

# A LITANY OF CONFESSION, REPENTANCE, AND RENEWAL

Though the world was made through you, majestic Lord, we have failed to recognize both your handiwork and your glory before the nations. Though the universe is vast, our praise has been small.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Though you came to your own people, the very chosen of God, we have been reluctant to acknowledge both them, as your people, and you as Lord of all.

*Christ, have mercy.*

Like Simeon of old, may we receive the consolation of Israel, the grand hope of the ages, in the embodiment of your holy love. May you, Lord, be the culmination of our lives, the rightful desire of our hearts, our treasured hope, just as you were for Simeon, your humble servant.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

Like Joseph and Mary, your holy family, may we marvel at what was declared about you in the temple courts at the time of your manifestation and dedication. May we add our voices today to such joyous praise throughout the world. May all the nations rejoice!

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

Like the Magi of old, may we become wise in seeking you. May we set out on a course, a journey of discovery in which, to our surprise and delight, you find us in your providential care and love, and we in gratitude and in abundant thanksgiving bow down, worship, and adore.

*Lord, have mercy.*

May we open our treasures and lay them before your feet: all that we are; all that we shall ever be. And all to your glory!

*Christ, have mercy.*

Like John the Baptist of old, may we cry out publicly and enthusiastically: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

May we add our many voices, in lands near and far, to the exuberant witness filled with joy: “I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May the phrase “If you are the Son of God,” never pass through our lips again. May we ever triumph over temptation as you have triumphed over all manner of evil, empowered by the living Word of God, the true and righteous sword of the Spirit.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Unlike the people of Nazareth, those who claimed to know you, may we be deep in our understanding and wise in our judgment. May we never take offense at you either privately or publicly. May we ever be

ready to have your name upon our lips, seasoning our conversation with salt, the very words of life.

*Christ, have mercy.*

May we never become preoccupied with our own little world, our limited perspectives, and therefore consider you in your zeal, passion, and steadfast focus on God, your Father, to be so removed from our normal way of thinking, our sense of what's real or even appropriate, that we judge you so poorly, in a reduced way, as even some of your own relations had done.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

It is the highest honor to bear your holy name, merciful Lord, and to be marked by your abundant grace. Therefore, may our own evil or faults never be ascribed to you in any manner especially when we, as your people, are known by the world. May we be mindful in deep humility of our own sins, limitations, and shortcomings. May such things never be projected onto you and thereby sully your glorious name among the nations.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we comprehend the goal of your holy law as manifested in the gift of the Sabbath, an understanding that calls us beyond the legalism that stifles and obscures to a grasp that invites us to the richness of the love of God and neighbor, the point of it all.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Like the people who brought the paralyzed man to you, finding a way through the roof of the house, may we forget ourselves and be diligently focused on the needs of others. May we take up the plight of the sick, the poor, and the brokenhearted and make it our own. May we

seek the social justice, marked by your abundant grace, that ever brings the sweetness of reconciliation.

*Christ, have mercy.*

Like the woman who wet your feet with her tears, gracious Lord, who wiped them with her hair, kissed them with her lips, and poured oil on them, may we be deeply devoted to you, lavish in both our love and praise, knowing who you are in your goodness and from whom in glory you have come.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

May we eagerly follow you as your disciple Matthew had done, forsaking idolatry and deceit in the form of money and the fleeting things of this world. May we be rightly focused on what endures: relationships marked by holy love, the true wafting incense before your magnificent throne.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we be rightly directed, especially in religious matters, where opportunities abound for mistaken judgment and even for an ill will that can masquerade as your most holy will but that actually harms our neighbor. Keep us, merciful Lord, from all manner of deceit and self-deception.

*Lord, have mercy.*

May we ever live in accordance with your life-sustaining teaching that the two great commandments, which summarize the law and the prophets, are to love Almighty God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. May we recognize that

there is nothing more religious than this, nothing more sanctified than your other-directed and encompassing holy love.

*Christ, have mercy.*

To you, empowering and sustaining Lord, who declared “whoever obeys my word will never see death,” may we take up the obedience of faith by your grace and enter into eternal life here and now with the precious promise, and in the heart-felt assurance, of all the good things that are yet to come. May we ever recognize both your eternity and the nature of your being in your splendid declaration, “Before Abraham was born, I am!”

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

In a world full of voices crying for our attention, may we like sheep be attentive to your voice, merciful Lord, for you are our one and only Good Shepherd, the one who has laid down his life for the sheep. May we therefore follow in obedience, not swerving either to the right or to the left, a path that will lead us to the peaceful pastures that endure.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we freely confess, holy Lord, as your disciple Peter had done long ago, that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. Your title is exclusive; your love inclusive. Forgive us then, Lord, when we have diminished you, being forgetful of both your divinity and your eternity, to the status and limitations of other, all-too-human, religious leaders for the sake of simply getting along or for a contrived and unsatisfying peace. In our hearts we know that there is no one like you. As the Word made flesh, you have no equal. Our compromises then have been ugly; however, your being was, is, and remains beautiful.

*Lord, have mercy.*

May we glory in the miracles that attest to your compassion and love: the healings, the feedings, and the raisings from the dead. May we ever affirm your words of power as a sign, a testament, to who you are in your very being, in your abiding goodness and resplendent love.

*Christ, have mercy.*

Unlike the tenants of the vineyard in your parable, gracious Lord, may we ever be mindful that the vineyard is not ours but your Father's. We are but humble stewards of the good gifts that have been entrusted to us. Free us, then, from the temptation to think or act in a way as if the vineyard were our own, that we are or should be in control, a state in which self-love would be mistaken for the very love of God.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

We acknowledge, gracious Lord, that you have never advocated peace at all costs but that you would turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother,” because the truth of God is that important. Pardon us then for the times when we have compromised the truth or soft-pedaled it, or bartered it away, for the sake of popularity or even for unthinking convenience.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we take up the cross and deny ourselves daily especially as we serve the poor, the despondent, and the despised. May whatever detracts from the love of God and our neighbor be cast aside. May whatever fosters the love of God and our neighbor be heartily embraced.

*Lord, have mercy.*

May we learn the great wisdom of not judging by appearances but instead of judging correctly, in truth and in love, as you have taught us, merciful Lord. May we ever be oriented to the Holy Spirit who is the

Spirit of Truth. May we ever seek the mind of Christ, whatever the cost, in the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God, the Father.

*Christ, have mercy.*

Let us learn to forsake ourselves, in all manner of self-denial. May the language of the I, the me, the mine, the self, and the like<sup>i</sup> be abandoned, forsaken, so that we may be empowered to exclaim: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” May we ever know the freedom and the joy that marks such praise!

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

Gracious Lord, may we understand deeply why the poor in spirit, so scorned and rejected, will be blessed in receiving the kingdom of God and why those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied, fulfilled. Teach us then to think about all our values, all that we cherish, in a new way, in accordance with your uncanny and astonishing wisdom: “the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

We know, precious Lord, that you declared: “Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Help us then to be courageous in any private or public setting in which your name or your teachings are challenged, undermined, or dismissed. May our eyes not be on ourselves, and on what we may suffer or forfeit, but on you and your glory.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Loving Lord, may we ever eat your flesh and drink your blood so that you will be in us and we in you. We desire you fully, completely. May you be in our hearts, minds, and souls, and become the very

essence of who we are, that we may be Christlike in our thoughts and actions, and all of this resounding to your glory!

*Christ, have mercy.*

Let us learn in a new way, invigorated by your grace, to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!”

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

May the command “do this in remembrance of me” ever be in our hearts and minds so that we will be fortified by your body and blood, real food and true drink, the emblems of the new covenant in our midst.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we learn to submit our will to God, the Father, as you did, humble Lord, in the garden of Gethsemane, for we have come to believe, by your grace, that submission is peace and obedience is sheer joy.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Unlike Judas, may we forsake all manner of duplicity, deception, and pretense as to whom we know ourselves to be in both our hearts and minds. May our private witness and our public one ever be in accord. May we be like your disciple, Nathanael, a man in whom there was no guile, and therefore be open, honest, and sincere in all our actions before both God and humanity.

*Christ, have mercy.*

Let us forsake all manner of false witness and the evil speaking that breaks your heart, gracious Lord, and that tears down our neighbors and harms them so greatly, those for whom you have died. May we learn



the discipline of regulating our tongues so that our speech may become edifying to our neighbor and most pleasing to you.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

Unlike your apostle Peter, may we never deny you, gracious Lord, and fearfully say, "I don't know the man!" May we ever acknowledge you, in abiding trust, whatever the circumstance, whatever the suffering, whatever the cost.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

You have said, Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," but we have made this world our only kingdom and we think of nothing else. Free us then from all self-absorbed love and from the tribalism that it mistakes for your coming kingdom, your holy reign.

*Lord, have mercy.*

Unlike Herod Antipas, may we look to you not for a sign or a performance, but for nothing less than the way, the truth, and the life that you are. May you direct our lives, gracious Lord, along the paths not that we have preferred, but that you have chosen.

*Christ, have mercy.*

You were despised and rejected by common people and religious leaders alike. May we identify with those who like you, holy Lord, are despised and rejected today. May we be known not for what we hate, but for whom we love. Let it be known, therefore, both within and without the church, both near and far, that we love you, Lord, most of all. You are the very strength and purpose, the high end, of our being.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

The Governor's soldiers mocked you, precious Lord, and taunted, "Hail king of the Jews!" Seeing your great suffering, knowing the loathing that you endured in the midst of these derisive shouts, may we always be careful in our speech, recognizing its great power to do either good or evil. May we learn to bless by the power of your holy Word. May we comfort those who have been maligned, mistreated, and abused with the healing balm of your welcoming love.

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

Enjoying the flush of graces in the gospel, the universal love of God and neighbor, may we throw off, by your strength and power, all forms of bigotry especially in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and whatever other ways attempt to block or limit your holy love from having its way with us. May you transform us more deeply into your beauty and goodness, the precious image in which we have *all* been created.

*Lord, have mercy.*

The religious leaders who cried, "crucify," also proclaimed, "We have no king but Caesar." May we ever place you, glorious Lord, and your kingdom above all. May we understand that all earthly kingdoms are fleeting, but your kingdom will have no end. May we set our hearts on nothing else.

*Christ, have mercy.*

If you had come down from the cross, lowly and humble Lord, you would not have descended to the very depths, where human sin and evil had placed you, and where your holy love was brilliantly revealed in the darkest of places. May we fathom the depth of your sacrifice,

the measure of your abandonment, the extent of your passion, and live accordingly.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

By your grace we know the world-shattering significance of your holy love that has triumphed at Golgotha. Nails could not destroy it; taunting could not weaken it; hatred could not overcome it. By your full and perfect sacrifice, curses have now been transformed into blessings. Glory!

*Christ, grant us strength and peace in your holy love.*

May we become like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who offered decency, respect, reverence, honor, and love in a setting yet filled with violence and ill will. May we be courageous and honest enough to acknowledge goodness wherever it is found and to recognize hatred when it is present. As you have taught us, we must be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”

*Lord, have mercy.*

May we be free from that sinful attitude that diminishes women, that fails to recognize the glory of their being as created in nothing less than the image and likeness of God. May we never refuse to believe their sound, wise, and glorious testimony: “I have seen the Lord.”

*Christ, have mercy.*

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, may we, too, be transformed through the Word of God and through the breaking of the Bread of Life so that our hearts will be aflame, a precious instance of

your glorious presence within us, through your empowering grace, as well as among us, through your rich and everlasting holy love.

*Lord, forgive us our sins.*

Yes, Lord, forgive us all our sins!

*Praise be your holy name now and forevermore!*

Amen!

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