

CONFESSING CHRIST – DAILY LECTIONARY AND PRAYERS

Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2014-2015

Frederick R. Trost and Colleen Darling, Editors

“Come, bow down and worship, kneel to the Lord our maker. This is our God, our shepherd, we are the flock led with care.” (Psalm 95:6-7)

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+Come to us, Lord, come with peace to save your people+

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. Amen.

The First Sunday in Advent, 11/30	Psalm 80:1-7 *1835 Mark Twain	Gerald & Cynthia Bertsch Sheboygan, WI
Monday, 12/01	Isaiah 64:1-9	David Biebighauser Zimmerman, MN
Tuesday, 12/02	1 Corinthians 1:3-9 +1980 Maura Clark +1980 Jean Donovan +1980 Ita Ford +1980 Dorothy Kazel	Robert & Sheila Bock Waunakee, WI
Wednesday, 12/03	Mark 13:24-37	Cathie Fisher Braman Fredericksburg, VA
Thursday, 12/04	Romans 13:8-10 +306 Saint Barbara	Charles O. Brizius Elkhorn, WI
Friday, 12/05	Luke 1:68-79 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott +1791 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Robert F. Broeder Le Sueur, MN

Saturday, 12/06	Hebrews 10:19-25 +343 Saint Nicholas	Calvin Brown Etobicoke, Ontario
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Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Second Sunday in Advent, 12/07	Isaiah 40:1-11 1965 Gaudium et Spes	Richard S. Brueseke Owensville, MO
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Monday, 12/08	Psalm 85:8-9 +1691 Richard Baxter +1977 Sr. Alice Domon (Disappeared, Argentina, Mothers of May Square)	Martin Bupp, II Wyomissing, PA
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Tuesday, 12/09	Psalm 85:10-13	John P. Burgess Pittsburgh, PA
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Wednesday, 12/10	Mark 1:1-8 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights +1968 Karl Barth +1977 Sr. Leonie Duquet (Disappeared, Argentina, Mothers of May Square)	Christine Busch Dusseldorf, Germany
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Thursday, 12/11	Romans 15:4-6	Michael Caldwell Wolcott, VT
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Friday, 12/12	Romans 15:7-12	John R. Cedarleaf Fairport, NY
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Saturday, 12/13	Romans 15:13	Rich & Lainie Christensen Ephrata, PA
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Lord, we ask you to give ear to our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by your gracious presence among us for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Third Sunday in Advent, 12/14	John 1:6-13	Herbert & Lillian Davis Honey Brook, PA
Monday, 12/15	John 1:19-23 1791 Bill of Rights	James G. Deitz Amherst, OH
Tuesday, 12/16	John 1:24-28	Uwe Dittmer Potsdam, Germany
Wednesday, 12/17	Isaiah 61:1-4	Vernon Dolde Wausau, WI
Thursday, 12/18	Matthew 3:1-11 1865 Abolition of Slavery (U.S.) *1946 Steven Bantu Biko	Wayne & Colleen Drueck Schofield, WI
Friday, 12/19	2 Timothy 4:4-5 +215 Clement of Alexandria	Chet Dziczek Clinton, MA
Saturday, 12/20	1 Corinthians 4:1-5	Roger Easland Pierre, SD

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Stir up, O Lord, your power and come among us. In your compassion for the world feed us that by the help of your grace whatever is hindered by our sins may be soon accomplished through your mercy, for you live and reign among us, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent, 12/21	Luke 1:26-38	Loree Elliott Kearney, NE
Monday, 12/22	Philippians 4:4-7	John Ebenshade Lancaster, PA
Tuesday, 12/23	1 John 1:1-4	Gabriel & Dorothy Fackre West Hyannisport, MA
Wednesday, Christmas Eve, 12/24 The Nativity of our Lord	Luke 2:1-14	Ralph Faisst West Bend, WI

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O God, who has made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light, grant that as we have known on earth the mysteries of that Light, we may also come to the fullness of his joys in heaven, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, forever and ever.

Thursday, Christmas Day, 12/25	John 1:1-14	William Falla Whitehall, PA
Friday, 12/26	Isaiah 9:2-7 Day of Saint Stephen, Martyr	Richard & Martha Floyd Pittsfield, MA
Saturday, 12/27	Psalms 98 Day of Saint John the Evangelist	Jerry Folk Madison, WI

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Almighty and everlasting God, ... your testimonies are very sure and holiness becomes your house forever. Your throne is established of old and you are from everlasting. Bless us as we make our way from the stable into the new year, and let your benevolence, grace and truth abide with us now and forever. Amen.

The First Sunday in Christmastide, 12/28	Luke 2:22-32 Day of Holy Innocents, Martyrs	Ron K. Freyer-Nicholas Wildwood, FL
Monday, 12/29	Luke 2:33-40	Hans-Wilhelm Fricke-Hein Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany
Tuesday, 12/30	John 1:14-18 +1968 Hans Asmussen	
Wednesday, New Year's Eve, 12/31	Psalms 121 1915 Fellowship of Reconciliation	Theodore Fritsch North Chatham, MA
Thursday, New Year's Day, 1/01/2015	Psalms 8 *1484 Huldreich Zwingli 1865 Emancipation Proclamation Day of Prayer for Peace	Michael A. Frost Kresgeville, PA
Friday, 1/02	2 Corinthians 5:1-5	P. V. George Syracuse, NY
Saturday, 1/03	2 Corinthians 5:6-10	Milton E. Gockley, Jr. Lancaster, PA

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Almighty and Everlasting God, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, we give you thanks for all your benefits, temporal and spiritual, given to us in the past year, and we ask that of your goodness you might grant to us a favorable and joyful year. Defend and preserve us from all dangers and adversities and grant us the fullness of your blessing, through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, forever and ever. Amen.

The Second Sunday in Christmastide, 1/04	Ephesians 1:3-14	Peter Goguts Robeson, PA
Monday, 1/05	Psalm 148:1-6	Gerald Goldsworthy Mt. Prospect, IL

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O God, who by the leading of a star did make known your only begotten Son to the world, mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may bear witness to our Savior's birth through word and deed and by the guidance of your Holy Spirit bear witness to the wonder of it all. Amen.

Tuesday, The Epiphany of our Lord, 1/06	Matthew 2:1-12	Charlotte P. Gosselink Kennett Square, PA
Wednesday, 1/07	Matthew 2:13-15	Stephen & Susan Gould Elkhart Lake, WI
Thursday, 1/08	Matthew 2:16-18 *1894 Maximilian Kolbe +1996 Sadao Watanabe	Kathryn Greene-McCreight New Haven, CT
Friday, 1/09	Matthew 2:19-23	Christa Gregel Berlin, Germany
Saturday, 1/10	Isaiah 60:1-6 1957 Southern Christian Leadership Conference	Reinhard Groscurth Bremen, Germany

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O Lord, we ask you to mercifully receive the prayers of all your children nearby and across the great seas, granting us grace that we might all perceive and know the things we ought to do and so knowing, might also receive your grace and power to faithfully fulfill the same, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

The First Sunday after Epiphany, 1/11	Mark 1:4-11 *1907 Abraham Joshua Heschel	Ruben Grosshuesch Sheboygan, WI
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Monday, 1/12	Psalm 29:1-4	Linda Gruber Phoenixville, PA
Tuesday, 1/13	Psalm 29:5-8 +1691 George Fox *1931 Maura Clarke	Joanne Hartunian Belmont, MA
Wednesday, 1/14	Psalm 29:9-11 +368, Hilary of Poitiers *1875 Albert Schweitzer	Esther Haskell Claremont, MA
Thursday, 1/15	Romans 12:1-5 *1929 Martin Luther King, Jr. Madison, WI	Philip Haslanger
Friday, 1/16	Luke 2:41-52 1992 El Salvador Peace Accords	Steven Hecky Menomonee Falls, WI
Saturday, 1/17	Psalm 122	Kim and Fay Henning Two Rivers, WI

Holy One, Fountain of all truth, who has called us out of darkness into the marvelous light by the glorious gospel of your Son: Grant us power to walk worthy of this vocation with all lowliness and meekness, seeking to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace that we may enjoy the fruits of righteousness and inherit the gift of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany, 1/18	Psalm 139:1-6	Ramon Hernandez Madison, WI
Monday, 1/19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday	Psalm 139:7-12 1563, Heidelberg Catechism	Kristin Herzog Durham, NC
Tuesday, 1/20	Psalm 139:13-18 1529, Luther's "Small Catechism" 1993, Guatemalan refugees return from Southern Mexico *1925 Ernesto Cardenal	Ralph E. Houseman Grafton, WI
Wednesday, 1/21	Romans 12:6-16	Robert E. Howell Walnut Creek, CA
Thursday, 1/22	John 2:1-11	Robert G. Hunsicker Lancaster, PA

Friday, 1/23	Isaiah 61:1-6	Joan Hunt Weston, MA
Saturday, 1/24	John 1:19-23	Dorothy Hutch Branford, CT
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Almighty and Everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth your hand to help and defend us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.		
The Third Sunday after Epiphany, 1/25	Mark 1:14-20 +1586 Lucas Cranach The Younger	Steven Jaberg West Bend, WI
Monday, 1/26	Romans 12:16-21 +155 Polycarp 1945 Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau	J. Charles Janes Cadillac, MI
Tuesday, 1/27	Romans 1:16-17 1967 Outer Space Weapon Treaty +1972 Mahalia Jackson	Clifford J. Janssen St. Louis, MO
Wednesday, 1/28	John 4:5-15	Laverne R. Joseph Long Beach, CA
Thursday, 1/29	John 4:16-26	Robert E. Kasper Elgin, IL
Friday, 1/30	John 4:27-30 +1948 Mahatma Gandhi +1987 Gerhard W. Grauer	Christoph Keienburg Paderborn, Germany
Saturday, 1/31	John 4:46-54 *1915 Thomas Merton +1955 John R. Mott	William Kesting Cleveland, WI

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Almighty God, you who know well the fractures and cruelties of this world, and how we are set in the midst of many dangers and temptations, grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in the perils that come our way, renewing courage among us as we accept the cost and joy of discipleship, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, 2/01 (Septuagesima)	Mark 1:21-28 +110 Ignatius of Antioch	Ray Kibler Claremont, CA
Monday, 2/02	Mark 1:29-34 +1945 Alfred Delp	Russell Kimmerly Harrison, OH
Tuesday, 2/03	Mark 1:35-39 *1909 Simone Weil	Stodden G. N. King Orange, CT
Wednesday, 2/04	Mark 1:40-45 *1906 Dietrich Bonhoeffer *1906 Rosa Parks	Paul Kittlaus Claremont, CA
Thursday, 2/05	Psalm 111:1-4	Armin F. Klemme Union, MO
Friday, 2/06	Psalm 113:1-4	Russell Knoth Germantown, WI
Saturday, 2/07	Psalm 77:11-20 *1909 Dom Hélder Câmara	Paul Koepke Goshen, IN

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Gracious God, we ask you to keep your Church continually faithful to the gospel that they who lean only upon the fact of your grace may be defended evermore by your abiding love and truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, 2/08 (Sexagesima)	Matthew 13:24-30 *1878 Martin Buber	R. Gerhard & Ruth Koslowsky Bruehl, Germany
Monday, 2/09	Colossians 3:12-17	Fred & Sandie Kraemer Elkhart Lake, WI
Tuesday, 2/10	Romans 12:1-2	David Kratz Seattle, WA
Wednesday, 2/11	Romans 8:18-25 1531 Reformation in England 1889 Freedom of Religion in Japan 1990 Nelson Mandela freed	Howard & Martha Kriebel Collegeville, PA

Thursday, 2/12	Matthew 7:24-29 *1809 Abraham Lincoln *1817 Frederick Douglas 1909 NAACP founded	Dale Kuck Merrill, WI
Friday, 2/13	Isaiah 64:1-4 +1984 Roland H. Bainton	Kathryn & Karl Kuhn Kiel, WI
Saturday, 2/14	1 Corinthians 13:1-13 1967 Latin America Nuclear Free Zone Treaty	Juergen Kunellis Issum, Germany

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Lord, be to us a strong Rock; a house of defense to save us. You are our Rock and our Fortress, therefore for your Name's sake lead us and guide us, for in you we place our trust; let us never be ashamed. Amen.

The Last Sunday after Epiphany, 2/15 (Estomihi)	Mark 9:2-9 *1564 Galileo *1820 Susan B. Anthony	Fred Kurkowski Clemmons, NC
Monday, 2/16	Matthew 17:1-9 +1977, Janani Luwum Uganda	Thomas Lane Bradenton, FL
Tuesday, 2/17	Luke 18:31-43	Andy Lang Cleveland, OH

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+Drink the water the Lord shall give, and never be thirsty again+

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS/REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY

"Venite"

A voyce from heven to erth shal com:

"Venite ad iudicium..."

"Venite" is a blyssed song

For them that for joye dooth longe

And shall forsake paynes strong:

"Venite ad iudicium."

Glad in hert may they be
 Whan Chryst sayeth, "Venite;
 Ye blysed children, come to me,
 Into vitam eternam.

"Whan I hongred, ye gave me meat;
 Ye clothed me against the heat;
 In trouble ye dyde me not forget;
 Venite ad iudicium.

"Ye socoured me at your doore
 And for my sake gave to the poore;
 Therfore wyll I you socoure;
 Venite ad iudicium.

"Sory in hert may they be
 That hereth this hevy worde: "Ite;
 Ye cursed chylidren, go fro me,
 Into ignem eternum.

"Whan for nede that I dyde crye,
 Comfortlesse ye lete me dye;
 Therfore now I you deny;
 Venite ad iudicium..."

(English carol, sixteenth century)

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A Motherless Child

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
 Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
 Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
 A long way from home, a long way from home.

(African-American spiritual)

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“Night is Drawing Nigh”

Night is drawing nigh---How long the road is. But, for all the time the journey has already taken, how you have needed every second of it in order to learn what the road passes-by.” (Dag Hammarskjold)

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“Promise Rises”

Face to face with our limits,
Blinking before the frightful
stare of our frailty,
Promise rises
Like a posse of clever maids
Who do not fear the dark
Because their readiness
Lights the search.

Their oil
Becomes the measure of their love,
Their ability to wait---
An indication of their
Capacity to trust and take a chance.
Without the caution or predictability
Of knowing day or hour,
They fall back on that only
Of which they can be sure;
Love precedes them,
Before it
No door will ever close.

(T.J. O’Gorman in “An Advent Sourcebook, Liturgy Training Publications, 1988, Archdiocese of Chicago)

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The Christmas Vigil

In Russia, the custom exists of fasting (on the Christmas vigil) until the first star appears. This brings to mind both the star which led the magi to Bethlehem and Christ who is the true light. May this day also be a day of fast in our souls: let us abstain from all bad or useless thoughts and speech, and await in silence and composure the savior who is coming to us. Darkness falls. Soon the first star will rise and mark, according to the church calendar, the start of the new day and of the great feast of Christmas. With the rising of this star, may the light of our Lord rise for us so that, in the words of the apostle

Peter, "Ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (Eastern Orthodox Church)

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Christmas Eve

O Lord, our God, thou didst desire to dwell not only in heaven but also with us on earth, to be not only exalted and great, but like us lowly and small, not only to rule, but to serve us, not only to be God for eternity, but to be born to live, and to die for us. In thy dear Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, Thou hast given us no less than thine own self so that we might belong wholly to thee. This concerns us all, although no one of us has earned it. What remains then for us but to be amazed, to rejoice, to be thankful, to hold fast to that which thou hast done for us? We beseech thee, grant that this may become reality among us and in all at this hour. Grant that in honorable, open, and willing prayer and in song, speaking, and hearing we may become a true Christmas congregation, and in great hunger may experience the true communion of the Lord's Supper. Amen. (Karl Barth, 1886-1968)

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Ring Out Wild Bells

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky, The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night; Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind, For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor, Ring in redress to humankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause, And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life, With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin, The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood, The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right, Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease, Ring out the narrowing lust of god;
Ring out the thousand wars of old Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant one and free, The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be.

(Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1809-1892)

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What Child is This?

What Child is this, who, laid to rest On Mary's lap, is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate, Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear: for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh, Come peasant, King, to own Him;
The King of Kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone Him!

(English Carol, fifteenth century)

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"Keeping Christmas"

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas... Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open---are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas... (Henry Van Dyke, 1852-1933)

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"A Child Has Been Given to Us"

The topic here is the birth of a child---not the revolutionary deed of a strong man, not the bold discovery of a wise person, not the godly work of a saint. It really goes beyond all comprehension: the birth of a child is supposed to lead to the great turning point of all things and to bring the salvation and redemption of all humanity.

What kings and leaders of nations, philosophers and artists, founders of religions and teachers of morals have tried in vain to do---that now happens through a newborn child. Putting to shame the most powerful human efforts and accomplishments, a child is placed here at the midpoint of world history---a child born of human beings, a son given by God (Isaiah 9:6). That is the mystery of the redemption of the world; everything past and everything future is encompassed here.

The infinite mercy of the almighty God comes to us, descends to us in the form of a child, his Son. That this child is born for us, this son is given to us, that this human child and Son of God belongs to me, that I know him, have him, love him, that I am his and he is mine---on this alone my life now depends. A child has our life in his hands... A shaking of heads, perhaps even an evil laugh, must go through our old, smart, experienced, self-assured world, when it hears the call of salvation of believing Christians: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945)

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"For This One, I Would Kneel"

At last!
 An end to plodding, night by night,
 My feet compressing more at every step
 Bearing my so-called royal burden,
 His trappings and his trinkets.

Cool blessed water!
 Fresh sweet straw!
 (Although a trifle crushed by some small weight.)

And now,
 Away from busy roads,
 The crowded town, the raucous inn,
 Some quietness.
 In the dim restful starlight,
 Silence, and something more.
 While I, and my fellows, rest
 Free of blankets, saddles, reins and packs,
 Peace seeps through us like water into sand.

Our crowned masters, offering their hoard
 (our former charge),
 Now sink onto their knees
 And lower abject heads.
 When I lift my own sand-cruste eyes,
 I meet those of the focus of their awe
 Whose penetrating newborn human stare

Already comprehends
My life of bound and laden servanthood.

For this One, I would kneel without the prod
And trek through untold days in desert sun.

(May Cheyne Porco, 1951-2014)

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A Child in a Foul Stable

A Child in a foul stable, Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know
But our hearts we lost---how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale, And strange the plain things are.
The earth is enough and the air is enough For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star...

To an open house in the evening Home shall humanity come,
To an older place than Eden And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all humanity is at home.

(Gilbert K. Chesterton, 1874-1936)

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"Come, Heavenly Child"

Come, Heavenly Child, and on this place
Shed the bright halo of Your grace.
O burning Love, O Heavenly Fire
Consume us with Your deep desire.

As in the Holy Christ Child's name

This blessed wax shall feed the flame---
 So let our hearts their fires begin
 And light the Heavenly Pilgrim in.

(Anna Hempstead Branch, 1875-1937)

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Heidelberg Catechism Prize

The Steering Committee of "Confessing Christ" established the Heidelberg Catechism Prize on the 500th anniversary of the catechism last year (1563-2013).

The Committee invited seminarians of the United Church of Christ to reflect on the "continuing relevance of this catechism for the Church in the world today." A "Review Committee" (Professor Lee Barrett, Professor Rich Christensen and Pastor Frederick Trost) selected three papers to receive this prize of \$1,000 each. We congratulate the honorees: Christine Fidanza, Linda Kozlowski, and Scott Siciliano.

The papers are available on the Confessing Christ website. The Steering Committee would like to thank all those whose gifts to Confessing Christ made the establishment of the Heidelberg Catechism Prize possible. (frt)

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You are invited to refer to the Confessing Christ website at the following address:

<http://confessingchrist.net>

*Confessing Christ materials are being prepared at the Mission House Center, Lakeland College. Those no longer wishing to receive materials or those with address changes should contact Colleen Darling, Lakeland College, P.O. Box 359, Sheboygan, WI 53082-0359 by e-mail darlingca@lakeland.edu or by calling **920-565-1021 Extension 2123**.*

"For no one can lay foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ."

(1 Cor. 3:11, NRSV)