Devotions for Lent
2021

Saints of the Passion

prepared by students of Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Augsburg Confession says, “the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works” (AC XXI). This devotion is organized by the CTSFW students to do exactly that by following two saints each week through these next 40 days of Lent. Each week will surround two saints of the passion—those who, in some way, participated in the passion of our Lord.

The schedule will proceed as follows. The devotions for the week of Ash Wednesday will be the propers from Ash Wednesday. Then each Sunday will reflect on the Collect (Sunday’s prayer) for the week as well as the two saints and each week will focus on a new set of saints through the Old Testament and the New testament. Saint Clement once said “Follow the saints, because those who follow them will become saints.” Therefore, throughout these 40 days, let us follow the saints who lead us to the cross.

Many thanks to all of the CTSFW students who contributed devotions to this effort. Special thanks should also be given to Kim Hosier and Rev. Dr. Paul Grime for their aid in completing this devotion.

Therefore, through this devotional, as we surround ourselves with so great a cloud of witnesses and saints of our Lord’s passion, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1–2).

Ian Kinney
Martyrdom of Saint Valentine, 2021
Devotion
When I was a child, one of the hobbies I had was making model cars from kits. There was nothing better than getting one of those cars done and making it exactly as I wanted it. I would take pride in the cars that I made. Eventually, something terrible would happen to the cars, either falling off the shelf, becoming faded, or even being shown off and dropped. When that happened, no matter what I did, the car would never be the same again.
When God created man, He made us exactly how He wanted—in His image—and called us good. But just like the cars, something happened to damage us, and that is sin. Unlike my model cars, God can make us perfect again, which He does through Jesus’ death on the cross. Whoever repents and believes is made righteous in His sight.

Prayer (Collect for Ash Wednesday)
Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
From depths of woe I cry to Thee,
   In trial and tribulation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
   Lord, hear my supplication.
If Thou rememb’rest ev’ry sin,
Who then could heaven ever win
   Or stand before Thy presence?

From Depths of Woe (LSB 607:1)
Reading
Joel 2:12–19

Devotion
The land of Judea was suffering from a severe locust infestation. Their land was so overrun that the people could not even gather the supplies needed for offerings to God. The prophet Joel brought news to the people: their situation was about to get worse. The Day of the Lord was coming with darkness and destruction. “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments” (v. 12–13a). God calls His people to repent—to truly repent from the heart. In his call to repentance, God tells His people to come together into a solemn assembly and pray for mercy. Then God will have pity on His people, provide a savior, and rescue them from judgment. This Lenten season, let us all come together, repenting of our sins, and praying to God for mercy from our very hearts.

Prayer
Grant to us, O Almighty God, that by the annual exercise of Lenten observances we may advance in knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and follow His mind by conduct worthy of our calling; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Thy love and grace alone avail
To blot out my transgression;
The best and holiest deeds must fail
To break sin’s dread oppression.
Before Thee none can boasting stand,
But all must fear Thy strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

From Depths of Woe (LSB 607:2)
Reading
2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Devotion
Originally, the imposition of ashes was a Medieval practice in which repentant persons who had been subject to church discipline were marked upon their forehead to demonstrate their desire for reconciliation to the Church. Currently, we receive the sign of ashes as a reminder of our mortality, which is the wages of sin, and as an expression of penitence as we enter the penitential season of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Perhaps we would do well to remember that the ashen cross is also an expression of our reconciliation to God. It was, after all, in the mortality, in the dust, of the incarnate God that you were reconciled to God. It was because of Christ, who was made sin and who was lifted up on the cross, that Paul bases his appeal for you to be reconciled to God. And Christ Himself continues to make His appeal to you through those He calls to the Holy Ministry. Today’s text is about the reconciliation that called ministers of Christ zealously bring to the world on Christ’s behalf. Listen to these faithful men, announcing to you that you are living in the day of salvation. Listen to these men who are but dust and are treated so for bringing the message of reconciliation. As the dust is fleeting, so are the hardships of this life. But what you are to become, the righteousness of God, is everlasting. In Christ, this is how you are: right with God. Reconciled.

Prayer
O God, if You should determine to render to us what we deserve, we must sooner perish than endure our deserved punishment. Mercifully forgive our wanderings, and that we may be able to be converted to Your commandments, we pray that You would go before us with abundant mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Therefore my hope is in the Lord
And not in mine own merit;
It rests upon His faithful Word
To them of contrite spirit
That He is merciful and just;
This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

From Depths of Woe (LSB 607:3)
Reading
Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

Devotion
“What are you giving up for Lent?” We often hear this question as our forty days of preparation begin. Some of us are starting a traditional fast with reduced meals, no meats, and no treats. Others are giving up worldly entertainments, including television, games, or social media. These habits can be beneficial to turn our attention away from earthly delights and back towards Christ. However, before we boast of our pious deeds, we should consider Christ’s warnings in Matthew 6. If we brag, then our works do not benefit us, since boasting turns our attention towards ourselves instead of Christ. Instead, we should let our fasting remind us of God’s free gifts, especially forgiveness of sins, Holy Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.

Prayer
We beseech You, O Lord, in Your forgiving love, turn away what we deserve for our sins, nor let our offences prevail before You, but let Your mercy always rise up to overcome them; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
And though it tarry through the night
   And till the morning waken,
My heart shall never doubt His might
   Nor count itself forsaken.
O Israel, trust in God your Lord.
Born of the Spirit and the Word,
   Now wait for His appearing.

From Depths of Woe (LSB 607:4)
Devotion
God gives provision where and when it is needed. The people of Israel needed clothes and shoes while in the wilderness forty years. God provided ones that miraculously did not wear out. Jesus needed a tomb and burial preparations after dying for us on the cross. God provided through Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. So also, God provides all things necessary for us: clothing of righteousness in Baptism, forgiveness in His Supper, daily bread, and shoes of readiness given by the gospel of peace. Just as God led the people of Israel through the wilderness and to a land flowing with milk and honey, so He will lead us to heaven where the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. There, we will praise Him forever.

Prayer (Collect for Lent 1)
O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Though great our sins, yet greater still
  Is God’s abundant favor;
His hand of mercy never will
  Abandon us, nor waver.
Our shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free
  From all their sin and sorrow.

From Depths of Woe (LSB 607:5)
Saint: Joseph of Arimathea

Reading
John 19:38–42

Devotion
The Lord of life they had crucified—His body hung lifeless upon the cross. The Romans provided no undertaker, and even the disciples stood far off as a secret follower of Jesus took the task of laying to rest the Lord’s body. Joseph of Arimathea, with Nicodemus alongside, reverently dressed the body of the Lord, wrapping with linen and attending with spices the Holy One of Israel. Joseph offered the tomb which was meant for him (Matt. 27:57–60), not yet comprehending that the Lord Jesus had by His agony and atoning death conquered that which Joseph laid Him into. Like a gardener in the wilderness, Joseph dressed the Vine that appeared withered—but to the marvel of all the place of his rest would become the icon of the Lord’s salvation: for from the garden tomb wherein He lay, the Root from the stump of Jesse would shoot forth, flourishing and blossoming abundantly, whose branches, watered in the baptismal Exodus of the Lord’s death, are brought through the tomb hewn by Joseph’s hand and raised up with the Glory of the Lord.

Prayer
Be present, O Lord, to our supplications and do not let Your merciful clemency be far away from Your servants. Heal our wounds and forgive our sins, that being severed from You by no iniquities we may be able evermore to cleave to You our Lord.

Hymn
Christ, the life of all the living,
  Christ, the death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
  To the darkest depths of woe:
Through Thy suff’rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
  Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Christ, the Life of All the Living (LSB 420:1)
Saint: Joseph of Arimathea

Reading
Isaiah 53:9

Devotion
Joseph of Arimathea fulfilled this prophecy from Isaiah by providing a new tomb for Jesus’ body. Such a donation would have been costly, and in more ways than one. A garden tomb like this would probably have been available only to the wealthy, and an unused one was probably rare. But the cost to Joseph would have been more than merely financial. As a respected member of the council, his reputation and livelihood were at stake, and he had already challenged the council by not consenting to the actions condemning Jesus. Now Joseph comes to Pilate asking for Jesus’ body and places Him in an expensive tomb. Joseph’s actions are certainly suspect in their eyes, and could well cost him his reputation, his station, or perhaps even his life. The example that saints like Joseph provide us is that of a faith that overcomes fear. Heavenly Father, we pray for such faith as this, that we may act boldly for Christ and His Kingdom when facing danger or adversity.

Prayer
O God, beneath whose eyes every heart trembles and all consciences are afraid, be merciful to the groanings of all, and heal the wounds of all, that as not one of us is free from fault, so not one may be shut out from pardon; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Thou, ah! Thou, hast taken on Thee
Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,
O Thou sinless Son of God!
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver
From the bonds of sin forever.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Christ, the Life of All the Living (LSB 420:2)
Saint: Joseph of Arimathea

Reading
Luke 9:60

Devotion
When one who is close to us dies, we can find closure in burying them or being at the graveside when it is done. Doing so is an act of respect and love. This act of love, respect, and closure was taken up by Joseph of Arimathea. He tenderly, lovingly took the body of our Savior from the cross, prepared His body with herbs and spices, and laid Him in his own tomb. As heartbreaking as the grave may be, we are not to remain there. Jesus calls us to proclaim the Gospel, which ushers in the Kingdom of God. We are not to remain fixated on the dead, for our joy is not found within the tomb of the crucified Lord. Rather our joy is found in proclaiming that our Lord lives and reigns and that He will one day call us from our grave to continue this proclamation of God’s glory in heaven!

Prayer
Remember Your compassion, O Lord, and sanctify with eternal protection Your servants for whom Christ Your Son by his blood appointed unto us the Paschal mystery; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Christ, the Life of All the Living (LSB 420:3)
Saint: Nicodemus

Reading
John 19:38–42

Devotion
Nicodemus brought a massive amount of fragrant perfume to bury our Lord. Fulfilling the burial rites of the Jews, the blessed body of our crucified Christ was anointed with precious spices. The blessed body that was lifted up to crush the wicked serpent of old. The blessed body that was scourged and striped for us sinners, and is even now given to us. The blessed body to which we can now be joined in the waters of rebirth, through the death of our Lord. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took down Christ who had been lifted up and laid Him in a new tomb in a garden outside Jerusalem. A new tomb for a new kind of death. He who came to earth to redeem mankind, that race which had been cast out of the Garden for the first transgression, would die for all transgressions. May we with Nicodemus show honor to Christ Jesus in whose death we have life.

Prayer
Grant, we beseech You, Almighty God, that we who are incessantly afflicted by our own transgressions may be delivered by the Passion of Your only-begotten Son; who with You and the Holy Spirit are one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Heartless scoffers did surround Thee,
Treating Thee with shameful scorn
And with piercing thorns they crowned Thee.
All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne,
That as Thine Thou mightest own me
And with heav’nly glory crown me.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Christ, the Life of All the Living (LSB 420:4)
Saint: Nicodemus

Reading
2 Chronicles 32:33

Devotion
The ancient Jews were very keen on caring for those unable to help themselves. This piety frequently crops up in the Bible as caring for the orphans and widows of their community. In Isaiah 1:17 one sees the Lord commanding Judah to repent of their sin; this faith was to manifest itself in advocating for the fatherless and the widowed. Death is the point when man is no longer able to help himself. To attend to the body of a loved one is a sign of respect and love. After his death, Hezekiah the King was honored throughout Jerusalem; that is, the people mourned his passing. Hezekiah was buried in the tombs of the sons of David. His body lay in waiting along with the rest of the sons of David for the coming Messiah, the one who would be their Savior.

Prayer
Lord Jesus Christ, You stretched out Your hands on the cross and redeemed us by Your blood. Forgive me a sinner, for none of my thoughts are hidden from You. Pardon I ask, pardon I hope for, pardon I trust to have. By Your great mercy spare and forgive me for the sake of Your holy name.

Hymn
When I survey the wondrous cross
   On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
   And pour contempt on all my pride.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (LSB 425/426:1)
Saint: Nicodemus

Reading
John 3:1–5

Devotion
Throughout the Gospel accounts, we see our Lord’s great patience toward sinners. He is patient even with the Pharisees, those “hypocrites” and “blind guides,” most of whom, sadly, reject Him and cause others to reject Him also (Matthew 23). Yet Christ desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, namely, salvation by grace through faith in Him. And so He continues to teach the Pharisees about Himself so they might repent and believe in Him. Imagine, then, His great joy over Nicodemus, who comes to Him at night to learn. And what does our Lord teach this Pharisee? He teaches him of the new birth “of water and the Spirit,” by which one “enter[s] the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus is amazed, dumbfounded. So are we when we see what an incredible gift baptism is! In it all our sins are washed away, and we are given the gift of everlasting life as we are joined with Christ in His death and resurrection! So, like Nicodemus, let us come to Jesus (night and day!). To learn. To confess. To receive His gifts of forgiveness and everlasting life.

Prayer
Heavenly Father, grant that Your blessing may be upon us as we pass through these holy days in which we remember the suffering and death of our dear Lord. Teach us ever to follow His holy example and thereby learn willing obedience, that we may be filled with His love and joyfully serve our neighbor; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Water, blood, and Spirit crying,
By their witness testifying
To the One whose death-defying
  Life has come, with life for all.

Water, Blood, and Spirit Crying (LSB 597:1)
Second Week of Lent
The Penitent Thief on the Cross
and Simon of Cyrene

February 28, 2021

Devotion
Lent is a time for reflection and repentance. We reflect on our redemption from sin by means of Christ’s holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. Christ died and shed His blood for you and me, lost and condemned sinners that we are. In and of ourselves, we have no strength. Just as Simon of Cyrene carried the cross for Jesus on the way to His crucifixion, Christ also carries our burdensome load of sin. On the cross, He took on the full “due reward of our deeds” (Luke 23:41). As God’s redeemed children, we have confidence that we will one day be in heaven. After the thief on the cross confessed Jesus as Lord, Jesus said even to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). No matter what life may throw at us, we can confidently pray to our Father in heaven: “let Your will be done.”

Prayer (Collect for Lent 2)
O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Lord Jesus, think on me
   And purge away my sin;
From worldly passions set me free
   And make me pure within.

Lord Jesus Think on Me (LSB 610:1)
The Penitent Thief on the Cross

Reading

Devotion
The penitent thief on the cross—traditionally known by the name Dismas—really was “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20). But there was another thief crucified that day, who died reviling Jesus. He wasn’t so much crucified “with” Christ as “next to” Christ. So, being crucified with Christ isn’t a matter of physical or temporal proximity. It has to do with things like repentance and faith. The penitent thief considered that the most important thing wasn’t honor, health, or even life itself, but to be remembered by Jesus. For Jesus doesn’t “remember” like mortals, whose memories are mental fragments that fade with the passing of time. To be remembered by Jesus is to be sustained in His eternal life. So, in that thief who hung at Jesus’ right side, we have an icon of the baptized life. Through baptism, we are also crucified with Christ, remembered in His kingdom, and alive in Paradise. Glory to God!

Prayer
Most holy Jesus, in Your infinite mercy you heard the penitent prayer of him who hung beside You and promised life eternal in Paradise. Open Your eyes of mercy upon all who do not confess You, and by Your grace grant them, together with us, true repentance and amendment of life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Lord Jesus, think on me,
   By anxious thoughts oppressed;
Let me Your loving servant be
   And taste Your promised rest.

Lord Jesus Think on Me (LSB 610:2)
The Penitent Thief on the Cross

Reading
Revelation 21:1–5a

Devotion
The thief who was crucified at Jesus’ right side—also known as Dismas—is sometimes referred to as the “good thief” because of his repentant heart and acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord. Though he may be “good” compared to the other thief who mocks Christ, he is still a thief. His punishment, however gruesome and painful, is just and fair. There is perhaps not a single character in Jesus’ passion narrative who represents the average Christian better than this man. He captures the essence of what it means to be simultaneously saint and sinner. He experiences immeasurable suffering brought about by his own disobedience. But amidst his suffering, Jesus’ words of hope and grace and love break through. Jesus promises that Dismas, along with all Christians, will see his Savior in Paradise. Paradise is described by John in Revelation as the place where there will be no more “mourning, nor crying, nor pain.” And the One who suffered undeservedly on the cross will proclaim to the penitent thief and to all Christians, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Prayer
Gracious Father, Your beloved Son has taught us that whoever would be Your disciple must take up his cross and follow Him. Fix our eyes firmly upon Him who suffered all for us, that with firm trust in His mercy we may one day close our eyes in the confidence that we shall live forever in Paradise; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Lord Jesus, think on me
   Amid the battle’s strife;
In all my pain and misery,
   O be my health and life!

Lord Jesus Think on Me (LSB 610:3)
The Penitent Thief on the Cross

**Reading**
Matthew 20:20–23

**Devotion**

Our Father in heaven has already answered your prayer, “Thy Kingdom Come,” since the kingdom of God certainly came when the crucified Son of God hung upon the cross. The stricken and smitten body of Jesus is God’s triumph and glory over death and the devil. Jesus’ suffering is His glory; His blood alone covers the sin of the world. Thus, to sit at Jesus’ right hand, in His kingdom, means to hang on the cross next to Jesus. This was not set aside for the sons of Zebedee, but for the thief hanging on the cross, thought to be a man named “Dismas.” James and John cannot drink the cup of suffering that Jesus drinks, nor could this thief. How could they? Even Jesus knows what this cup will bring, for He asks His dear Father “Take this cup from me!” (Luke 22:42). We ask the wrong question when looking for the glorified position at Christ’s side. It is better to receive the glory pouring from Christ’s side into His cup of joy. Why? Because Jesus ascended and sits at His Father’s right-hand side. The Father’s kingdom comes through the flesh and blood of Jesus, which were shed also for the unbaptized Dismas: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son and laid on Him the grievous burden of the cross so that we might now the glory of Your holy love. Grant that our faith in Him may not be shaken by adversity but that we may follow steadfastly in the way that leads to perfect fellowship with Him; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Hymn**

Lord Jesus, think on me
Nor let me go astray;
Through darkness and perplexity
Point out Your chosen way.

Lord Jesus Think on Me (LSB 610:4)
Simon of Cyrene

Reading
Mark 15:16–21

Devotion
Simon’s 800-mile journey from Cyrene to Jerusalem slowed to a standstill. The murmur in the crowd was that the Romans made a show of this Jesus. His blood was dripping onto the streets. He clearly had been beaten and mocked. Then a rough Roman hand grabbed Simon. Simon was pulled from the sideline and into the road. Pulled off his path to the holy city and onto the road shared with the Holy One of Israel. In picking up the blood stained cross, Simon was rendered unclean for Passover. He forsook all he came to do by following Jesus. He turned around, left Jerusalem, and went to the cross. We too have been called to turn off our path, take up our cross, and follow the Christ. Simon’s journey is our journey. We too have been covered by the cleansing blood of the Lamb in our baptism and participate in the fruits of the cross at the rail.

Prayer
O God, You give strength to the weak and light to those who are in darkness. Grant us to know Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, so that we may not be shaken by adversity but may follow in the way that leads to perfect fellowship with Him and so with You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Your cross I place before me;
Its saving pow’r restore me,
     Sustain me in the test.
It will, when life is ending,
Be guiding and attending
     My way to Your eternal rest.

Upon the Cross Extended (LSB 453:7)
Simon of Cyrene

Reading
1 Kings 17:8–14

Devotion
As a young child, I always felt sorry for Simon of Cyrene as he carried the cross for Jesus. To my young ears, it sounded like the Romans were forcing Simon to do something he didn’t want to do under penalty of severe punishment. In our reading from 1 Kings today, the widow is also called on to serve God. She doesn’t have much, hardly enough to feed herself and her son, but she dutifully obeys and trusts God. As I grew older, I realized this was a joyous opportunity, both for Simon of Cyrene and for the widow, to be able to faithfully perform a duty given by God. We all have a duty to love God and love one another. Through the Holy Spirit, we pray that we can accomplish both each day by praising and thanking God and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our neighbor.

Prayer
O God, we give You thanks that You have drawn us to Your Son, Jesus Christ. By the memory of His cross sustain us in our trials, comfort us in our sorrows, and strengthen us against temptation, that by His holy wounds we may be sustained in the continuing promise of forgiveness and of an eternal life of righteousness with You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Yet unrequited, Lord, I would not leave Thee;
I will renounce whate’er doth vex or grieve Thee
And quench with thoughts of Thee and prayers most lowly
All fires unholy.

But since my strength will nevermore suffice me
To crucify desires that still entice me,
To all good deeds O let Thy Spirit win me
And reign within me!

O Dearest Jesus (LSB 439:10–11)
March 6, 2021

Simon of Cyrene

Reading
Matthew 16:24–26

Devotion
To take up your cross and follow Jesus is to walk the road to Golgotha, the road that leads to the bloody hill where our dear Savior’s body was nailed to a tree. Only that road leads to life and immortality. A life without burden and pain in the eternal presence of Jesus. Simon walked that road in his weak, dying, sinful flesh with that dead tree of Life bearing down on his back. The tree that would hold the body of God until He died, so that our life wouldn’t be in vain. Do you want a life without suffering and pain on this earth? Then find a different road. Because the road to eternal life is only found through the Tree of Life. And that road is filled with repentance, self-denial, affliction and heartache. But take heart! Your suffering isn’t in vain, because that cross pushing down on your back is shaping and molding you into something new. In the midst of your suffering is life as God is freeing you from your body of sin and death and delivering you to life eternal through the blood of Jesus. And your dear Savior walks with you even as He suffered and died for you. Only eyes of faith can see life in the midst of suffering and death on your road to Golgotha. Rejoice my friends! The bright light of Easter morning shines on your grey, sleepy morning. Jesus died, but Jesus lives, and so do you.

Prayer
Lord Jesus, Lamb of the Father’s own choosing, who offered Yourself a bloody sacrifice for our sins on the place of skulls, receive our thanks for Your love beyond measure. Let Your wounds be the solace of our hearts, and Your merits the ornaments of our souls in life and death, that, with Your perfected saints on high, we may forever sing Your praise.

Hymn
I walk with Jesus all the way. And by His footsteps led,
   His guidance never fails me; My path I safely tread.
Within His wounds I find a stay No evil leads my soul astray;
   When Satan’s power assails me; I walk with Jesus all the way.

I Walk in Danger All the Way (LSB 716:5)
Devotion
Betraying their sworn loyalty to Jesus, our Lord’s disciples abandoned Him, fearing death. So soon after promising his beloved Teacher that he would sooner die than deny Him, Peter thrice said that he did not know Him. In contrast, Mary, the Mother of God, stayed at the side of her Son through His death. Fearing not what the Roman guards or the riotous crowds would do to the mother of the Man they were slaying, the Blessed Virgin anchored herself at the foot of the cross to which was nailed the body of her Son, her God, her Savior. Would that all were kept thusly in unflinching faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but for those who have left the faith like the Fleeing Apostles, we wait alongside the loving Father looking for the prodigal to be brought to faith and repentance by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

Prayer (Collect for Lent 3)
O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
O little flock, fear not the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow;
   Dread not his rage and pow’r.
And though your courage sometimes faints,
His seeming triumph o’er God’s saints
   Lasts but a little hour.

O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe (LSB 666:1)
Saint Mary, Mother of God

**Reading**
John 19:25–27

**Devotion**
Mary bore God into this world in the flesh and was there when He was crucified for her sins and for the sins of this world. Her life was not easy. She struggled and doubted, but she was there at the cross because she knew who Christ was, and knew what He came to do. Jesus cared for her deeply. In one of his final breaths, He provides for the needs of His mother. This woman, once a young girl from Palestine, now looks upon the face of her Son and her Savior as He is lifted up and pierced for her transgressions. Thirty years earlier this same woman, held the same man in her arms and cradled Him. As she looks at Him—high and lifted up—while a spear is plunged into His flesh, a sword pierces her own soul. Her child, her Lord, has died for the sins of the world.

**Prayer**
Almighty God, You chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of Your only Son. Grant that we, who are redeemed by His blood, may share with her in the glory of Your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

**Hymn**
My song is love unknown,
   My Savior’s love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
   That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
   That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

My Song Is Love Unknown (LSB 430:1)
Saint Mary, Mother of God

Reading
2 Kings 4:32–37

Devotion
The Shunammite woman faces the greatest horror under the sun. A child who loses his parents is an orphan. A husband or wife who loses a spouse is a widow or widower. Yet no word describes a parent who loses a child, for the pain and suffering goes to the foundation of who we are. Perhaps this is what St. Simeon means when he tells the Blessed Virgin Mary that a sword would pierce her own soul, even as her Son caused the rise and fall of many (Luke 2:34–35). Our Lord faces the curse of Adam in His passion. By the bloody sweat of His sacred brow He fights against the thorns the earth produces, now adorning His head as a crown of suffering. The fire of God’s wrath consumes Jesus on the cross, and He returns to ashes in death. Mary, the Mother of God, faces the curse of Eve. As her Son dies for the sins of the world, her pain in childbirth is greatly multiplied. Like the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:27, she has come to the mountain and seen the Man of God, and is in distress. But this darkest woe gives way to Easter triumph. Her son who has died now lives. We who were banished from Eden are now ushered into Paradise through the merits of Mary’s Son and God, Jesus the righteous One. The sword which pierced Mary’s soul and the flaming sword which guarded Paradise are beat into ploughshares when Jesus overcomes death itself and destroys death for you forever.

Prayer
O Lord Jesus, while You suffered in agony on the cross, yet You showed love and compassion for Your mother. Sustain us all in Your mercy that we may look ever to You for eternal comfort and peace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But, oh, my friend,
My friend indeed,
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
Who at my need
His life did spend!

My Song Is Love Unknown (LSB 430:2)
Saint Mary, Mother of God

Reading
John 2:1–5

Devotion
Here, at the wedding at Cana, the mother of our Lord gives us a precious example of how a Christian ought to place his trust firmly in the Lord. See how Mary does not even ask for wine; such is her certainty of the grace of Jesus that she simply tells Him of the need, “they have no wine,” and knows that He will supply it. But then Jesus tests her faith, seemingly rebuffing her faithful request, even nearing a rebuke for requesting a miracle before the time appointed by the Lord. Nevertheless, in the face of what appears in every way to be a rejection by the Lord, blessed Mary remains convinced that our gracious Lord will only ever deliver goodness to her, yet leaves the time and manner up to Him, instructing the servants to do as He says. We should pray to have such a faith that expects only goodness from the Lord.

Prayer
We beseech You, O Lord, in Your forgiving love, turn away what we deserve for our sins, nor let our offences prevail before You, but let Your mercy always rise up to overcome them; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Why, what hath my Lord done?
   What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
   He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
   Yet they at these
   Themselves displease
And ‘gainst Him rise.

My Song Is Love Unknown (LSB 430:4)
The Fleeing Apostles

Reading
Mark 14:43–50

Devotion
The disciples feared for their own lives as they left Jesus. Maybe as they fled the scene, their ears rang with Jesus’ first words, “Follow me.” Against their natural instinct to survive, Jesus warned them that to follow Him is to take up a cross and not to save one’s own life. The Christian might go through the same human experience of fearing death or vengeance on account of Jesus. He might try to command the situation by grabbing a sword to fight. Jesus warns him in Matthew’s Gospel that the outcome is fruitless; he will perish by the same sword. Yet, Jesus did not leave the disciples alone. He assured them that this threat was necessary: “Scripture will be fulfilled.” The Christ must suffer, die, and be raised. Jesus was in control, in spite of the disciple’s fear. He would keep them until each one’s appointed time to receive the crown of glory entering into heavenly bliss. That is why Jesus called out to them, “Follow me.”

Prayer
Almighty God, Your Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption. Grant us courage to take up our cross daily and follow Him wherever He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To Him who can avenge your wrongs;
   Leave it to Him, our Lord.
Though hidden yet from mortal eyes,
His Gideon shall for you arise,
   Uphold you and His Word.

O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe (LSB 666:2)
The Fleeing Apostles

Reading
Jeremiah 2:13

Devotion
On that night in the garden of Gethsemane, the disciples committed two great evils whose eternal consequence they could not even begin to comprehend. They carved out their own plan, their own cistern, to protect Jesus from the betrayer and the Romans. The disciples attacked the men who came for our Lord, and in doing so stood in the way of the eternal will of the Father. Worse yet, they then abandoned our Lord, the Rock and only source of living water. Rest in, and do not run from, the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. A broken cistern of one’s own construction is of no benefit when the Fountain of everlasting life is already poured out for you.

Prayer
O Lord Jesus, before your cross of agony, suffered that we might be one in You, we mourn the divisions that separate us from one another. Grant that we may lose ourselves and all that is petty and unholy in You and thirst for the accomplishment of Your will in our lives; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
As true as God’s own Word is true,
Not earth nor hell’s satanic crew
Against us shall prevail.
Their might? A joke, a mere facade!
God is with us and we with God—
Our vict’ry cannot fail.

O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe (LSB 666:3)
The Fleeing Apostles

Reading
Luke 24:36–44

Devotion
How easily we can be overcome by fear. It can cause us to lose heart, to tremble, and to flee in desperation toward anything that might offer some semblance of solace. When Christ was betrayed and arrested in the garden, His disciples fled out of sheer fear, and they went into hiding to avoid suffering the same fate as Christ. How quickly we will hide ourselves away to avoid suffering, and in doing so separate ourselves from Christ. But as the disciples were sheltered in place behind locked doors, the now risen Christ appeared to them, revealed to them that He was risen, and comforted their troubled hearts with His precious and encouraging Word. He reminded them that everything in Holy Scripture was about Him and the work He came to do, suffering and dying for the sake of sinful man, and that by dying and rising again from the grave, the things we fear are defeated and rendered powerless. Praise be to Christ, in whom we have no need to fear anything

Prayer
Merciful and everlasting God, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all to bear our sins on the cross. Grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we fear not the power of sin, death, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Amen, Lord Jesus, grant our prayer;
Great Captain, now Thine arm make bare,
   Fight for us once again!
So shall Thy saints and martyrs raise
A mighty chorus to Thy praise
   Forevermore. Amen.

O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe (LSB 666:4)
Devotion
Mary Magdalene was a woman with a past. The Gospel of Luke tells us that she had once been tormented by seven demons. Some pious tradition traced back to Gregory I also suggests that she was the adulterous woman whom Jesus saved from stoning by saying, “let he who is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7). Regardless and despite her past, there was forgiveness, healing, and redemption even for Mary. Out of love for Jesus and gratitude for His mercy, she supported Him financially during His earthly ministry. She bore witness to the gruesome violence of the crucifixion, and in loving devotion, she was among the faithful myrrh-bearing women who came to the tomb Easter morning in order to care for the body of Jesus whom they found alive. May we also, like Mary, cling to Jesus, His cross, and resurrection, and with thankful hearts rejoice in His mercies which are new every morning. For there is forgiveness, healing, and redemption for us too.

Prayer (Collect for Lent 4)
Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
He came from His blest throne
   Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
   The longed-for Christ would know.
But, oh, my friend,
   My friend indeed,
Who at my need
   His life did spend!

My Song Is Love Unknown (LSB 430:2)
Saint Mary Magdalene

Reading
John 19:25

Devotion
Here we see the blessed Saint Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross. Next to her was the blessed mother of Jesus and Mary of the wife of Clopas. Together, with the beloved disciple, they watched the results of God’s wrath upon our sin now being atoned for. They stood so close that Jesus, who was nearly at the point of death, hung there and saw them, then called out to His mother and beloved disciple. Mary Magdalene is a primary witness of the death of God for sinners. She witnesses not only Christ atoning work on the cross, but a few days later the risen Christ. She sees her Savior as He reveals Himself: selfless, crucified, and risen. O Lord, grant us faith as witnessed by Mary Magdalene as we contemplate the consequences of our sin, which she witnessed firsthand, but also the hope of the resurrection which she boldly proclaims to the disciples. Teach to hold fast to that hope founded upon Christ alone.

Prayer
Almighty God, Your Son Jesus Christ restored Mary Magdalene to health and called her to be the first witness of His resurrection. Heal us from all our infirmities, and call us to know You in the power of Your Son’s unending life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Sometimes they strew His way
   And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
   Hosannas to their King.
Then “Crucify!”
   Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.

   My Song Is Love Unknown (LSB 430:3)
Saint Mary Magdalene

Reading
Proverbs 31:10–12

Devotion
Saint Mary Magdalene is given us to exemplify the virtuous woman, the excellent wife, of Proverbs 31. No, she is not Christ’s secret wife as portrayed in fiction and popular media, but she along with all baptized (women and men) are members of Christ’s true bride, the Church. Yet Mary is not virtuous on the merit of her own works. No, none of us are virtuous on account of ourselves, but because Christ has had mercy on us and cleansed us from our sin. He had mercy on Mary Magdalene when He cast seven demons from her, giving her a new life in body and soul. After this cleansing, as a faithful disciple, she devoted her means to the support of Christ’s earthly ministry. We follow her example when we support our local church in the proclamation of the Good News. Mary Magdalene followed our Lord even to the foot of the cross and there served as an eyewitness to His passion and resurrection. We are not eyewitnesses but are baptized into that same death and resurrection of Christ. When we are cleansed in baptism, Christ adorns us as a bride is adorned for her husband and we are made more precious to Him than jewels.

Prayer
O loving Lord, You bid us to follow You. Sanctify our hearts and lives to daily fellowship with You that we may learn the things of life and eternity; for You live and reign with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Glory be to Jesus,
Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the lifeblood
From His sacred veins!

Glory Be to Jesus (LSB 433:1)
Saint Mary Magdalene

Reading
Luke 7:36–47

Devotion
Sinners confidently reject God. They wallow in their lusts and passions and pride. They find peace in their sin, which is the cause of their division from God. Yet, here in Luke 7, a sinner comes before Jesus in tears. She does not come to Him arrogantly, but humbly. Isn’t it amazing that she comes at all? She didn’t hide her shame from Jesus. She knew He was there at the table of the Pharisee and she came to Him. She did not run from Jesus in fear, but washed His feet with her hair and tears. She knew that Jesus knew her condition, and she came confidently—yes, confidently—to Jesus. Her confidence was in Jesus, not herself. She knew that only Jesus could forgive sins. Jesus tells this woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” Repent, therefore, and believe the Gospel. It’s for sinners.

Prayer
O Lord Jesus, grant us Your gentleness and meekness, Your compassion and love, that filled with Your grace we may always forgive the wrongs and evils that have been done to us and seek the blessings of Your cross for those who hurt us; for You live and reign with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
Grace and life eternal
   In that blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
   Infinitely kind!

Glory Be to Jesus (LSB 433:2)
Weeping Women of Jerusalem

Reading

Devotion
It was customary for women to follow those who were sentenced to death and help ease their pain with wine mixed with myrrh. But these women of Jerusalem wept as Jesus carried His cross. While weeping, Christ warned them not to mourn for Him but for themselves. They were the ones who would be under attack and Christ knew that His suffering was necessary. Christ also questioned that during a time a strong religious fervor, if they would persecute and kill God’s Son, what would they do when their religious strength became dry. Would they now be ready to be thrown into the fire as dry wood is? But Jesus is the promise given to these women, given to the Jews, and given to all as the shoot of Jesse that remains green with life. Even in His death, He gave life and that life continued on Easter morn. We need not weep, for we know that Christ has saved us from the eternal fire.

Prayer
Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, mighty are the works of your hands. Hands that created all the world. Hands that heal our pains and hands that wipe away tears. Dry our eyes as we look to you and at the actions and words of Your saints during this Lenten Season. In Jesus name we pray.

Hymn
Lamb of God, pure and holy,
   Who on the cross didst suffer,
   Ever patient and lowly,
   Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o’er us:
   Have mercy on us, O Jesus! O Jesus!

Lamb of God, Pure and Holy (LSB 434:1)
Weeping Women of Jerusalem

Reading
1 Samuel 2:1–3, 10

Devotion
Hannah takes heart in the promise, here sung as a declaration of that promise, that the Lord considers, cares for, and acts on behalf of the lowly. Hannah’s song is similar to David’s song and parallels Mary’s song. The ones in low estate are blessed because their salvation is made full on the cross by our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, when we bless the name of the Lord, we are speaking well of Him, singing thanks and praise. This is a sign of the restoration of the relationship with the Holy One. God’s righteousness is victorious over wickedness and His salvation comes to His people solely because of Him. Thus, all generations will bless the Lord’s name.

Prayer
Lord Jesus, Lamb of the Father’s own choosing, who offered Yourself a bloody sacrifice for our sins on the place of skulls, receive our thanks for Your love beyond measure. Let Your wounds be the solace of our hearts, and Your merits the ornaments of our souls in life and death, that, with Your perfected saints on high, we may forever sing Your praise.

Hymn
Blest through endless ages
  Be the precious stream
Which from endless torment
  Did the world redeem!

Abel’s blood for vengeance
  Plead to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
  For our pardon cries.

Glory Be to Jesus (LSB 433:3–4)
Weeping Women of Jerusalem

Reading
Mark 15:40–41

Devotion
Jesus hangs on the cross, and around Him stand the faithful women of Galilee. They have followed Him, they have served Him, they have heard His teaching; they know He is their Lord. But their Lord is dying, and they do not understand. Is this not the Messiah, their King? What wrong has He done to deserve this? He has done nothing wrong, in fact, He has done everything right, exactly right. It is for that very reason that He is on the cross, for through that act He will be their Savior. After three days He will rise again and will soon after ascend into heaven, where He will sit at the right hand of the Father, interceding not only for the forgiveness of those women’s sins, but for everyone’s sins. God is faithful; He has brought us salvation.

Prayer
Heavenly Father, grant that Your blessing may be upon us as we pass through these holy days in which we remember the suffering and death of our dear Lord. Teach us ever to follow His holy example and thereby learn willing obedience, that we may be filled with His love and joyfully serve our neighbor; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Whence come these sorrows, whence this mortal anguish?
It is my sins for which Thou, Lord, must languish;
Yea, all the wrath, the woe, Thou dost inherit,
This I do merit.

What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!
The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,
Who would not know Him.

O Dearest Jesus (LSB 439:3–4)
Fifth Week of Lent
Centurion at the Cross and the High Priest’s Servant, Malchus

March 21, 2021
Patrick Randolph (Sem I)

Devotion
Oh my great Lord! I see the Devil’s brood approaching, with torches, swords, and club! The prince of this world has come for the Prince of Peace! The soldiers of the enemy, with hearts full of malice and blasphemy, will take You away. Their fists will break You, their whips will tear You, and their nails will pierce You, until we have lost our Savior altogether. You will go to death! But, oh my good Lord! You go willingly! You wear the crown of thorns with love and mercy. The whole world, even the soldiers the enemy used to break You, will be saved by Your work. The cross is Your throne, and You govern us unto eternal life. You serve us and preserve us by giving Your body and soul to save our body and soul. Oh, my Almighty Lord!

Prayer (Collect for Lent 5)
Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
O dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken
That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?
Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession,
What dark transgression?

They crown Thy head with thorns, they smite, they scourge Thee;
With cruel mockings to the cross they urge Thee;
They give Thee gall to drink, they still decry Thee;
They crucify Thee.

O Dearest Jesus (LSB 439:1–2)
Centurion at the Cross

Reading
Mark 15:33–39

Devotion
The centurion observes the entire scene. His soldiers had savagely beaten Jesus earlier in the day and nailed Him to the cross. He had heard the mocking and taunts of the Jews. And now he has seen the darkness over the whole earth, the anguished cry of the condemned man, and the rending of the temple curtain. Truly this man was no ordinary criminal, as the Jews had portrayed Him. Truly this man had favor from above; indeed, no other death would be accompanied with such havoc. Truly, He declares aloud, this man was the Son of God. We, like the centurion, are complicit in the death of the Son of God. Yet in His great love, the Father has made us His own. Let us then make the confession of the centurion our own, both during this season of Lent and always, as we await the glorious return of the crucified and risen Christ.

Prayer
Grant to us, O Almighty God, that by the annual exercise of Lenten observances we may advance in knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and follow His mind by conduct worthy of our calling; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Jesus, I will ponder now
   On Your holy passion;
With Your Spirit me endow
   For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
   May the image cherish
Of Your suff’ring, pain, and death
   That I may not perish.

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:1)
Centurion at the Cross

Reading
Exodus 12:12–13a

Devotion
While the Israelites were under slavery in Egypt, God declared to Moses that He would deliver them. God directed the Israelites to kill a lamb, without blemish, and place the blood on the doorposts. This was the foretelling of Christ’s sacrifice. The blood of Christ was shed for the atonement of mankind. The wrath of God was set aside by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the punishment mankind was due. The centurion presiding over the crucifixion of Jesus declared, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” declaring that Jesus is the one who bore the sin of the world, fulfilling what was spoken by the prophets, whose death delivers believers into their new life.

Prayer
O God, if You should determine to render to us what we deserve, we must sooner perish than endure our deserved punishment. Mercifully forgive our wanderings, and that we may be able to be converted to Your commandments, we pray that You would go before us with abundant mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Make me see Your great distress,
   Anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness
   And Your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod,
   Spear and nails did wound You,
How for them You died, O God,
   Who with thorns had crowned You.

   
   Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:2)


Reading
1 Corinthians 1:22–25

Devotion
If you want to know God, be like the centurion and look at the Crucifix. If you want to love God, be like the centurion and look at the Crucifix. If you want to know the love of God, seek the preaching of Christ crucified and look at the Crucifix. If you wish to have a part in giving that same love to others, heed the preaching of Christ crucified and look at the Crucifix. If you want to know who you are and your worth, stop looking at yourself and look at the Crucifix. If you want to know how you were saved from the jaws of hell, look at the Crucifix. If you want to know what it took to save your immortal soul, look at Him who in the substance of your moral flesh hangs on the Crucifix. If you want to know Who will lead you to Heaven, look at the Crucifix. If you want to live well, be like the centurion and look at the Crucifix. If you want to die well, gaze upon Him who died on the Crucifix.

Prayer
We beseech You, O Lord, in Your forgiving love, turn away what we deserve for our sins, nor let our offences prevail before You, but let Your mercy always rise up to overcome them; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Yet, O Lord, not thus alone
   Make me see Your passion,
But its cause to me make known
   And its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin
   Wrought Your deep affliction;
This indeed the cause has been
   Of Your crucifixion.

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:3)
Malchus

Reading
John 18:1–11

Devotion
A chef managed a group of people at a local restaurant. One employee embodied a set of skills that had not been acquired by the chef. This individual challenged the authority given to the chef. As a result, he prayed and asked the Lord to humble him. The chef approached the person and sought to be shown the unacquired skill. The individual screeched at his approach to the challenge. Malchus was executing tasks that was given to him. The assignment led him to engage with Peter, who challenged his approach towards Jesus. The interaction led to Malchus’ ear being chopped off. He did not anticipate Jesus placing his ear back unto his body. Neither did the chef anticipate acquiring a new set of skills from the employee. Jesus reveals that negative actions can yield unexpected results. Jesus helps those who seek Him to find light in every situation.

Prayer
Be present, O Lord, to our supplications and do not let Your merciful clemency be far away from Your servants. Heal our wounds and forgive our sins, that being severed from You by no iniquities we may be able evermore to cleave to You our Lord.

Hymn
Grant that I Your passion view
   With repentant grieving.
Let me not bring shame to You
   By unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun
   Ev’ry sinful pleasure
Since for me God’s only Son
   Suffered without measure?

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:4)
Malchus

Reading
Isaiah 2:3–4

Devotion
We all are born enemies of God. We carry swords and spears and raise them against Him in every thought, word, and deed. Malchus, the servant of the High Priest who accompanied Judas to betray Jesus, was just such a one. An enemy of Christ, ready to condemn Him. Did Malchus he not deserve the violence Peter visited upon him when Peter cut off his ear? Do we not deserve violent separation from God when we sin? Yes. And it was Jesus who experienced violence. It was Jesus who experienced separation from God, His Father. It was Jesus who reached out to heal Malchus. It is Jesus who reaches out on the cross to heal us. It is Jesus who makes it possible for us to say, “Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD . . . that He may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.”

Prayer
O God, beneath whose eyes every heart trembles and all consciences are afraid, be merciful to the groanings of all, and heal the wounds of all, that as not one of us is free from fault, so not one may be shut out from pardon; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
If my sins give me alarm
   And my conscience grieve me,
Let Your cross my fear disarm;
   Peace of conscience give me.
Help me see forgiveness won
   By Your holy passion.
If for me He slays His Son,
   God must have compassion!

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:5)
Malchus

Reading
Luke 7:1–7

Devotion
The powerful and authoritative word of Jesus healed the centurion’s servant. Throughout His ministry Jesus showed the power of His word to heal the sick and even raise the dead. His word calls sinners to repentance, forgives sins, and preaches that He is the Son of God and the source of salvation. This true and saving word caused His enemies to hate Him and desire to kill Him in order to stop Him from speaking. When they came to arrest Him, He healed the servant of the high priest named Malchus, showing His power over all creation but submitting Himself to death on the cross. In that death, He healed us of our sin and saved us from eternal death. The powerful and authoritative word of Jesus calls us to repentance, grants us faith, and declares us to be righteous for His sake.

Prayer
Remember Your compassion, O Lord, and sanctify with eternal protection Your servants for whom Christ Your Son by his blood appointed unto us the Paschal mystery; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hymn
Graciously my faith renew;
   Help me bear my crosses,
Learning humbleness from You,
   Peace mid pain and losses.
May I give You love for love!
   Hear me, O my Savior,
That I may in heav’n above
   Sing Your praise forever.

Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (LSB 440:6)
Holy Week
Saint Peter and Saint John

March 28, 2021
Richard Sovitzky (Sem I)

Devotion
Let the man who prays to God look to Christ for the substance of his prayer. Let him stand at the foot of the cross with the blessed St. John, fixing his eyes upon the author and perfector of his faith, meditating in his heart upon the Word, that his words of prayer be worthy. For the man who turns to Christ to guide his prayer will see that what is lacking in his flesh is filled in Christ, who took on flesh to put the flesh to death through His suffering upon the tree, that in rising He might be crowned in glorious exultation and bestow life to men. Shall not the man who beholds this pray for the patience and humility of Christ, to endure the sufferings of life through the passion of Christ, that Christ’s life be his, even if it means a death like His? For when man is wounded, Christ’s wounds envelop his; when man stumbles, Christ’s arms bear his load, when man’s soul is pierced, Christ hides him in the cleft of His side; when man dies, Christ’s death gives him life. The blessed St. Peter’s martyrdom conformed to Christ’s passion since Christ’s strength was his, and the rock of the church was unmoved in the rock of Christ; so too for the man who believes in the face of death. Let the man who prays to God ask on account of Christ, knowing that, though his flesh meet death, his life is in Christ.

Prayer (Collect for the Sunday of the Passion)
Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
See, from His head, His hands, His feet
   Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet
   Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (LSB 425/426:3)
Saint Peter

Reading
Mark 14:26–31

Devotion
Peter wanted special honor. He wanted to be the only one who would not deny Jesus, the only one to die with his Lord. After all, he had earlier confessed the identity of Jesus: “You are the Christ.” Yet Peter did not consider that the Christ, God’s Anointed One, was the Jesus who spoke the truth now. Jesus, who alone died for the sins of the world, was struck by the Father for all mankind. Peter could not and did not die with Him that Good Friday, leaving his Lord like the rest of the disciples. Yet Peter’s denial did not mean he was no longer a disciple. Jesus died for Peter, for those who deny Him. Jesus died and rose not to make us special but to give us Himself, that we might confess Him boldly and truly. In that, we join with Peter and confess what our Lord has done.

Prayer
Almighty God, grant that in the midst of our failures and weaknesses we may be restored through the passion and intercession of Your only-begotten Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
We sing the praise of Him who died,
   Of Him who died upon the cross.
The sinner’s hope let all deride;
   For this we count the world but loss.

Inscribed upon the cross we see
   In shining letters, “God is love.”
He bears our sins upon the tree;
   He brings us mercy from above.

We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died (LSB 429:1–2)
Saint Peter

**Reading**
Joshua 24:14–24

**Devotion**
Saint Peter thought he could be faithful until death. “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” (Matt. 26:35). Yet Peter denied his Lord. So also the Israelites confessed, “The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey.” But their foreign gods were never put away. They became witnesses against themselves. And though we put up signs in our homes, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” we also come short of our resolution. We neglect prayer, we neglect God’s Word. But Jesus, the new Joshua, looked at Peter and forgave him. He restored Peter and enabled him to die a martyr. He preserved a remnant in Israel. He died for all who think they can be faithful on their own. He restores us and enables us to serve him faithfully until death. Thanks be to God for His grace!

**Prayer**
Almighty and everlasting God, grant us by Your grace so to pass through this holy time of our Lord’s passion that we may obtain the forgiveness of our sins; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Hymn**
The cross! It takes our guilt away;
   It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day
   And sweetens ev’ry bitter cup.

   It makes the coward spirit brave
   And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes the terror from the grave
   And gilds the bed of death with light.

   We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died (LSB 429:3–4)
Saint Peter

Reading
John 21:15–17

Devotion
“Do you love me?” With these words, Jesus cuts to the heart, not simply questioning Peter’s affection toward his Lord, but calling Peter to search deep within himself and examine his faith, his convictions, his devotion to his Lord and Savior. Jesus’ question cuts to the heart of each Christian, but our love for Christ is not simply an introspection. Where there is faith, love follows, love for our Savior and love for our neighbor. With the threefold questioning, Peter is confronted with his pride and weakness in his denial and brought to true contrition and repentance. With each answer, Christ’s forgiveness is evident as He calls Peter to shepherd His flock. When we struggle with our past sins and failures and feel unworthy to serve our Lord, Jesus comforts even His shepherds and the flock they tend with forgiveness of sins and love only God can provide.

Prayer
Merciful and everlasting God, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all to bear our sins on the cross. Grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we fear not the power of sin, death, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
O sacred Head, now wounded,
  With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
  With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
  What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
  I joy to call Thee mine.

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (LSB 450:2)
Saint John

Reading
John 19:25–27

Devotion
In this brief passage, we see Christ upon the cross during His passion. Here John tells us something that the other Gospels do not: Christ calls to His mother and beloved disciple, John. Both are witnessing the event that Christ attested to in John 3, that the Son of Man be lifted up. John is commended by His Lord to take Christ’s mother into his own home. This exemplifies the Church bearing sons for the Father. Just like the apostle John became a son of the same mother who bore Christ, we too also become sons of the Church through Baptism. We become brothers with Christ, heirs of the promise through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ is the Son of the Father, so we too are now called sons.

Prayer
O Lord, in this wondrous Sacrament You have left us a remembrance of Your passion. Grant that we may so receive the sacred mystery of Your body and blood that the fruits of Your redemption may continually be manifest in us; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
How pale Thou art with anguish,
   With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy face now languish
   That once was bright as morn!
Grim death, with cruel rigor,
   Hath robbed Thee of Thy life;
Thus Thou hast lost Thy vigor,
   Thy strength, in this sad strife.

   O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (LSB 450:2)
Saint John

**Reading**
Isaiah 6:1–5

**Devotion**
“My eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts!” With Christ high on the cross where He declared victory over sin, death, and the devil, with the world shrouded in darkness, with His death and the earth quaking, the apostle John would have a perspective of the divine presence that would have terrified him, just as it did Isaiah. Yet there he was, standing next to the mother of the God-man he had followed the last three years, watching in grief as Jesus gave up His Spirit. But as Isaiah was cleansed with an altar coal, John and the others had tongues of fire fifty days later, and they were shown how important that day was to all history. They had seen God come, die a sacrificial death, and be raised three days later. He would recall these words in his book of Revelation (4:8). To this day we recall the words of Isaiah and John as we receive the blessings of Christ’s presence won for us on the cross.

**Prayer**
Almighty God, graciously behold this Your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Hymn**
What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
   Was all for sinners’ gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
   But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
   ‘Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
   And grant to me Thy grace.

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (LSB 450:3)
Saint John

Reading
1 John 5:6–12

Devotion
Saint John here writes concerning the truth and where it may be found. He calls our attention to the threefold witness concerning Christ: the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Where can we receive this testimony today? In the Church, where we hear the Spirit-breathed Word and receive the water of Baptism and the blood of our Lord. All three of these are the means by which God communicates His ultimate truth to us: He has given us eternal life through His Son. Receiving the water and blood flowing from His pierced side, we can rest assured in the truth of God’s testimony to us.

Prayer
O God, Creator of heaven and earth, grant that as the crucified body of Your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with Him the coming of the third day, and rise with Him to newness of life, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn
My Shepherd, now receive me;
   My Guardian, own me Thine.
Great blessings Thou didst give me,
   O Source of gifts divine.
Thy lips have often fed me
   With words of truth and love;
Thy Spirit oft hath led me
   To heav’nly joys above.

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (LSB 450:4)
Are there any who are devout lovers of God? Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival! Are there any who are grateful servants? Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord! Are there any weary with fasting? Let them now receive their wages! If any have toiled from the first hour, let them receive their due reward; If any have come after the third hour, let him with gratitude join in the Feast! And he that arrived after the sixth hour, let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss. And if any delayed until the ninth hour, let him not hesitate; but let him come too. And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour, let him not be afraid by reason of his delay. For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first. He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour, as well as to him that toiled from the first. To this one He gives, and upon another He bestows.

He accepts the works as He greets the endeavor. The deed He honors and the intention He commends. Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord! First and last alike receive your reward; rich and poor, rejoice together! Sober and slothful, celebrate the day! You that have kept the fast, and you that have not, rejoice today for the table is richly laden! Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one. Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith. Enjoy all the riches of His goodness! Let no one grieve at his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again; for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the death of our Savior has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it. He destroyed hell when He descended into it. He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh. Isaiah foretold this when he said, “You, O hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below.” Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with. It was in an uproar because it is mocked. It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed. It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated. It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive. Hell took a body, and discovered God. It took earth, and encountered heaven. It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see. O death, where is thy sting? O hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen, and you, O death, are annihilated!
Christ is risen, and the evil ones are cast down!
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is risen, and life is liberated!

Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead; for Christ having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

_Easter sermon of John Chrysostom (c. 400)_