



# HOLY SATURDAY

OFFICE OF READINGS & MORNING PRAYER

OFFICE OF READINGS

INTRODUCTION

O God, come to our aid.  
O Lord, make haste to help us.  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

HYMN

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle,  
sing the last, the dread affray;  
o’er the cross, the victor’s trophy,  
sound the high triumphal lay,  
how, the pains of death enduring,  
earth’s Redeemer won the day.

When at length the appointed fulness  
of the sacred time was come,  
he was sent, the world’s Creator,  
from the Father’s heavenly home,  
and was found in human fashion,  
offspring of the virgin’s womb.

Now the thirty years are ended  
which on earth he willed to see.  
Willingly he meets his passion,  
born to set his people free:  
on the cross the Lamb is lifted,  
there the sacrifice to be.

Praise and honour to the Father,  
praise and honour to the Son,  
praise and honour to the Spirit,  
ever Three and ever One:  
One in might and One in glory,  
while eternal ages run.

Psalm 4  
Thanksgiving

*Now I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once.*

When I call, answer me, O God of justice;  
from anguish you released me, have mercy and  
hear me!

O men, how long will your hearts be closed,  
will you love what is futile and seek what is false?

It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he  
loves;  
the Lord hears me whenever I call him.

Fear him; do not sin: ponder on your bed and be still  
Make justice your sacrifice, and trust in the Lord.

‘What can bring us happiness?’ many say.  
Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord.

You have put into my heart a greater joy  
than they have from abundance of corn and new  
wine.

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once  
for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Now I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once.*

Psalm 15 (16)  
The Lord, my inheritance  
“God raised up Jesus, freeing him from the pains of death” (Acts 2:24).

*My body shall rest in hope.*

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.  
I say to the Lord: ‘You are my God.  
My happiness lies in you alone.’

He has put into my heart a marvellous love  
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.  
Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows.  
Never will I offer their offerings of blood.  
Never will I take their name upon my lips.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.  
The lot marked out for me is my delight:  
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,  
who even at night directs my heart.  
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:  
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;  
even my body shall rest in safety.  
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,  
nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,  
the fullness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*My body shall rest in hope.*

CANTICLE  
Benedictus  
The Messiah and the one who was sent before him

*Save us, Saviour of the world. By your cross and the shedding of your blood you have redeemed us. Come to help us, Lord, our God.*

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel!  
He has visited his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up for us a mighty saviour  
in the house of David his servant,  
as he promised by the lips of holy men,  
those who were his prophets from of old.

A saviour who would free us from our foes,  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
So his love for our fathers is fulfilled  
and his holy covenant remembered.

He swore to Abraham our father to grant us,  
that free from fear, and saved from the hands of our  
foes,  
we might serve him in holiness and justice  
all the days of our life in his presence.

As for you, little child,  
you shall be called a prophet of God, the Most High.  
You shall go ahead of the Lord  
to prepare his ways before him,

To make known to his people their salvation  
through forgiveness of all their sins,  
the loving-kindness of the heart of our God  
who visits us like the dawn from on high.

He will give light to those in darkness,  
those who dwell in the shadow of death,  
and guide us into the way of peace.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Save us, Saviour of the world. By your cross and the shedding of your blood you have redeemed us. Come to help us, Lord, our God.*

PRAYERS AND INTERCESSIONS

Let us pray to our Redeemer, who suffered for us,  
was buried, and rose from the dead.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, our Lord, you saw your mother standing by  
the cross;  
may we share your saving passion in our time of  
suffering.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, our Saviour, you died like a grain of wheat  
falling into the ground;  
gather us to yourself in the harvest of redemption.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, our shepherd, lying in the tomb you were  
hidden from men;  
teach us to love our real life, which is hidden with  
you in God.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, the new Adam, you went down into the  
world of the dead to free the just;  
may those who are dead in sin hear your voice and  
live.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Son of the living God, we were buried with you in  
baptism;  
let us rise with you, alive to God for ever.  
– Lord, have mercy on us.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Almighty, ever-living God,  
whose Only-Begotten Son descended to the  
realm of the dead,  
and rose from there to glory,  
grant that your faithful people,  
who were buried with him in baptism,  
may, by his resurrection, obtain eternal life.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

For Sheol cannot thank you,  
death cannot praise you;  
those who go down to the pit  
cannot hope for your faithfulness.

The living, the living, he thanks you,  
as I do this day;  
the father makes known to the children your  
faithfulness.

The Lord will save me,  
and we will sing to stringed instruments  
all the days of our life,  
at the house of the Lord.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the  
Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Save my soul from the gates of hell, Lord.*

Psalm 150  
Praise the Lord  
“Sing praise in your spirit, sing praise with your  
soul, that is: give glory to God in both your soul and  
your body” (Hesychius).

*I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever, and I  
hold the keys of death and of hell.*

Praise God in his holy place,  
praise him in his mighty heavens.  
Praise him for his powerful deeds,  
praise his surpassing greatness.

O praise him with sound of trumpet,  
praise him with lute and harp.  
Praise him with timbrel and dance,  
praise him with strings and pipes.

O praise him with resounding cymbals,  
praise him with clashing of cymbals.  
Let everything that lives and that breathes  
give praise to the Lord.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the  
Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*I was dead and now I am to live for ever and ever, and I  
hold the keys of death and of hell.*

SHORT READING  
Hosea 5:15-6:2

The Lord says this: They will search for me in their  
misery. ‘Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn  
us to pieces, but he will heal us; he has struck us  
down, but he will bandage our wounds; after a day  
or two he will bring us back to life, on the third day  
he will raise us and we shall live in his presence.’

SHORT RESPONSORY

When I sing to you my lips shall rejoice.  
– *When I sing to you my lips shall rejoice.*

My tongue shall tell the tale of your justice.  
– *When I sing to you my lips shall rejoice.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the  
Holy Spirit.  
– *When I sing to you my lips shall rejoice.*

Psalm 23 (24)  
The Lord comes to his temple  
“The gates of heaven were opened to Christ because  
he was lifted up in the flesh” (St Irenaeus).

*Grow higher, eternal doors: let the King of glory enter.*

The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.  
It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who shall stand in his holy place?  
The man with clean hands and pure heart,  
who desires not worthless things,  
who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbour.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord  
and reward from the God who saves him.  
Such are the men who seek him,  
seek the face of the God of Jacob.

O gates, lift high your heads;  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is the king of glory?  
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,  
the Lord, the valiant in war.

O gates, lift high your heads;  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is he, the king of glory?  
He, the Lord of armies,  
he is the king of glory.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the  
Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*Grow higher, eternal doors: let the King of glory enter.*

Judge my case and redeem me.  
– Give me life according to your promises.

First Reading  
Hebrews 4: 1-13

Be careful: the promise of reaching the place of rest he had for them still holds good, and none of you must think that he has come too late for it. We received the Good News exactly as they did; but hearing the message did them no good because they did not share the faith of those who listened. We, however, who have faith, shall reach a place of rest, as in the text: And so, in anger, I swore that not one would reach the place of rest I had for them. God’s work was undoubtedly all finished at the beginning of the world; as one text says, referring to the seventh day: After all his work God rested on the seventh day. The text we are considering says: They shall not reach the place of rest I had for them. It is established, then, that there would be some people who would reach it, and since those who first heard the Good News failed to reach it through their disobedience, God fixed another day when, much later, he said ‘today’ through David in the text already quoted: If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts. If Joshua had led them into this place of rest, God would not later on have spoken so much of another day. There must still be, therefore, a place of rest reserved for God’s people, the seventh-day rest, since to reach the place of rest is to rest after your work, as God did after his. We must therefore do everything we can to reach this place of rest, or some of you might copy this example of disobedience and be lost.

The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.

RESPONSORY

They buried the Lord, made the tomb secure and rolled a stone across the entrance, and they placed soldiers there to guard the body.

*The chief priests went to Pilate and asked for a guard, and they placed soldiers there to guard the body.*

SECOND READING  
From an ancient homily for Holy Saturday  
*The Lord's descent into the underworld*

Something strange is happening – there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: “My Lord be with you all.” Christ answered him: “And with your spirit.” He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: “Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated. For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image. On my back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my

side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell. The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.

RESPONSORY

Our shepherd, the source of living water, has departed. At his passing the sun was darkened, for he who held the first man captive is now taken captive himself. Today the Saviour has shattered the bars and burst the gates of death.

*He has torn down the barricades of hell and overthrown the power of Satan. Today the Saviour has shattered the bars and burst the gates of death.*

MORNING PRAYER

Psalm 63 (64)  
A prayer against enemies  
“This psalm in particular invites us to think about the passion of the Lord” (St Augustine).

*They will mourn for him as for an only son, since it is the innocent one of the Lord who has been slain.*

Hear my voice, O God, as I complain,  
guard my life from dread of the foe.  
Hide me from the band of the wicked,  
from the throng of those who do evil.

They sharpen their tongues like swords;  
they aim bitter words like arrows  
to shoot at the innocent from ambush,  
shooting suddenly and recklessly.

They scheme their evil course;  
they conspire to lay secret snares.  
They say: ‘Who will see us?  
Who can search out our crimes?’

He will search who searches the mind  
and knows the depths of the heart.  
God has shot them with his arrow  
and dealt them sudden wounds.  
Their own tongue has brought them to ruin  
and all who see them mock.

Then will all men fear;  
they will tell what God has done.  
They will understand God’s deeds.  
The just will rejoice in the Lord  
and fly to him for refuge.  
All the upright hearts will glory.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.

*They will mourn for him as for an only son, since it is the innocent one of the Lord who has been slain.*

Canticle  
Isaiah 38  
The psalm of Hezekiah on recovering from sickness  
“I was dead and behold, I am alive and I hold the keys of death” (Rev 1:17-18).

*Save my soul from the gates of hell, Lord.*

I said, In the noontide of my days I must depart;  
I am consigned to the gates of Sheol  
for the rest of my years.

I said, I shall not see the Lord  
in the land of the living;  
I shall look upon man no more  
among the inhabitants of the world.

My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me  
like a shepherd’s tent;  
like a weaver I have rolled up my life;  
he cuts me off from the loom.

From day to night you bring me to an end;  
I cry for help until morning;  
like a lion he breaks all my bones;  
from day to night you bring me to an end.

Like a swallow or a crane I clamour,  
I moan like a dove.  
My eyes are weary with looking upward.  
O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security.

Lo, it was for my welfare  
that I had great bitterness;  
but you have held back my life  
from the pit of destruction,  
for you have cast all my sins  
behind your back.