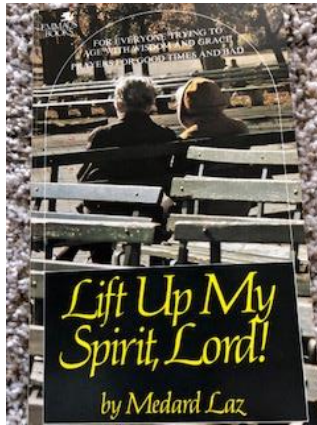


# Lift Up My Spirit, Lord!

by

*Medard Laz*



For Everyone Trying to Age with Wisdom and Grace

Prayers for the Good Times and Bad

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***AS I BEGIN TO CONSIDER MY LIFE,***

*I DISCOVER.....*

## **A Full Life**

Lord, I never thought of my life that way.  
Until the thirty-five-year-old man in the next room died.

And here I am.....  
Double his years  
His children are still in school.  
My grandchildren are finishing theirs.

I've seen my share of.....

Television,  
New cars,  
The latest this,  
The latest that.

Yet I am still most amazed by all the mystery locked into  
A snowflake,  
A baby's smile,  
A flower petal.

By forty I felt that I knew everything.  
After sixty I found I had everything still to discover.

My life has become full as I started to pour it out –  
Seeing how much there was in my cup.  
To get up each day and to pour.  
For you and your love are within me as a wellspring, O Lord.

I could never exhaust your love inside me.

Jesus, help me to extract enough love today.....  
For my family coming to visit,  
For the nurses who will be doing their jobs,  
For the sorrowing wife and children of the dead thirty-five-year-old.

## **Aloneness**

It has finally hit, me, Jesus.....

My aloneness!

At night.....after

Pills,

Shots,

TV.

They pull down the shade,

Take away the newspapers, and

Shut out the visitors.

I find myself alone

It scares me

The silence

In a world that is turned by its own noises.

I turn over and over.

I try to force sleep.

I become more awake.

I ask myself:

Is there anyone in all the world

Who really cares about me?

Is there anyone who needs me?

You care, Jesus.

You need me.

The nurses would be lost without my gentle teases.

My roommate would have a long search to find

A better listener.

The candy strippers would have no one to confide in.

So give me my rest, Jesus.

I am only feeling sorry for myself.

And sorrow belongs to those

Much less fortunate than myself.

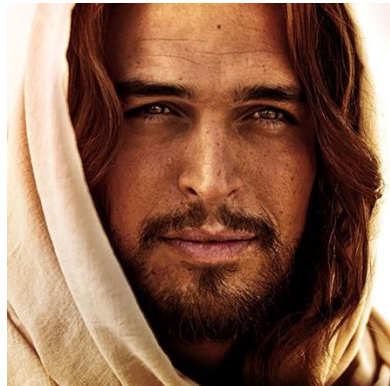
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## **Guilt**

I sit here hour by hour watching TV, Lord.

I am so aware that the picture tube is  
Out of focus.  
That is the way that too much of my life has been  
Out of focus.  
So many past events never seem to leave me –  
I am haunted by.....  
Afternoons that were slept away.  
A tongue that never knew when to stop.  
Faces that my life quickly moved away from.  
My busyness with work and not my family.  
Who is the repairman that I can get to  
So that my life can be put back into focus?

Jesus, you come to me and say,  
"Fear no more.  
I am with you.  
As the sun burns away the haze from the cloudy sky,  
So my divine love burns away  
The guilt from your past.  
I died long ago to pay off your pain.  
Live no longer in the shadow of the cross,  
But in the aurora of my love.  
I put no blame on your yesterdays,  
In my hand I hold only your tomorrows."



## Rest

"Get your rest!"

Everyone uses that as a good-bye now, Lord,  
As if they did not know what else to say.

It is a necessary evil for me,  
Like turning the pages of a book,  
To get on with the story.  
No one else views it this way.

Rest from what?  
Rest to do what?  
I feel like you did Jesus:  
“Let the little children come unto me.”

I am not saving myself for anything special.  
The more rest I get  
The weaker my legs,  
The dizzier my head,  
The more hunched my back.  
There are so many things I still have to do....  
My granddaughter's wedding.  
Bill's retirement party,  
A visit to Ethel who is sick,  
A ride to the country before the frost  
And all the leaves fall off.

As with the children –  
Let them all come  
Or else....  
I must be on my way!

## **Belonging**

My whole life I have belonged to:  
Bridge clubs,

Associations,  
Church groups,  
Neighborhood groups,  
Bowling leagues.

All these years I have belonged to a:

Company

To which I gave the best days that I had to offer.

Spouse

That I have been with almost as far back as I can remember.

Family

That I have raised from diapers to denims.

Only one thing has been wrong:

Somehow I have always felt that

All of them belonged

To me.

Lord, I have even felt that you belonged to me.

I thought of you

When everything else was taken care of.

I went to you

When there was a heartache or a need.

Now with my advancing years

Life has changed so for me.

All along I should have felt that

I belonged to the:

Company

Who supported my family and myself over the many years.

Spouse

Who more than tolerated all of my many shortcomings.

Children

Who were able to do the best with the little of myself

That I gave to them

Throughout it all I should have felt that

I belonged to

You.

Without you

I am nothing.

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I have not been aware of the sunshine

Until I opened the shades.

I have not been aware of how much I have belonged

To you



Until my years have led me out of my own prison.



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### **A Follower**

All my life, Jesus,

I have been a follower:

The kids ahead of me at school,  
The style of others' clothes,  
The gatherings of friends on Friday evenings.

Where have all of those that I have followed gone?

I have lost contact.  
I have laid some to rest.

Others may have thought that I was a follower

By my outward appearance.  
But this was not the case.  
And you know it, Lord.

Inwardly, I was

Praying

That my co-workers would make the grade.

Hoping

That there would be an end to the bickering.

Wishing

That I could find the answer to injustice.

Hurting

From the way people were being talked about by neighbors.  
Would that I had been more vocal....  
More of a leader.

I am glad that I have at least tried

To respond to your call:  
"Follow me."

And I have tried to follow you

In the days when I thought I was too sick to get up.  
Into offices and shops where you were not honored.  
Into a bed of pain where the outcome is not bright.  
Into moments when I thought that my heart would burst.

I do not mind

To be your follower.

## Happiness

I am really happy, Lord.  
How can I not be?

With so much of life behind me,  
With so many dreams yet ahead  
To be fulfilled  
At home with you.

I tell everyone that I meet  
How good you have been to me....  
Guiding me down the right paths,  
Opening doors of opportunity,  
Turning me from the way I once was  
that everybody (especially myself) hated.

I cannot wander the world right now,  
But my mind can.

I can see  
Forests lined with spruce trees by the mile,  
Tiny robins leaving their nests for the first time,  
The sun hung over ocean waters,  
A family spreading a picnic blanket.

You look at your world, Lord, and you say,  
"It is good."  
I look at your world, Lord, and I say,  
"It is good."



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## Peace

I need peace of soul to drink in  
The meaning of life.

There have been so many people at  
All the events  
Of all the years.  
Somewhere you must have a mosaic of my life, Lord.  
Through prayer  
Help me to sort out the pieces,  
Figure out where they all go  
Or should have gone.

As I find a missing piece or two,  
Help me to have the courage  
To put the misplaced of the forgotten  
Where they belong.

The time approaches when  
You will take up my mosaic  
For a closer look.  
Help me to have it finished  
The way you want it, O Lord.



## **Meditation**

Why begin again?

Life is a beginning.

When I do not have time

Consider God's time.

When I feel too old

Renew just one day.

When my arms are too weary

Embrace a child.

When there is no human understanding

God is at work.



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## **What If?.....Why Not?**

What If....

The family forgets that I am here?

The children do not come and pick me up?  
The doctor sees little hope for me?  
The phone does not ring for days?  
The mailperson just passes by?  
I have fifteen more years of life to live?  
I walk out of here of my own volition?  
There is no tomorrow?

Why Not....

Get up and begin a new day  
As I have wanted to for a long time?  
Take my life hour by hour, day by day?  
Find the strength you put within me  
To conquer my loneliness?  
Make the calls myself to the ones that  
I have been waiting to hear from?  
Carry my day as far as I can  
And bid you to do the rest?  
Look up to the sky and see that it is  
The sun that is shining?  
Leave my "yesterday" self and find what  
My "newborn" self can be like?  
Fix my attitude for today as beautifully  
As you fixed the stars above?



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### **Every Time I Think Of**

Every time I think of  
The many years that we shared together –

I dare ask what does it all amount to?  
For you have been the one light  
On my often treacherous way.  
I try to determine why love took so long to happen  
Yet, you have stood waiting.  
One would surmise that I know everything about you.

Yet here I am taking the first step.  
I recall how the decades have washed ashore....  
Your footprints were always visible.  
How is it that we have stayed so close,  
Never drifting apart?  
Your steps  
I could always hear coming.



## The Hospital

Where does life happen, Jesus?  
I always thought that it was out there in the world  
    That was the stage  
    On which it was played.  
Now I find that there is a true lesson  
    Within these walls  
        In every room  
        In each bed.

When I once came to visit  
    My sick father,  
    My ailing spouse,  
    My terminal brother.  
I was a visitor  
    Free to come,  
    Free to go.

And so I ran.  
I did not really want to know  
    Or feel  
    What the pain in a place like this  
    Was really like.  
I was so happy to get outside,  
To turn to what for me was normal everyday life.

Many who come to see me,  
    Even my closest family and friends,  
    Are like what I have been for my whole life:  
        Fearful in coming,  
        Relieved to go.

But the person who lingers in here for awhile.....  
    Who really feels my pain,  
    That person really knows me  
When all are gone.

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I think of you, Lord.  
You really have felt my pain  
And you truly know me.





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## **The Crack in the Wall**

It was the first thing that I noticed in this room, Lord.

The crack in the wall.

I am sure that this is what my family and friends  
Have been trying to notice in me for years  
A crack in my wall.....  
Some way possible of getting through to me.  
Is it possible, Jesus?

I have tried to be solid and strong  
Up against all that the world  
Has thrown at me.  
But since all of this has befallen me  
I have had to change.

That crack no doubt got there  
When the building shifted,  
Even a little bit.

That is how my family and friends  
The doctors and nurses  
Are getting through my wall  
I have had to shift,  
More than a little bit.

I have no reason to be callous any longer.  
As your waves have beaten against my shores  
You have become the cornerstone  
Of my house.

Jesus, thank you for the added weight.  
Helping me to crack,  
Letting all the others in.

17

## **Nurses**

Theirs is such an exquisite life that  
I am jealous.

Why have I discovered so late in life  
What real caring can mean?

I feel their  
Knowing smile,  
Gentle tease,  
Sympathetic sponge bath,  
Motherly feeding.  
The weaker I am,  
The stronger they become.

Each nurse works so quietly  
Caring for such ordinary people.

Still jealous,  
I asked one nurse how she could continue  
Day after day.  
She simply replied:  
“I say to myself,  
With each new soul –  
This is my mother,  
This is my father,  
This is my Lord!”



I'm here in your presence again, Lord  
Because I'm searching.  
Imagine,  
At my age  
I'm still searching  
But I am.

For meaning in all of the roads that I have traversed.  
For temperance when the nurse takes my temperature.  
For quietness when I lie down to rest.  
For sparks of life to excite me enough to want  
To welcome tomorrow.  
For fullness of spirit to put aside my still  
Too childish habits.

Here in your presence I feel so close:  
To my spouse who has gone on,  
To my friends I so rarely see,  
To grandchildren so busy with their life,  
To you.

I hear you saying to me that:  
My life has been a good one.  
My sins are all forgiven.  
I should weep no more....  
You are arisen!



## **The Road to Life**

How long have I been on this road, Jesus,

Searching for you?  
Lost  
Discouraged  
In the very pit of my despair.....  
Not knowing the one to turn to.

Then I met someone  
Who seemed to know so much more than I  
He knew where I had been  
And where I was going  
Even better than I did.  
I realized that all this time  
It was you walking with me  
Each day of my life.

So visible  
Yet so hidden.  
Holding me up.  
In the breaking of the bread  
Did my life finally meet yours?  
And then at the zenith of my joy  
You were gone.  
But not really.

Gone  
Only in the way  
I wanted you to be with me.  
You were now out there.....  
Everywhere.

So I have had to hasten  
To tell all that I meet  
Where to find you.  
On their road  
To life.

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## **Time**

Every time that I look at a clock or a watch  
Ten or fifteen minutes seem to go by.

I was always looking for time to pass by quickly.  
Now I am begging for time to slow down.

Where has time gone for me?

Only yesterday.....

I went for a ride on my new bicycle.

I cleaned out our new apartment.

I cuddled our new baby.

Life is no longer hours and days

But months and years.

Looking back is so far.

Looking ahead is so near.

Time for me is now a lifetime.

Time heals.

Time reveals.

All the clocks that beat in the world

Have little or nothing to tell me now.

The seemingly endless train of time will soon stop for me.

And you Lord will invite me

To go on with you.

Into neither day nor night

But into infinity.

What ecstasy to view all that is, was, and will be.....

With you as my close companion!



21

## Food

It's there.....

That's all I can say, Lord.

It's there.  
The tray comes filled.  
    It often goes filled.  
    I'm just not hungry.

I remember how I used to stuff myself  
    At parties,  
    On Sunday afternoons,  
    At picnics.  
        Now I just pick at it.  
        The food stares back at me.

Sometimes I am too lazy even to want to  
    Put in my false teeth to get at it.  
        So the  
        Hamburgers and the tuna-fish salad,  
        Pork chops and the spaghetti,  
        Corn flakes and the pancakes  
        Just sit before me.

Most of the time I feel so guilty  
Just leaving it there.  
    What am I to do?  
    My taste is no longer for  
        What goes into my stomach  
    But for all that can  
        Enter into my heart.



22

### **Communion**

When I taste your bread, O Lord, I taste life itself.  
    There is so little

I get hungry  
So quickly  
And become my old self.  
There is so much  
I can feed thousands  
With all that you give me  
And all that is left over.  
This is the way that you have fed me, Jesus.....  
Piece by piece.  
At our wedding mass,  
At the funeral mass of a loved one,  
As I received with my newborn child in my arms,  
At my child's First Communion.  
Amounting to the completeness of a lifetime  
You have never stuffed me with yourself.  
It has always been  
Piece by piece.

Through your bread  
You have come so very deep inside me.  
I can feel your pulse within me  
Your body within mine.

All these years I have gone  
To receive Communion.  
At last  
I am ready  
To give Communion.



23

## **A Glass of Water**

“I thirst.”



There was a time when  
I smoked,  
Bit my fingernails,  
Tapped my foot,  
Rubbed my eyes.

Now.....

I am forever drinking water.  
I wake up grasping for a glass.  
I clutch it by the hour.  
I pour water as thoughts flow in my mind.  
I drink it to get me to sleep.

Am I that dry  
Or is this a new habit  
That tries to refresh this body of mine continually?

You come to be, Lord, and say.....  
"Come and drink of me  
For mine is  
Living water."



### **The Stroll**

I have ridden in cars more than I could ever  
Want to remember

Trains brought me home for many a year.  
Planes took me away to far-off places and to rest.

My daily stroll is as fast as I want to go now, Lord.

Not that I am tired of living

Or because life is too fast-paced for me.

Rather, my stroll is just the way I like

To look at life now:

The delight on the baby's face as his mother

Pushes him back and forth on the swing.

The earnestness in the little leaguers' bodies

As they try for the winning hit.

The tranquility of soul in a new-found friend

Who shares the park bench with me.

Cars fill the veins of the city.

Trains dot the countryside scene.

Planes join the birds in the sky.

Everything that moves

Along with the steps I take on my stroll

Forms a journey.....

A journey that will end.

For everyone and everything that moves

Must come to rest

And find their place

In you.



25

## **My Garden**

My garden has produced food and flowers, Lord.

If I had to choose.....

I would take  
The flowers.  
They have no purpose  
But to be enjoyed.  
That is how life is and will be for me.

I remember planting the seeds.  
You did the rest  
With your earth, sun and rain.  
For decades now I have been planting "this" big seed.  
You have done the rest  
With schooling,  
My spouse,  
My own seedlings.  
I am ready for the harvest and  
The harvest master.

I have no purpose but  
To enjoy  
And to be enjoyed.  
We enjoy each other very much!



## The Picture Albums

Less than an hour and  
I have paged through all of

The family picture albums.  
So many of the events of my life  
Can so easily be fingered through.  
Before me lies a panorama of my existence.

As I view myself at such different ages  
I have come to notice that  
There is a story in those eyes of mine  
It is the same glint that runs through  
The class portraits,  
The family gatherings,  
The vacations,  
The weddings.

For those two eyes of mine tell the story  
of your divine grace:  
To have even finished school,  
To have found sufficient love for my in-laws,  
To have afforded those vacations,  
To have borne the anxiety of my children  
leaving the nest.

None of this before me could have happened, Lord  
Without the wonder of your grace.  
That is the story in my eyes  
That causes such a sparkle.



27

### **The Daily Paper**

Every day they drop off the paper, Lord.  
The headlines always stare at me.

The words change:

Troop Buildup  
Begin Evacuation  
Storm Lashes Coast  
Sign Peace Accord  
Officials Convicted  
Find Family Slain  
Call Up National Guard

The meaning remains the same:

Humans are weak.  
Humans falter many times.  
Humans need God's help.

We are so incomplete.  
The world is sinful.  
A Savior is so needed.

I page past:

The sales and the sports.  
The movies and the weather.  
The commentaries and the comics.  
The recipes and the earning reports.

And when I finish,  
I notice.....

That my fingers have become blackened by it all.  
As I go to wash them clean, Jesus,  
Baptize anew  
All who make the news  
With the wrong that they have done.

And I, too, who have never made the news  
And all the wrong that I have done.

### **The Greeting Card**

Whenever I receive a greeting card, Lord

It is like going across a bridge for me.  
The one on the other side is so far away  
And has been for some time.

Then this card arrives.....  
The miles  
The months  
Apart  
Shrink in an instant.  
With a child's joy do I open it.  
Laugh at its gaiety,  
Enjoy its thoughtfulness.  
Tears well up as I read of the  
Concern  
Love  
Prayers.  
Joy flows back into me.  
It lasts  
For hours  
And a day.

So much of life can be  
An unexpected treat.



29

## Clothes

Lord, I look at the clothes that others are wearing  
And they reflect:

“I’m going somewhere.”  
I look at the clothes that I wear and that hang in the closet  
And they reflect:  
“I’ve been somewhere.”

Most everything I wear is old.  
I have had them for years.  
And I am delighted that I still possess them.  
For I can again wrap myself in  
Christenings  
Fourth of July’s  
Anniversaries  
Hobbies  
Long walks.

Looking through old picture albums  
I am reminded  
That this is still me.

My clothes may say:  
“I’ve been somewhere.”  
But my heart disclosed:  
“I’m going somewhere.”



### Keys

They are worn with age, Lord,  
For my life has always been one of unlocking doors.

On this one ring I hold  
Two apartment keys,  
One house key,  
A safety-deposit key,  
Two car keys,  
A locker key from work,  
Two luggage keys.

At times I was not able to locate them.  
They were  
Behind the seat,  
In another pocket,  
On the dresser top.

Yet they always made their appearance.  
Before they did I cursed and cursed.  
After they did I rarely thanked you.  
I am glad today that I am not cursing.  
This shows that  
I  
Am not lost.

I am so happy today that I am thinking of you.  
This shows that  
I  
Am found.



31

## Money

The wallet or the purse is always at hand.



It must give me a sense of security.

You have said to me:

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,  
And to God the things that are God’s.”

Yet I have spent more than a half a century

Chasing

After money.

Did the coins and the bills

Own me

Or did I own them?

I am still not quite sure.

I needed:

Food for the family

The rent payments

Clothes

Schooling for my child

Entertainment

I wanted:

Luxuries

Acceptance

Security

Raised heads

Assurance.

The former you always took care of for me, Lord.

The latter I could never begin to secure.

So I now look forward to:

Christmas

Easter

Birthdays

Anniversaries

Valentines

Anything

To send generous gifts.

I am only too happy to part with my money.

It has done all that it can

To me

And for me.

Someone else may have more success with it than I....

I doubt it.

I choose to belong to you

And not to Caesar.

## Litany of Strength

When my legs weaken,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
As I grow tired,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When my back aches,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I lose control,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I am helpless,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I am defenseless,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I cannot eat,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When names escape me,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
As I sit down to pray,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
As I lie down to sleep,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
To face another dawn,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
To get going again,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When the doctor walks in,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I cannot move,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
Over financial worries,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
During lingering temptations,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
In times of doubt,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
In my hours of loneliness,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
Throughout my daily treatments,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
During isolated days,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
For unattended pains,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When it is hard to smile,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When I have nothing left,	Strengthen me, O Lord.
When everyone has gone,	Strengthen me, O Lord.



## Litany of Deliverance

From self-pity,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From past sins,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From worried looks,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From painful shots,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From languid afternoons,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From sleepless nights,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From inner turmoil,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From agonizing reports,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From lingering doubts,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From senility,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From loss of self-control,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From useless reading,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From unnecessary fears,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From childless ways,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From feeling abandoned,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From criticizing the helpful,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From continued numbness,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From feverish attacks,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From chilling spells,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From unsavory foods,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From boring visitors,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From spiritual harm,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From doubts of faith,	Deliver me, O Lord.
From eternal aloneness,	Deliver me, O Lord.



For abiding friends,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For dutiful children,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For relaxing moments,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For saving drugs,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For refreshing baths,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For tender touches,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For easing medicines,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For unexpected calls,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For long-suffering nurses,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For consoling chaplains	I Thank you, O Lord.
For attentive doctors,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For cloudless days,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For cooling breezes,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For occasional sweets,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For quenching liquids,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For refreshing programs,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For amusing visitors,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For genial roommates,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For inexhaustible memories,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For silent moments,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For nature's voice,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For favorite keepsakes,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For your Bread of Life,	I Thank you, O Lord.
For an eternal yearning,	I Thank you, O Lord.



For useless chatter,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For forgetting,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For not caring,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For daydreaming,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For quibbling,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For sharpness of tongue,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For being superficial,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For short-sightedness,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For unreasonable demands,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For not listening,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For harboring animosity,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For judging falsely,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For insensitive remarks,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For stifling hopes,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For unwillingness to change,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For laziness of spirit,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For dejected glances,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For undone projects,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For weary ways,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For displeasing deeds,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For entertaining excesses,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For misspent graces,	Forgive me, O Lord.
For knowing everything,	Forgive me, O Lord.



## Waiting to See

There was at that time in Jerusalem a man called Simeon.  
This man was upright and devout.  
The Holy Spirit was upon him.  
It had been disclosed to him by the Holy Spirit  
That he would not see death  
Until he had seen the Lord's Messiah.  
Guided by the Spirit he came to the temple.  
When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him  
What was customary under the Law,  
He took him in his arms,  
Praised God, and said:  
"This day, Master, you give your servant his discharge in peace;  
Now your promise is fulfilled.  
For I have seen with my own eyes  
The deliverance which you have made ready  
In full view of all the nations:  
A light that will be a revelation to the heathen,  
And glory to your people Israel."  
The child's father and mother were full of wonder  
At what was being said about Him.  
Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother,  
"This child is destined to be a sign which men reject;  
And you too shall be pierced to the heart.  
Many in Israel will stand or fall because of Him,  
And thus the secret thoughts of many will be laid bare."

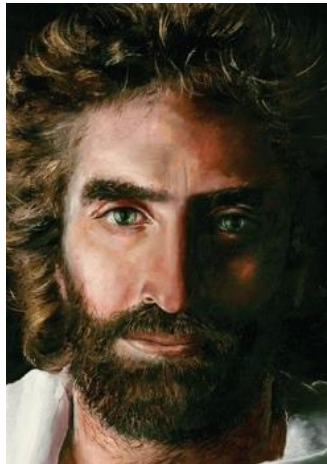
*Luke 2:25-35*

Lord, I too have spent so much of my life waiting,  
Waiting for the weekend to come,  
Waiting for the children to grow up,

Waiting for the morning sun.

And now that I have seen all that I have ever  
Wanted to see of this world,  
I desire to see only you.  
For you are all that is really left for me to see.  
As with Simeon, you are my Savior.  
A light that will burn in my eyes and my heart forever.

Lord, you are as quietly here with me as would  
A sleeping child be  
In my life I have seen so many reject you.  
I, along with Mary, am pierced to the heart.  
But my eyes are now old enough to have seen many more  
Grow with you  
Embrace you  
Die with you  
And rise with you.  
I too am filled with your wonder  
And I will bless all that I meet through you.



There was a prophetess, named Anna.  
    She was a very old woman.  
Who had lived seven years with her husband  
    After she was first married,  
And then alone as a widow to the age of eighty-four.  
    She never left the temple,  
    But worshipped day and night,  
        Fasting and praying.  
Coming up at that very moment to see the child,  
    She returned thanks to God;  
And she talked about the child to all who were looking  
    For the liberation of Jerusalem.

*Luke 2:36-38*

Lord, Anna your prophetess knew of great sorrow in her life.  
    Yet she did not grow bitter.  
At times, the sorrow of my life has left me bitter  
    And hard and resentful of you.  
But like with Anna, the sorrow you have shared with me  
    Has softened my crust  
And made me more patient with my own ills  
    And those of others.  
Lord, I who am old, pray never to cease to hope.  
    The years have taken away the bloom and the strength  
        Of my body.  
    But you will not allow them to deprive me  
        Of the hope I need.  
May my loneliness never take a greater hold of me  
    Than you.  
Through my treatments and fasting and prayers you show me  
    That the best is yet to come for me.  
Tomorrow can never kill the hope I have for today.  
    Those younger than I  
Want to be delivered from the happenings of daily life.  
    I wait to see you as did Anna.

39

I may not be present in your temple day to day as was Anna.  
    But you are still with me right here day by day.



The ending of my life finds me not at all alone –  
But with you.  
For you take on my weakness.  
Only now in my life do I realize that you are the one  
Who gives me strength.



40

### **Walking Along**

In the colonnades there lay a crowd of sick people,  
Blind,

Lame,  
And paralyzed.  
Among them was a man who had been crippled for  
Thirty-eight years.  
When Jesus saw him lying there  
And was aware that he had been ill for a long time,  
He asked him,  
“Do you want to recover?”  
“Sir,” he replied,  
“I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is disturbed.  
But while I am moving, someone else is in the pool before me.”  
Jesus answered,  
“Rise to your feet,  
Take your bed and walk.”  
The man recovered instantly,  
Took up his stretcher,  
And began to walk.

*John 5:3-9*

Everyone moves more quickly than I do, now, Lord.  
It is hard to keep up.  
I suffer the pains that never seem to go away.  
Others ask me how I am,  
I say.....“Fine.”  
But you know that I am not fine.  
You ask if I want to be well again  
How could I say “No”?

The doctor gives me pills to ease the pain  
My children come to hold my hand.

You come and take my whole self  
Press me to your yourself.  
You never let go.  
At your word I will get up and walk  
But only to along with you.

41

## **Take My Hand**

Simon’s mother-in-law  
Was ill in bed

With fever.  
They told him about her at once.

He came forward,  
Took her by the hand,  
And helped her to her feet.  
The fever left her  
And she waited upon them.

*Mark 1:30-31*

They all come by, Lord.  
The grandchildren,  
The children,  
The relations  
To see how I am,  
To offer their support  
It is so wonderful to see bone of my bone,  
Blood of my blood, come through that door.

The sweet fragrance of grandchildren  
The loving concern of my children.....  
It is hard to see all that end.

But you take my hand and help me up  
As you did for Simon's mother-in-law.  
My fever does not leave me,  
But the more disturbing fear does.

I can no longer wait on them,  
But my smile and my prayers  
Help them in an untold measure.

### **Weep No More**

Jesus went to a town called Naim, accompanied by  
His disciples and a large crowd.

As he approached the gate of the town  
He met a funeral.  
The dead man was the only son of his widowed mother;  
And many of the townspeople were there for her.  
When the Lord saw her,  
His heart went out to her.  
And he said,  
“Weep no more.”

With that He stepped forward and laid his hand on the bier;  
And the bearers halted.  
Then he spoke:  
“Young man, rise up!”  
The dead man sat up and began to speak;  
And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Deep awe fell upon them all, and they praised God.  
“A great prophet has arisen among us,” they said, and again,  
“God has shown his care for his people.”

*Luke 7:11-16*

How great is your compassion for me, Lord!  
“Weep no more!”  
I hear you whisper these words to me,  
But I want to lament the tragedies of my own life.  
And my sins as well.  
I want to go on crying,  
Being sorry for myself,  
For my lot in life has led me to this moment.

You gave life to the dead son  
You give that same life to me.  
And to all of my departed loves  
You give a life to them that I never could.

The widowed mother of an only son  
Each was all that the other had in this life.

How great the dependence  
The caring  
Your compassion.....  
To discover in death the fact that  
Both mother and son need you.

In my life I have seen you give life to many:  
My tired helpmate  
My children  
Their children  
The depressed and the lonely that  
Go by me every day.  
I ask once more for life  
A life that does not end here  
But a life that is eternal.



## **My Treasures**

“Do not store up for yourselves

Treasure on earth,  
Where it grows rusty and moth-eaten,  
And thieves break in to steal it.  
Store up  
Treasure in heaven,  
Where there is no moth and no rust to spoil it,  
No thieves to break in and steal.  
For where your treasure is  
There will your heart be also."

*Matthew 6:19-21*

For a lifetime, Lord, I have been storing up my treasures:  
Savings accounts,  
401k's  
Clothes closets,  
Bank-deposit boxes.

In a day they will all be cleaned out.....  
Empty.  
Let me spend one day, Jesus,  
Today.....  
Piling up spiritual treasure by  
Greeting anyone who comes through that door  
As I would you.  
Controlling my tongue when it begins to swell.  
Taking under my wing through prayer those lost and alone  
And hope  
That these  
Will last an eternity.

45

### **The Little I Have**

Jesus looked up and saw  
The rich people dropping their gifts into the chest

Of the temple treasury;  
And he noticed a poor widow  
Putting in  
Two tiny coins.  
“I’ll tell you this,” He said:  
“This poor widow has given more than any of them;  
For those others who have given  
Had more than enough,  
But she,  
With less than enough,  
Has given all she had to live on.”

*Luke 21:1-4*

I once dreamed of being rich, Lord,  
But not anymore.  
Almost everything I saw others have,  
I too wanted.  
I found out the hard way  
That all of these things soon become  
Useless  
And out of style.  
And it becomes a game of worldly replacements.  
I am so rich in the life I have lived:  
I’ve been a support to many  
I’ve been loved by more than I have ever deserved.

Sometimes now I have to give of the little I have  
Usually this is not money:  
A prayer  
For someone that neither I nor another can reach  
A phone call  
To a bedridden neighbor  
A letter  
To a grandchild at college  
None of this is really much, Lord.  
But what I can give  
I do with joy.

46

### **Dying to Live**

Then Jesus replied:  
“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Amen, Amen I say to you,  
Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies,  
It remains just a grain of wheat;  
But if it dies,  
It produces much fruit  
Whoever loves his life,  
Loses it  
And whoever hates his life in this world  
Will preserve it  
For eternal life  
Whoever serves me  
Must follow me  
And where I am,  
There also will my servant be  
The Father will honor whoever serves me.  
I am troubled now.  
Yet what should I say?  
Father, save me from this hour?  
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.  
Father, glorify your name.”

*John 12:23-27*

Lord, I am but a seed.  
These many years I have tried to die to myself  
That I might bloom.  
I look ahead to the day of my dying  
To shed the outer chaff that has clung to me for so long  
To get out of myself.  
To become infinitely more than what I have been on earth.

I love my life  
But I can lose it.  
I hate my life  
But I can keep it.

It is scary to think that no one, no one but you,  
Will be with me at that moment.

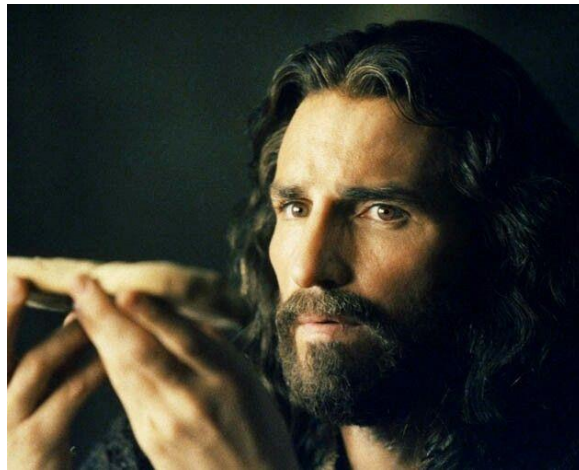


You have been my hidden friend throughout this life.  
You will be my everlasting friend throughout eternity.

I cannot be spared from death.  
You were not.  
I cannot ask the Father for more than you.

I was born to die.

I am dying to live.



### **The Cup of Uncertainty**

Then they came to a place named Gethsemane,

And he said to his disciples,  
    "Sit here while I pray."  
He took with him Peter, James and John.  
    And began to be trouble and distressed.  
    Then he said to them,  
    "My soul is sorrowful even to death.  
    Remain here and watch."  
He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed  
    That if it were possible  
    The hour might pass him by.  
    He said,  
    "Abba, Father, all things are possible with you.  
    Take this cup away from me,  
    But not what I will  
    But what you will."  
When he returned he found them asleep.  
    He said to Peter,  
    "Simon, are you asleep?  
    Could you not keep watch for one hour?  
    Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test.  
    The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."  
    Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing.  
Then he returned once more and found them asleep,  
    For they could not keep their eyes open  
    And did not know what to answer him.  
He returned a third time, and said to them,  
    "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?  
    It is enough.  
    The hour has come.  
Behold the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners.  
    Get up, let us go.  
    See, my betrayer is at hand."

*Mark 14:32-42*

I try to be courteous:  
    I say for them to

Go  
Eat  
Rest.  
Really, I want them to stay.  
Inside I realize  
I must face my future  
Alone.  
I want it to pass, Lord.  
It will not pass.  
I  
Must face it.

More support from family and friends  
Would make it so much easier.  
More than likely,  
I am looking for  
Sympathy.

With the same strength you begged from the Father  
In your agony  
As you faced your death  
You will help me to drink from this cup of  
Sheer uncertainty.





But be assured, my soul,  
I will be listening  
And in readiness.

Lord, you knew, so much better than I  
That being born  
Means that one must die.  
My life and my birth mean the same.  
But your death  
Is showing me the way to life  
That I can follow.

Compared to what you suffered,  
What are a few needles?  
And weeks of confinement to bed?

As I lie here awaiting my fate,  
Help me to offer my anxiety and pain for all that  
I have condemned.  
Throughout my life  
By my words and my actions  
I ask only to share  
Whatever days, months or years ahead  
With whomever you send to me.



I have never liked to carry anything, Lord:  
A bag of groceries,  
A sick child,  
An overdue bill,  
Let alone a cross

But that is what is being placed upon my body – a cross.  
On the one hand, I fear that I am too weak to carry it;  
On the other hand, I am afraid to admit to others  
That I am not strong enough  
To bear the load of my own infirmities.  
It pains me even more to see the sufferings that those  
Around me must carry:  
In their bodies  
And nothing can be done.  
In their souls  
And they want nothing to be done.

I pity you who were so young when you shouldered your cross.  
So much living yet ahead....  
To preach,  
To serve,  
To give.

53

But your cross joined together  
All the sacrifices that you could possibly have made in this world.  
And made them one.

May my cross that I am now carrying  
Join the many fragments of:  
Well wishes,  
Unspoken words,  
Half-finished projects,  
Household chores,  
And complete them all by the weight of what I must bear with you.

### THE THIRD STATION

Jesus Falls for the First Time



Lord, my whole life  
I have seen only little children ever fall.  
But this is how I feel now  
When I fall –  
Like a little child.  
I am so slow to get up.  
Maybe the next time I fall will be the last.  
My legs carry me so much slower now.....  
Yet I can manage.  
But I hate looking up at the world lying down.  
At my age it is so humiliating.

54

As I see you down here beside me, Lord,  
I take one of those dry swallows that come so frequently.  
How has a man of your age

And with your power gotten down here?  
I know how.  
The weight of the sins of the world was too much  
Even for you in heaven to look at forever.  
So you got down here with me.  
Jesus, as you rise up to conquer sin by  
Continuing your walk,  
You bid me to rise also and to conquer the  
Weakness of my flesh.

## THE FOURTH STATION

Jesus Meets His Mother



Whenever I open my eyes, Lord,  
I see some member of my family or a friend.  
There is that familiar worried look on their faces.  
There is that restrained tear in the corner of their eyes.  
To see the ones I love suffer is worse  
Than anything I could possibly endure here, Jesus.

And yet I know  
It is only  
Because they love me.

Their endless vigils,



Their countless prayers,  
    Their unseen heartache,  
    Because they love me.  
That is why Mary has that look on her face, Jesus.  
    She knows all of the reasons  
        Why you are doing  
        What you must.  
    She loves you.

To patiently bear life  
    And to see it torn apart  
    Before one's very eyes  
    Is more than one heart can bear.  
    She loves you.

But now I open my eyes, Lord.  
    And I see you before me.  
    My eyes water.  
    The drops fall  
    On my clothes  
    And on the sheets.  
    I love you.



To endure the pain  
All the way  
Alone.

Pride once told me that I must.  
Experience now tells me that I cannot.

What was I trying to prove, Jesus?  
What was I trying to hide?  
Right now I need  
Like I've never needed before.  
If I could, I would have everyone in the whole world at my side.

But my Simons will suffice:  
The doctor,  
The nurses,  
The chaplain,  
My spouse,  
My children,  
My grandchildren.  
My friends.

57

The sponge bath,  
The cards and the calls,  
The candy and the flowers,

Everyone's coming and going,  
Carry me through another hour,  
Another day.

Your load was much too much for one man, Lord.  
You today ask for me to be your Simon.  
My load is all too much for me, Jesus.  
Please be my Simon-Savior.

## THE SIXTH STATION

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus



I can feel the flow of life slowly going out of me.  
Through my pores and from my eyes.

It is so frightening just to gaze into a mirror –  
What once was.  
What now is.

It is one thing to feel the toll of life upon my body.  
It is another to see it reflected upon my own face.

Where did all  
The beauty,

The strength,  
The fine lines  
Go?  
It is so painful to look  
At myself.

But you know my agony, Lord.  
Even Veronica could not wipe from your face  
The stains of humanity  
That stained your divinity.

My wrinkles cover but an aging form.  
Your sweat and blood hide a God.

When my face is as clean as it can be  
At this hour of my life  
I will flash a smile that  
Stops the tears, and  
Shapes the wrinkles, and  
Makes your love present.



It is such an effort now for me to move an arm or a leg,  
Even a few inches, Jesus.

These legs

So often perched high.....loafing,  
Running off to do useless shopping,  
Following aimlessly after every sporting activity  
Offered to me.

These arms

So used to reaching for coffee cups, plastic bottles,  
And cocktail glasses,  
Ever dialing smart phones and remote controls,  
Always fidgeting from the nervousness of my soul  
Now seem so frozen in comparison.

I see your arms and legs laid low by the sinful  
Weight of all I have done and failed to do.  
Jesus, you are prone because of the  
Foolishness of my limbs.

Movement does not come easy for me.  
Yet as I stretch out my arms

I within myself model  
The Cross.  
That stunned your precious body.  
You carry  
What I can become.

## THE EIGHTH STATION

Jesus Speaks to the Women



If young eyes could only see  
What these eyes of mine have seen, Lord:  
The foolishness of pride,  
The uselessness of anger,  
The helplessness of war.

I rebuke the young  
For doing what I have done long before.  
Would that I had ages ago rebuked myself  
For all of my self-pity.

What you said to the women of Jerusalem,  
You once more say to me and the children of  
This present age.

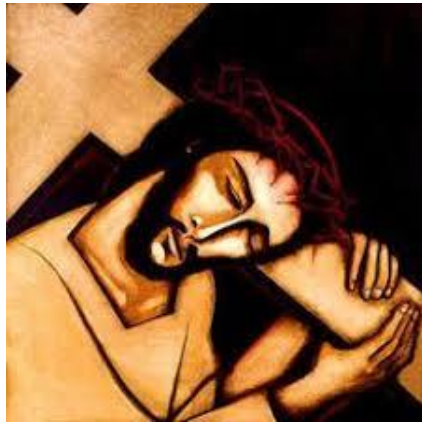
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Most of my tears are of self-pity:  
“Why has life left me this way?”

You are a certainty to conquer  
    Sin  
        Death  
            The Cross.  
I remain  
A question mark.  
Would that your love could conquer me!

## THE NINTH STATION

Jesus Fall for the Third Time



Just when I was so sure, Lord  
    That I was well again  
    Out of the hospital  
    On my feet  
    Away from doctors  
    And special diets.  
Here I am  
        Flat on my back again.

62

To be home  
    And see my garden

The smell of my kitchen  
The comfort of my family  
Useless dream.

I want to cry out

But to what avail?

Did you cry out? No.

You knew your fate

I must suffer hour by hour through mine.

You got up

Despite the agony of it all

To go on.

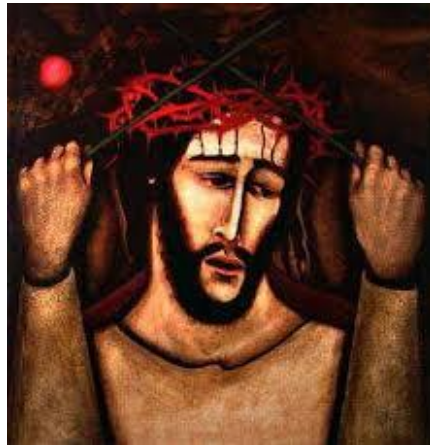
Lift up my spirit, Lord.

Despite the agony of the way I feel

To go on.

## THE TENTH STATION

Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments



Lord, how much more is there for me to give?

They even take off my clothes now.

I feel their endless hands all over my body.

But there is nothing that I can do

Not even get angry.

63

I have become so helpless.



I remember long ago when this skin of mine was  
As soft as a baby's.

Now it is

Dry

Limp

Blotched.

It hangs upon my frame.

But I was never as innocent a babe as you were  
In Bethlehem.

Your body was just reaching the height of its perfection  
When you were stripped of your miraculous power.

You showed me how naked God could become.

The greatest could become the least.

The least could grow to be something more.

I have nothing more to become in the world.

I have everything more to become as I lie

Next to your sacrificial body.

## Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross



Once this world  
And almost everything within it  
I considered to be my friend.  
But now they have all become enemies, Jesus.

Sleep brings not rest, but turmoil.  
Sunshine ignites a longing.  
Darkness excites a fear.  
I feel nailed to  
The bed,  
The rocker,  
The sofa.  
I want to go  
But I have nowhere that I can go  
So I must stay.

They used nails on your precious body, Lord.  
They use needles on mine.  
The pain runs all through me.  
They say that they are trying to help me to live,  
As if there was an answer  
A hope.

65

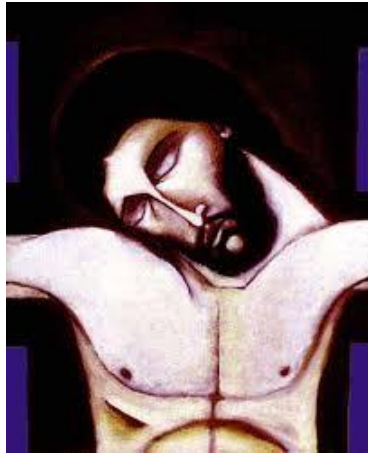
“Save me from this moment,” I say this  
How many times?

Out of fear,  
Out of agony,  
Out of despair.  
    You say this  
How many times?  
Out of love.

There is no escape from the pounding pain  
    Of life's end.  
Only a road through it all  
    To glory.

## THE TWELFTH STATION

Jesus Dies on the Cross



Oh Lord, I am looking down from my cross  
    And I see my body decaying,  
    Dying.  
I cry out to the Father  
    To save me from this hour  
    To take away this tremendous fear  
    That quakes within me.

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I have been here so long.  
    The earth has been my only home.  
Even upon this bed I am in dread.

My fingers can still hold on to its creases.  
I am afraid of leaving here  
Not knowing where it is that I am going.  
I know what death is like.  
I have delivered many to its grasp –  
My grandparents,  
My parents,  
My life-long companions.

Now it is my turn –  
Not now, Jesus.  
Later,  
Later.

You say:  
“At this moment,  
The later  
Is now!”  
With everybody else gone  
Feeling so alone and abandoned  
You come unto me  
To help me forget all my pasts.  
Upon your splintered cross  
You transcend this present agony of mine  
To die before my very eyes.  
I burn with the desire  
For the eternal now.  
To be not always dying  
But to be forever living.

Should my next breath be a last gasp,  
Might my heart sound but one more time,  
My eyelids descend as the final curtain,  
The chill of night encompassing the whole of me.

Somewhere a far off.....a newborn me  
Will shout a cry of joy.  
Look back and see  
Only an endless road ahead.

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For in a fleeting moment is revealed to me  
What every living being has sought to conquer –  
Death itself.

No more fear.  
Only to live.

## THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross



What will become of this body when it is wheeled  
Out of here, Lord?  
It will be prepared for its final appearance  
Dressed in old-favorite wear.  
The children will cry and feel the loss.  
Deepen their faith and keep them on the right road.  
Old friends will be reminded of so many past moments  
That we all shared together  
May their last days on earth be spent with you, Jesus.

This body will be a symbol of  
A life ended,  
A life begun.  
To lie in death.....

So hard for me to imagine.....

Me!  
So lifeless  
For all to come and see.

In sorrow  
    They will feel that I have just gone.  
In joy  
    I will just be arriving.

They will look at me and see so little.  
I will look at them and be seeing so very much.

Now  
Who would want to come back?  
Even for a second  
To miss a moment  
With you.



Lay this body to rest  
That it may be at peace.  
Fear pervades  
Only the onlookers.  
Tears are for the mortals left behind.

When you are placed in the tomb, Jesus,  
The world stopped.  
It had nowhere to go.  
You were at peace in that tomb.

Every drop of  
Sweat and  
Blood  
You had poured out upon the earth.

Creation stood back.  
You lay awaiting  
For the Father's power.

The weakness of faith seen in your disciples  
Contrasted the might of the Father to raise you up.

As I am laid in my grave  
May the blindness of faith of my family and friends

Soon give way to the Father's almighty strength.

All I ask is that I be placed  
Very close to  
My spouse,  
My children, and  
You.

## THE FIFTEENTH STATION

Jesus Is Raised from the Dead



For a slight second  
I imagine  
That I have arrived at home!

That is the way it is each time I awake, O Lord.

There is this  
Overwhelming anticipation  
That this might be the very  
Instant  
I have been waiting for since the first moment  
Of my conception.

My resurrection!

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The momentum builds  
As I have to die so many times each day.



Jesus, when you came out of that tomb  
Alive  
Who on earth could believe it?  
Jesus, when I come into your kingdom of heaven  
Alive  
I will hardly believe it!

Like you  
I wait for everything to pass.  
To be a child again.....  
A complete person.

Like you  
I want to know only a future.  
I want to be.....  
Like you.



