high adventure to go to work like that."

—EMMA LOU BENIGNUS

In Christ, the highest took the form of the lowest, and thus showed that the lowest is the highest.

—TRUMAN DOUGLASS

Christians do not go through the battles of history as the master race. They go through them as the servant people, looking up to the Father who is alone the Lord of history, accepting his disposition of events as the context of their obedience, relying on his spirit as their guide. They go through history as the witness people, in whom the Spirit is present to bear witness of the real meaning of the things which happen in the world, so that—in relation to these things—men are compelled to make decisions for or against God.<sup>8</sup>

—LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

If we love, we can never observe the other person with detachment, for he is always and at every moment a living claim to our love and service.

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

God makes the weak strong and the strong tender.

—DOUGLAS V. STEERE

Monday, April 8

## Attention Must Be Paid

*We preach Christ crucified.* 1 Corinthians 1:23.  
Read verses 18-24.

A death is an awesome fact. Any man's death. But no death has so compelled the attention of men as that of Jesus Christ. His is *the* death, around which generations of men have stood, aware of a significance in it that transcends all deaths.

The stark realism of this death must be observed by us, its tragedy entered into. The tree cut for the crucifixion was big enough to bear the weight of a man, cut to the size of death. No pretty decorated cross of gold and jewels to adorn a girl's neck. The cross on which Jesus was hung crushed him to his knees on the Via Dolorosa. Crucifixion is death in agony. And to that death attention must be paid, even beyond the fact of its tragedy. For what we see here is not simply a man killed by hate and fear, but the love of God, who in Christ accepted costly suffering for our salvation. Because of this, "we preach Christ crucified," the gospel of our redemption, the good news of a love so generous, so strong, that no force of evil can deny it. Jesus said, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." So it has been. This is the death that has redeemed us.

PRAYER: Lord God, though Jesus died, I think of him as alive, and know that because of him my own life has found new depth and meaning. I too sing, "In the cross of Christ I glory." Amen.

## For Further Meditation

The malevolent trinity of suffering, tragedy and death has yet to be dethroned. Lucidity demands that we deal with human life in light of its limitations. Once we accept the limitations that constitute the human condition, we become free to explore the possible.<sup>15b</sup>

—SAM KEEN

Man's greatest energy comes not from his dynamos but from his dreams. . . . But the quality of man's dreams can only be a reflection of his subconscious. What he puts into his subconscious, therefore, is quite literally the most important nourishment in the world.<sup>2</sup>

—NORMAN COUSINS, "The Computer and the Poet." *Saturday Review*, July 23, 1966.

Every parting means a meeting elsewhere, and every meeting is a new bondage.

—D. H. LAWRENCE

Jesus Christ seeks: for participation in a divided world; for freedom in a cut-off world; for possibility in an oppressive world; for significance in an aimless world. In a word, he seeks for integrity, for freedom, for hope and for dignity. All these longings are of God.

—JAMES K. MATHEWS

Authentic theology emerges out of the dialogue between the Gospel and the world.

—GEORGE M. WEBBER

The greatest change in the religion of the future will be the recognition of change itself.

—LEON PUTMAN

Tuesday, April 9

## God So Greatly Loved Us

*"The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."* John 6:51. Read verses 47-51.

Jesus' life was taken from him. Through careful surveillance, conspiracy, and, finally, betrayal by a disciple, he was arrested, condemned to death, and crucified. We see in all this the black evil which men did in bringing about his death.

But Jesus himself seems not to have thought of his death as the result of man's evil action alone; he saw it as a freely given act of his own. Obviously men had to perpetrate the death. But he himself gave himself to death.

The evangelist John declares this throughout his Gospel. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. . . . No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Jesus' life is freely given, the seal of God's love for men. As John says, "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The flesh given for us!

It seems a contradiction. The evil in men brought about Jesus' death. Yet that death, determined by the will of God, was for our salvation.

PRAYER: Lord God, whose love for us is seen in the cross, where Jesus' obedience even to death is for our salvation, give us the grace to accept this death as for us, and to yield thee grateful obedience. Amen.

For Further Meditation

It is in defeat, in brokenness, in alienation and despair that the Word finds and addresses us. Will the new program on peace be born of that Word, the Word which judges and empowers anew? Can the covenant of faith recover its integrity over against the covenant of nation by which it has long been prostituted? Can we grasp anew our unconditional calling to God's reconciling work in the world? Can men become free indeed in the bosom of the church, so that they dare to be free in the world?<sup>18b</sup>

—PAUL PEACHEY

Technology has always been, and still remains, an essential part of man. The question, therefore, is not whether man can master technology, the question is whether man can master himself. This is the technological imperative; this is the humanistic imperative.

—MELVIN KRANTZBERG

Faith is the affirmation of life—or, more precisely, of the one life in which all life participates. It is the deliverance from the worship of the lesser gods, from idolatry. And without such a basic confidence all men, whether they call themselves Christians or atheists, are sick, truncated, even evil.<sup>20b</sup>

—VAN A. HARVEY

If men have to be governed, the same is even more true of nations. No crime committed by an individual begins to compare with the crimes of nations.<sup>2</sup>

—NORMAN COUSINS, "Thought For the New Year." *Saturday Review*, Dec. 24, 1966.



## His Presence Is Forever

"Yet a little while I am with you." John 13:33.  
Read John 14:18-23.

In time, as we figure time, it was only "a little while" that Jesus was with his disciples. Only a few years at the most, all told. And from the point where he spoke these particular words, as John reports them, there were to be only a few hours, less than a whole day, that he would be alive, from Thursday night to Friday afternoon. Then—death.

But time has meant so little in God's chronology. Our life is not lived in days and years, but in the depth of our experience of God, a timeless, loving relationship. Jesus himself said that he would be present wherever two or three persons were gathered in his name. And so it is. He is present as we remember his words, celebrate his lordship, join in worship, eat the sacramental meal. Companionship with men only "a little while," he nevertheless is with men always, regardless of time. "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Death is no barrier to such manifestation. "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Jesus who lived and died, and then was buried, is also the risen Christ whose presence is forever.

PRAYER: Lord God, there is a presence which awakens me to hope and faith, and in the fellowship of Christian believers I hear the words of Christ across all time, as a saving truth. In this truth I rejoice. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Teach me to see you and reveal yourself to me in my search.

—ANSELM (1033-1109)

Reality is a matter of perception and interpretation. A definition of God or a description of an atom is only a "model." So gravitation, in different modes of perception, is attraction between bodies (Newton) or a warp in the space-time continuum (Einstein). So, too, my faith is not imposed on me: I choose it.

Who are you, reborn in Christ, to feel threatened by anything new and different?

—JOSEPH A. HOWELL

The Church's mission to all nations is a participation in the work of the triune God. In it, Christ continues his work of confronting men with the decision concerning their true end. It becomes, as he was in his incarnate life, the point at which the end becomes immediate for men; the kingdom of God is at hand. But the mission is fulfilled, as his ministry was fulfilled in dependence upon the Father, who determines the events by which it is outwardly governed and who alone knows and determines the times of growing and of harvest.<sup>8</sup>

—LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

There are two things in the world: politics and mysticism.

—CHARLES PEGUY

God reveals himself continuously to man by imprinting his image upon him.

—THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274)

## "For the Forgiveness of Sins"

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:28. Read verses 17-30.

They sat about the table, twelve disciples. Jesus at the head. It was the Passover meal, but no usual Passover meal. Impending betrayal, suffering, death, were in Jesus' mind. Apparently not in the disciples' minds, who even in this tense, heavy hour were not quite alert to what was happening, although when Jesus spoke of betrayal, they were sorrowful and bewildered; and when he passed to them the bread and wine, with the unusual sacramental words, they must have wondered, and feared.

The evangelists all see this sacramental meal as an act of forgiveness of sins. "For many." Not for the disciples alone. All men ever since, as they come to this table, where the words of Jesus' are repeated for us to hear, have heard the promise of forgiveness of sins. Here in this upper room, the grace of God, tied to the freely offered and poured-out blood of Jesus, is given us. We know that there is a commerce here between God and us, through Jesus, and that the gift made is to reconcile us, through forgiveness, to the Father.

PRAYER: Lord God, all-merciful Father, who didst take on the flesh of man and become incarnate in Jesus, thy Son our Lord: for the gift of thyself in Jesus, in the bread of his body and the wine of his blood, we give thee thanks. Amen.

The reason for loving God is God himself; the measure of loving God is to love him beyond measure. —BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (1090-1153)

The relation of the Church to man in his history is not merely one of *solidarity*, but also one of *separation*. Here also the Church, when it is faithful, follows the Lord who by his very solidarity with men pronounced the divine judgment on them, whose Cross was both the ultimate sign of his complete identification with sinful men and also the point at which God's total rejection of man's sin was manifested.<sup>8</sup>

—LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

A Christian and a church *may* be effective where they are: they *cannot* be effective where they are not. We who have the promise of the Presence *always* need to plan to be present *everywhere*, under the guiding of this Presence.

If the Christian norm is to be useful it must also have enough body and definition to withstand the antinormative tendencies of our time. Our vision of the life God has given us the freedom to grow into must be both flexible enough to exploit the rich promise of that freedom and coherent enough not to dissolve under pressures of our time and thus allow our freedom to revert to chaos.<sup>18c</sup>

—MYRON B. BLOY, JR.

I sometimes think that what America needs more than anything else is a hearing aid.

—ADLAI STEVENSON

## "It Is Finished"

*He said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30. Read verses 28-42.*

This word, "It is finished," the last of the seven words from the cross, is more than a tragic acknowledgement of death finally come; it is the heralding of a divine accomplishment. Jesus' death has never, in the eyes of the Christian community, been a simple, factual dying; it has been, for us, an amazing gift, a death for us. "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received," writes Paul "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures." The death is ordained in God's loving concern for his people. The New English Bible appropriately translates the phrase, "It is accomplished!" (Note the triumphant exclamation point.)

This death, then, is for me. If we say, "He died for our sins," the conclusion is: "He died for my sins." With earth-wisdom I cannot prove this; with God-wisdom I receive it and accept it. Somehow, this death is known to be for me; I see it as having a very personal meaning. It is not the death of a man, not that only; it is the death God entered into for my sake. And before such amazing love I can only stand in awe, humbly blessing God for it.

PRAYER: Lord God, let the sorrow of this day cleanse me of my sin and make it once again possible for me to start my life afresh, in new disciplined devotion. Amen.

The cross is the intersection of time and eternity.

—SIMONE WEIL

The church can hope to contribute to the transformation of the world only as it is itself transformed in contact with the world. The God who has sent his Son to the cross and manifests his power in weakness has brought us to this point and offers his people new opportunities of service and witness.

—CONFERENCE ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY (Geneva 1966)

There is a Story about a Great Wound that took all of us to inflict and can heal all our afflictions.

God is telling us something in the new situation in which we find ourselves. The rending of the veil of the Temple in an earthquake opened up the Holy of Holies to the world, and the earthquake of secularism has shaken us out of our hiddenness and complacency.

—FULTON J. SHEEN

In the Crucifixion the Word has finally died to its original form, losing its transcendent glory and its primordial holiness, while fully becoming flesh. Only in the Crucifixion, in the death of the Word on the Cross, does the Word actually and wholly become flesh. Finally, the Incarnation is only truly and actually real if it effects the death of the original sacred, the death of God himself.

—THOMAS J. J. ALTIZER

In the very moment when man did his worst, God did his best. The Cross inverts the daily values, the street expectations.

Saturday, April 13

## The Middle Day

*On the sabbath day they rested according to the commandment. Luke 23: 56. Read verses 50-56.*

This is the day between Good Friday and Easter. In that ancient time before the days were named as we name them, it was the sabbath, a day of rest. The day previous, Jesus had died and his body had been laid by Joseph of Arimathea "in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid." Women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee saw all this, then returned to someone's home nearby, to prepare the spices and ointments for the final care of Jesus' body. The following day, the sabbath, a day of prescribed rest, they waited.

We wait, too. Yesterday the crucifixion. The day of remembered sorrow, the grief of the disciples, the empty painful loss. Tomorrow is not yet here. For the first disciples its surprise would be complete, they anticipated no new revelation. For us the knowledge of the resurrection lifts the burden of grief from today, for the last word, as we now know, is the victory over death. We wait knowing the promise is sure, the hope will be answered; God has won the victory.

PRAYER: Lord God, for some this day is one of waiting, for upon them has come some sorrow and grief, and they wait for renewal of faith and assurance of victory over death. Give them the faith of the resurrection for their comfort. Amen.

For Further Meditation

God poured new wine into old wineskins. The wineskins burst—but the Wine was not lost.

If God is dead, then death is God, and perhaps the best motto for human life is what Dante wrote over the entrance to Hell: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter."<sup>15b</sup> —SAM KEEN

Man is spirit, achieving consciousness, thinking about himself; and he is history, involved in perpetual change. And because he is both, he can fulfil his nature only by reflecting on the historic situation in which he is placed and which is propelling him forward towards God's eternity, so that, in thus reflecting on himself as historically conditioned, he actuates his spiritual being, and thus at the same time propels his own history towards its destination.<sup>26</sup> —KARL RAHNER

Out of this turmoil, there must somehow come a New Church. Now I see it; now I don't. But come it must. —DANIEL CALLAHAN

Is everything sad going to come untrue?  
—A J. R. R. TOLKIEN *hobbit*

Men are the carriers of strange secrets. I believe these are partly the secrets of the evolutionary future. Man is not really visible or definable. He has to be encountered.

—LOREN EISELEY, *anthropologist*



## I Believe

"He has risen." Matthew 28:6. Read verses 1-10.

We come to Easter surprised at the joy the day brings us. Each year it is the same. How many years have passed for any one of us, and still the day has its surprise, that we should be made so glad in it! We think of the centuries that have disappeared in the vastness of history, and yet each new year brings Easter freshly! "He is risen!" is proclaimed from pulpits in a hundred lands, and we who have come to declare our faith, respond with joy.

I search my heart to find the cause of this joy. It isn't in my knowing that Christ has risen, for this is given me in my faith, not in knowledge. I who am so far removed in time and place have not "seen" the risen Christ. My neighbor who questions me about my belief gets no answer that satisfies his logical mind. And yet—I believe. In the heart of my life there pulses a creative affirmation that says it is so. God lives! Christ lives! I live! In all eternity this is true, must be true, will be true. God's life ends not in a dark tomb, but bursts open the sepulcher, demands light and freedom. "He is risen!"

PRAYER: Lord God, who art manifest in the risen Christ, victorious over sin and death, in whose birth, death, and resurrection thou hast shown us thine unending love for thy people, and for me, be thou blessed for the resurrection faith which gives us joy and peace in believing. Amen.

## For Further Meditation

Something is loosed to change the stricken world.

—STEPHEN VINCENT BENET

Without the cold and desolation of winter, there could not be the warmth and splendor of spring.

—HO CHI MINH

The Bible is only incidentally concerned with man's waywardness, activity and evil. It is primarily about God's faithfulness, goodness and mighty acts.

—WILLIAM E. WIMER

Let us look on  
And listen in  
On God's great workshop  
Of stars . . . and eggs.

—CARL SANDBURG

The universe can be compared with a great shadow which preannounces the arrival of the sun.

—PLATO

The meaning of the universe lies beyond history as love lies beyond desire.

—MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

I believe that the resurrection of Jesus can be affirmed as an ordinary event; the empty tomb tradition, at least, seems to me to contain historical material of a high degree of probability. The resurrection means the making present and available to men of faith the form of Jesus' lordship as a form of humiliation and suffering. He is risen, with the marks of his suffering still upon him.<sup>27</sup>

—WILLIAM HAMILTON

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him. Amen.

—STATEMENT OF FAITH

## QUOTATIONS USED BY PERMISSION

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The meditations on the left-hand pages were prepared by the Reverend Alfred Schmalz of Darien, Connecticut. Mr. Schmalz has had a long and courageous ministry in the churches and communities in which he has served, and has also participated notably in the wider circles of the United Church of Christ and in the ecumenical movement.



The author's hobby ministry is sculpture. He have asked his permission to reproduce here a recent sculpture of his—"Vietnam: War Is the Enemy"—portraying a dead soldier from each hemisphere of our tortured, tangled globe. The presence and centrality of the Cross speaks to Lent and to the life of the author-sculptor.

DEAR READER: This little book will do you no good unless you read it, only limited good unless you read it daily, great good if daily you ponder it with a heart open to God and to the world. . . . The quotations "For Further Meditation" follow no single viewpoint but aim to help you to be present to the Presence that steadily calls you to be more present to his world and yours.

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— W. E. Orchard