

PRAYER & MEDITATION AT MASS

LANGFORD,
MEDITATIONS IN THE TIME OF MASS

THREE POEMS AT THE
ELEVATION OF THE HOST

NICHOLAS LOVE,
TO BE RECITED BEFORE THE BLESSED
SACRAMENT AT THE MASS

AT THE LAST GOSPEL:
FROM JOHN LYDGATE,
ON KISSING AT
VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST



THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP

PRAYER & MEDITATION AT MASS

from Langford, *Meditations in the time of Mass*
(a modernised version)

The Mass signifies the Passion of Christ

The priest going to Mass signifies and represents the Saviour of the World, our most sweet Redeemer Christ Jesus, who came from heaven to the vale of misery of this wretched world to suffer Passion for mankind's Redemption. And therefore the process of the Mass represents the very process of the Passion of Christ.

The priest signifies Christ, the Altar the Cross.
The vestments signify the garments white and purple with which Herod and the Levites did clothe our Saviour in great scorn and derision.

The right corner of the Altar represents the life of innocency which man lost by sin, restored again in the life of our most blessed Saviour.

The left end of the Altar signifies this miserable life, the which we now be in.

The Chalice doth signify the sepulchre of our Lord. The Paten signifies the stone that covered it.

The corporals ... signify [the linen cloths] wherein his blessed body was laid.

The Host [is] the Body of Christ.

The water and wine doth represent the express effusion of blood and water from his blessed Side.

Let this be your daily meditation to stir you to the diligent and compendious Remembrance of the Passion of Christ.

The Mass as meditation on the Incarnation of Christ

But, if at any time ye be disposed to thank his Grace for his Blessed Incarnation and coming into this world, for your contemplation: behold, in a solemn Mass that is sung by bishop or priest, vested coming out of the vestry, which is a holy place, with lights on each side, with deacon and subdeacon going afore unto the midst of the Altar, and there kiss the same. After to go to the right corner of the Altar. And then after to the left end of the Altar, and there the Gospel to read. At the last to return again to the right end of the Altar, the choir in the mean time joyfully singing. All these be great mysteries, and do signify great secrets of the coming of our Saviour.

First, the choir represent the holy Fathers of the Old Testament, Patriarchs and Prophets which never ceased to desire and pray, and to cry with great affection of spirit, that it would please almighty God to send his eternal Son into this world.

Also the bishop or priest, vested, represents the Son of God which did clothe himself with the garment of our nature in the most glorious consecrated Temple, the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, signified by the vestry ...

The amice on his head doth signify his ghostly strength which would proceed from the womb of his blessed Mother like a champion or giant most mighty to know the way and will and commandment of his eternal Father.

The white alb doth signify his innocency; the chasuble his charity; the stole his cleanness of heart.

The two lights signify the law of Moses and the holy prophecy. The deacon represents the Apostles; the subdeacon the disciples of Christ. The Altar in this application signifies this present Church, the holy congregation of all Christian people.

The kiss on the Altar signifies the marriage betwixt the Son of God and the said Church.

The right corner of the Altar signifies the people of Jews to whom our Saviour first did preach. They might well then be called on the right hand

side: to them only almighty God had given his heritage, and to they principally and first had sent his only eternal Son.

By the left corner of the Altar is represented the Gentiles to whom God sent his Apostles after the Jews would not receive the faith of Jesus Christ. To this end of the Altar the priest doth go, and there is read the Gospel containing the mysteries of our faith which the Gentiles did receive.

At the last end of the Mass, the priest returns to the right corner of the Altar again, signifying that at the last end of the world the Jews shall be converted and receive the faith of Christ.

... I shall ... return to the first purpose, for now our intent is to move souls to the devotion of the Mass, and to the loving remembrance of the Passion of Christ.

The Mass in detail

When the maniple is put on the [priest's] left hand
remember the ropes with which the knights did bind our Saviour's hands when they did lead him from tyrant to tyrant.

When the stole is cast over the neck and crossed on the breast
have meditation of the ropes wherewith the tormentors did draw his blessed body on the cross so sore, that all his joints were dissolved, and his sinews and veins all to burst.

When the priest casts on his outermost vestment, called a chasuble,
remember the purple mantle wherein they did cloth our Saviour in great scorn, and how they crowned and sceptred him with a rod, and beat and mocked him, saying 'Hail, King of Jews', spitting unreverently in his most blessed face.

When the priest stands vested, inclining before the Altar
let us have before the eyes of our soul our sweet Saviour, who would vouchsafe to incline, and meek his majesty, and wilfully for our wealth and profit and salvation suffered all these great blasphemies [of the Passion], and theses aforesaid torments for our souls.

When the priest goes to the right corner of the Altar and there begins Mass have in meditation the most pure and innocent life of our Saviour, by whose Incarnation and Passion the life of Paradise, which we lost by our forefather Adam, now in grace equivalent or much better is restored by our said most glorious Redeemer Jesus.

When the priest begins in the midst of the Altar Gloria in excelsis, remember the great joy and glory which the multitude of angels did sing, making great mirth in the nativity of our glorious Saviour and Lord.

When the priest says the Orisons [i.e. prayers], Collects and Sequence have remembrance of the continual prayers, hymns, psalms, and other orisons, which our Saviour did offer for us to his eternal Father both nightly, daily and hourly.

When the priest or deacon reads the Gospel with his face against the north remember the holy doctrine and preaching of our Lord and Saviour, not only for the Jews, but for all mankind. He spared none to put his blessed face against the north, that is to say his holy Gospel against the ghostly Enemy, which is signified by the north. And let there be no less devotion in your heart to the said Gospel ...

When the Gospel is read, and the priest says Credo in Deum remember not only thus as is above said ... but also after the Gospel read, give thanks to our Lord according to the ordinance of the Church, that is with heart to believe the same, and with your mouth to confess it, and in testimony thereof say with the priest Credo in Deum

At the Offertory, when the priest doth take the chalice and hold it up and forms the oblation

have meditation how our Lord the Saviour of all mankind most wilfully offered himself to his eternal Father to be the sacrifice and oblation for man's Redemption. And offer for yourself to him again both body and soul, which he so dearly bought, rendering in recognition of the same to his grace, by devout meditation, all the thanks of your heart that it would like his goodness to the ransom for your trespass and sins.

After the Lavatory [hand washing], when the priest says the Secret in silence consider with due thanks and praisings the time afore the Passion, when our Saviour did draw himself from the company of the Jews, and did give him to

solitariness, all secret in prayer and contemplation, praying to his eternal Father in great watch and abstinence for the health of many souls.

When the priest begins with open voice 'per omnia secula seculorum', before the Preface

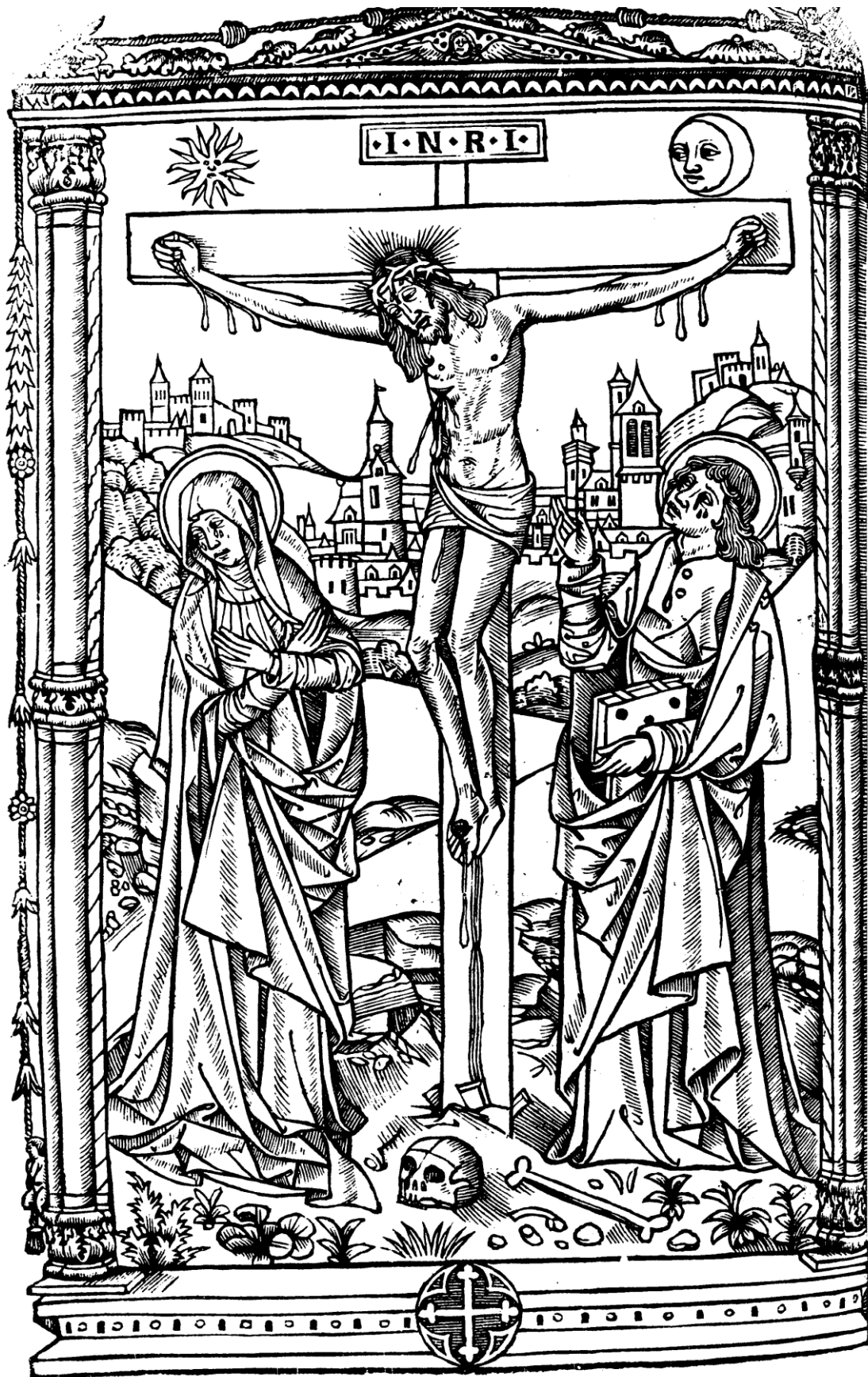
have meditation how certain of the Jews with great triumph and joy received our Saviour, coming wilfully and openly to Jerusalem to suffer Passion for man, riding upon an ass, afore whom they strewed their cloths with green boughs singing and saying with the children 'Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna filio David'. So likewise dispose you to say with the priest, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*, worshipping his blessed coming and presence, there on the Altar after the consecration.

From the beginning of the Canon, which is when the priest, after the Sanctus and after that he has kissed the crucifix on the mass book, doth incline afore the Altar until the sacring be done

have you in hearty meditation the process of the Lord's Maundy [i.e. the Last Supper] with all the ceremonies of meekness which his grace in his own person did show ... In the which Maundy he did feed his disciples with his precious body and blood, consecrated under the form of bread and wine. So every man and woman that is in grace, both the living and the dead, may be refreshed of that blessed Sacrament. ...

Call to remembrance, and imprint inwardly in your heart by holy meditation, the whole process of the Passion from the Maundy unto the point of Christ's death: first the prayer in the garden where in great agony he sweat blood and water; also his betraying of Judas, and how he was taken bound and led before Annas and Caiphas, and was there despitefully scorned, and was mocked of Herod in a white garment. And likewise in the presence of Pilate with whips scourged, over that with a purple mantle in derision clothed, and with a garland of sharp thorns crowned, and a reed of a sceptre of gold. After consequently brought him forth before Pilate as a felon or murderer should be arraigned at the bar. The Jews crying 'Crucify', and so by false sentence condemned. Whereupon he should suffer his bitter Passion. ... After his great torments, ... having nought to drink but wine mixed with bitter gall, and thereof his clothes despoiled, naked and quick [alive] so crucified, and quick [alive] hanging on the cross. Which is a meditation of sweetness unspeakable to them that inwardly can consider it ... This I

commend to your memory, trusting that ye will give thanks to our Lord therefore.



[Langford's meditations on the Passion of Christ continues, but here are offered other texts for the time after the Elevation of the Host.]

Three poems at the Elevation of the Host (in modernised versions)

Welcome, Lord, in form of bread,
For me you endured a painful deed;
As you suffered the crown of thorn,
Grant me grace, Lord, I be not forlorn [i.e. lost].

Jesu, Lord, welcome thou be,
In form of bread, as I thee see.
Now Jesu, for thine holy name,
Shield me from sin and shame;
Shrive and housel thou grant me both,
There that I shall hence go,
And very contrition of my sin,
That I never, Lord, die therein;
And, as thou were of a maiden born,
Suffer me never to be forlorn [i.e. lost];
But when I shall hence wend [i.e. die],
Grant me thy bliss without [an] end;
Amen, amen, so must it be.

Lord, as thou can, and as thou will,
Have mercy of me, that has done ill;
For whatso thou with me will do,
I hold me paid to stand thereto;
Thy mercy, Jesu, would I have,
And I for fearedness durst it crave,
But thou bids ask, and we shall have;
Sweet Jesus, make me safe,
And give me wit and wisdom right,
To love thee, Lord, with all my might.



To be recited before the Blessed Sacrament at the Mass

Nicholas Love, from *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*
(a modernised version)

Hail, O most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, now in truth present again here in this most excellent sacrament. I acknowledge thee my Lord God with the words of my mouth. I love thee with all my heart, and I desire thee with all the inward affection of my soul. I beseech thee, sweet Jesus, to grant me out of thy sovereign goodness, to kindly and graciously visit my sick soul this day; for I desire to receive thee spiritually as our healing sacrifice and our source of all graces; may I with gladness medicine and healing in body and soul, by virtue of thy blessed presence. Do not look, Lord Jesus, upon my wickedness, my great negligence and my ingratitude, but rather upon thy sovereign mercy and endless goodness. Truthfully, thou art the holy Lamb, without stain of sin. May this day be offered to the everlasting Father of heaven for the redemption of the whole world.

O thou sweetest Manna, Angels' meat; O thou most pleasing spiritual drink! Bring into my mouth that honeysweet taste of thy healing presence. Kindle in me the fervour of thy love; quench in me all manner of vices; shed in me plenty of virtues; increase in me the gifts of grace; and give me healing of body and soul, to thy pleasing. My God, I beseech thee, that thou wilt so graciously bow down to me, and from high heaven now come down to me, that I might be united and joined to thee, and be made one spirit with thee.

O thou worshipful Sacrament, I beseech thee that all my enemies be put away from me by thy strength, all my sins forgiven, and all wickedness excluded by thy blessed Presence.

Lord, give me a good purpose, correct and amend my ways, and dispose according to thy will all my works and deeds. By thee, sweet Jesus, may my wisdom and understanding, be made lucid by a new light of grace. May my affection be enflamed with the fire of thy love, and my hope comforted and strengthened by this Blessed Sacrament. So may my life here ever profit and change for the better; and at the last, may I depart from this wretched world with your blessing; so that I may come with thee to life everlasting, Jesus Lord, by virtue and grace of thy blessed and eternal life, Amen. Amen. Amen.

Lord Jesus, may thy blessed life help and comfort our wretched life. Amen.

At the Last Gospel

from John Lydgate, *On Kissing at Verbum Caro Factum Est*

O deuout pepyll whyche kepe an obseruaunce
Lowly in churche to kysse stone or tre,
Erthe or yron, haue in remembrance
What they do meane, take the moralyte;
Erthe tokeneth furst the pure humanyte
Of Cryst Iesu, the stone hys sepulture,
The spere of steele, the sharpe nayles thre,
Made large his woundes, remembryd in scripture.

Thynke on the crosse, made of four dyuerse trees.
As Clerkes seyn, of Cedyr and Cypresse,
To high estates and folks of lowe degrees
Cryst brought in pease, the Olyfe bereth wytnesse;
The Cedrat aloft, contemplatyf swetnesse,
Graue all these sygnes depe in thy memory,
And howe hys passion was grounded on mekenesse,
Geyne cruell Sathan to make vs haue victory.

These iiij figures combynyd in-to oon,
Put in thy mynde for a memoryall,
Erthe and yron, iiij trees and the stoon,
To make vs fre where as we were thrall,
Beholde the baner vyctoryous and royall,
Crystes crosse as standard of most pryse,
Thynke howe the thyef for mercy dyd call,
Tawght by thys tre the way to paradyse.

Your hertes ey lyft vp in-to the Est,
All yowre body and knees boweth downe,
When the preest seyth Verbum caro factum est,
With all your inward contemplacion,
Your mowthe furst crossyd of high deuocion,
Kyssying the tokens rehersyd here toforn,
And euer haue mynde on Crystes passion
Whyche for your sake weryd a crowne of thorne.

Oh devout people, who keep the observance
To humbly in church, kiss stone or wood,
Earth or iron, have in remembrance
What they do mean, take the morality [i.e. the meaning];
Earth means first the pure humanity
Of Jesus Christ, the stone his sepulchre,
The spear of steel, the sharp nails three
Made large his wounds, remembered in scripture.

Think on the cross, made of four different trees.
As the scholar said: Of [tall] Cedar and [spreading] Cypress,
To [i.e. signifying] high estates and folks of low society.
Christ brought peace, the Olive bears witness.
The Lemon above, contemplative sweetness.
Engrave all these signs deep in your memory;
And [remember] how his Passion was grounded on meekness,
To make us have victory against cruel Satan.

These four figures combined into one,
Put in your mind as a memorial:
Earth and iron, four trees and the stone
To make us free whereas we were enslaved.
Behold the banner victorious and royal,
Christ's cross as a standard is the biggest prize.
Think how the thief for mercy did call,
Taught by this tree the way to Paradise.

Lift up your hearts, lift them to the East,
And with your whole body and knees bow down,
When the priest says, 'And the Word was made Flesh.'
With all your inward contemplation,
Your mouth first cross with high devotion,
Kissing the tokens rehearsed before;
And be ever mindful of Christ's Passion,
Of him who for your sake wore a crown of thorns.



SOURCES

Illustrations

pp. 8, 10, 14: from *Missale ad usum insignis ecclesie Sarum*, 1527 (Antwerp, imprint Christoffel Ruremund, sold by Francis Byrckman), *STC* (2nd edition), no. 16027, images 158, 9 and 170 respectively.

Texts

1 (pp. 3–7): Extracts from ‘Meditatyons for goostly exercise. In the tyme of the masse ... Langforde: Preiste’, in Oxford, Bodleian MS Wood 17 (probably copied mid or late 15th century), ed. J. Wickham Legg, *Tracts on the Mass*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 27 (1904), 17–29.

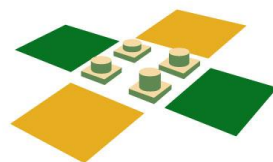
2 (p. 9) (1) ‘Welcome, lord, in fourme of brede’: from *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, ed. T. F. Symmons, transcribed Early English Text Society, Original Series, 71 (London, 1879), 40–41. F Text, 213–16. Also included in Loretta McGarry, *The Holy Eucharist in Middle English Homiletic and Devotional Verse* (Washington, D.C., 1936), 223.

(2). ‘Jhesu Lord, welcom thou be’. Versions of this text appear in several sources; that included here is adapted from John Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* (1581), lines 290–301; transcription in McGarry, *The Holy Eucharist*, 225.

(3) ‘Lord, als þou can, & als þou wille’: London, British Library MS Royal 17.B.xviii (The Lay Folks’ Mass Book), ‘A short prayer after the elevation, for mercy – for Christ said, Ask, and ye shall have’. Transcribed in *Lay Folks Mass Book*, EETS OS 71 (1879); also L. McGarry, *The Holy Eucharist*, 206.

3 (p. 11): ‘The Mirroure of the Blessid Lif of our Lord Ihesu Criste’, English translation by Nicholas Love (prior of Mount Grace) of Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditationes vitae Christi*, in Oxford, Bodleian MS Hatton 31 (copied 1425–50). Modern edition in Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. by M. G. Sargent (Exeter, 2004), 238–9.

4 (pp. 12–13): ‘On Kissing at Verbum Caro Factum est: A Lytyll compilacion declaring when men kysse in Churche stone or erthe Tymbre or Iron. What they shuld remember therby’, text included in various sources, including Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.21, leaf 215. Modern edition in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. H. N. McCracken, Early English Text Society, Extra series, 107 (London, 1910), 116–7.



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