

# Morning of Reflection: The Early Christian Wisdom of the Didache



“As I read this little book, I am called back to a time of simplicity and reality that I so miss – or maybe have never even experienced.”

– William Varner, *Didache* Scholar

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church  
March 13, 2010



# Morning of Reflection Program

Gathering & Greeting

Opening Prayer

**First Reflection: *Cherishing Our Christian Faith***

Individual Prayer & Reflection Time

**Second Reflection: *Reflections on the Wisdom of the Didache***

Individual Prayer & Reflection Time

Discussion & Fellowship

Closing Prayer



**The Peacock**

An early Christian symbol of the Resurrection.  
A peacock sheds its feathers, and they are replaced by a new, even more beautiful, set.

# Opening Prayer

**Leader:** Gracious Lord, you have gathered us this day to seek the quiet of your presence and the peace that only your love can give. We thank you for bringing us here despite the demands and distractions of our lives. Give us what we seek this morning; make our minds and hearts fertile ground for your grace, which you always long to give us in abundance. May our thoughts, words, prayers and fellowship be pleasing to you and blessed by you, and may we benefit from the holiness, courage and understanding of the earliest Christians, whose wisdom we turn to today. We ask this in the name of Jesus your Son. Amen.

## Prayer of St. Clement

*written ca. 96 A.D.*

We ask you, Lord, to be our help and our support.

Free us from our troubles; take pity on the lowly; raise up those who have fallen; give help to the poor, health to the sick, and bring home those who have wandered away.

Feed the hungry, ransom captives, give strength to the weak and courage to those who lose heart.

Let all peoples come to know that you alone are God, that Jesus Christ is your son, and that we are your people and the sheep of your flock.

For by your acts you made visible the everlasting structure of the universe and set the earth on its foundations.

For all generations you have been faithful and just in your judgments, and wonderful in your power and majesty.

Wisely you have created, and wisely you have kept things in being.

All that we see shows your goodness; to all who trust in you, you are faithful, kind, and merciful.

Forgive us our sins and injustices, our transgressions and our shortcomings.

Do not weigh down your servants with the burden of their sins, but cleanse us with the cleansing of your truth, and direct the paths we take so that we walk with holy hearts and do what is good and pleasing to you.

Come, Lord, turn your radiant face toward us so that we may peacefully enjoy all good things.

May your powerful hand be a roof over our heads and may your strength preserve us from all wrongdoing.

Free us, Lord, from those who hate us without cause.

Give peace and harmony to us and to all who dwell on the earth, as you gave them to our fathers who called on you with trust and faith.

We praise you, who alone are able to do this and still better things for us, through the high priest and guardian of our souls, Jesus Christ.

Through him be glory and majesty to you now and through all generations until the end of time.

**Amen.**

*St. Clement was one of the first popes and an "Apostolic Father" (one of the early Christian writers who had contact with the apostles). This prayer, from the First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians, is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Monday in the 1<sup>st</sup> week in Ordinary Time.*



#### **The Good Shepherd**

The image of the Good Shepherd was a favorite way of depicting Christ among the early Christians.



## About the *Didache*

- “*Didache*” means “teaching.”
- *The Lord’s Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles* (the full name of the *Didache*) was probably written during the first century. It is not thought to be written directly by the apostles, but it is considered faithful to their teachings.
- The *Didache* was not included in the final canon of the New Testament. It is classified as part of the writings of the “Apostolic Fathers.”
- The *Didache* was last referred to in 9<sup>th</sup> century Christian writings. It was rediscovered by a Greek Orthodox bishop in 1873.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a few verses of the *Didache* were discovered written on a small piece of papyrus. It appears the *Didache* was likely used as a literal “handbook” – a small manual that could fit into one’s hand.
- The *Didache* is written in the form of a handbook, manual or catechism. From its content, it seems it was written to prepare catechumens preparing for Christian baptism. The *Didache* is not deeply theological or doctrinal but is primarily instructive about the Christian life.



### **Fish, Anchor, Cross and Circle**

The fish was an early Christian symbol for Jesus. “Fish” in Greek is spelled “IXOYE”, which served as an acronym for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.”

It was a symbol Christians used to identify themselves in the midst of persecution when they could not openly refer to themselves as “Christians.”

The anchor is an early Christian symbol found in the catacombs symbolizing Christian hope.

The cross is of course a sign of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

The circle is an ancient symbol for eternity.

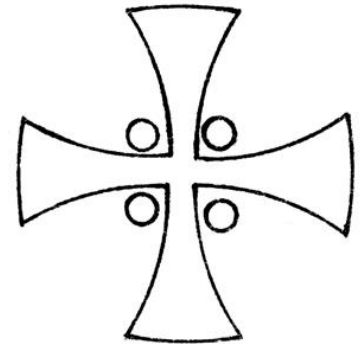
# THE DIDACHE

The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles

(thought to be written between 60-130 A.D.)

## I. TRAINING IN THE WAY OF LIFE

**Chapter 1. The Two Ways and the First Commandment.** There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love the God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts.



If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone presses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to everyone who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given from his own free gifts. Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is blameless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is blameless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what. And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

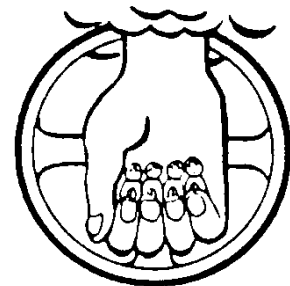
**Chapter 2. Grave Sin Forbidden.** And the second rule of the teaching is this: You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not corrupt children, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born. You shall not covet the things of your neighbor, you shall not swear, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor greedy, nor a hypocrite, nor malicious, nor arrogant. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.



**Chapter 3. Other Sins Forbidden.** My child, flee from every evil thing, and from every likeness of it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leads to murder. Be neither jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper, for out of all these murders are engendered. My child, be not a lustful one, for lust leads to fornication. Be neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye, for out of all these adulteries are engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens, since it leads to idolatry. Be neither an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look at these things, for out of all these idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since a lie leads to theft. Be neither money-loving, nor a seeker of glory, for out of all these thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads the way to blasphemy. Be neither self-willed nor evil-minded, for out of all these blasphemies are engendered.

Rather, be meek, since the meek will inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and merciful and harmless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, nor give over-confidence to your soul. Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with the righteous and humble you shall walk. Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

**Chapter 4. Various Precepts.** My child, the one speaking to you the word of God, you will remember night and day, and you will honor him as the Lord. For where the dominion of the Lord is spoken of, there is the Lord. And seek out day by day the faces of the saints, that you may rest in their words. You will not cause division, and you will reconcile those fighting. Judge righteously, and show no partiality when rebuking for transgressions. You shall not vacillate about whether a thing shall be or not be. You shall not become someone on the one hand stretching out your hands for the purpose of taking, and on the other hand withdrawing them for the purpose of giving. If you have anything by the work of your hands, you shall give ransom for your sins. Do not hesitate to give, nor complain when you give; for you know who will be giving back excellent recompense. Do not turn away from him who is in want; rather, share all things with your brother, and do not say that they are your own. For if you are partners in that which is imperishable, how much more in things which are perishable?



Do not take away your hand from your son or daughter; rather, teach them the fear of God from their youth. Do not enjoin anything in your bitterness upon your bondman or maidservant, who hope in the same God as you, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both; for God does not come to call anyone according to their status, but to call those whom the Spirit has prepared. And you bondsmen shall be subject to your masters as to an image of God, in modesty and fear.

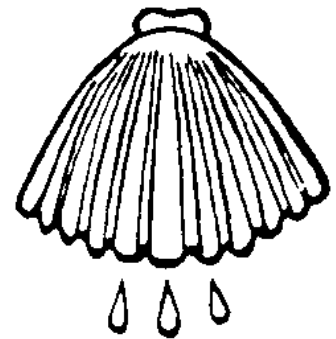
You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord. You shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord, but guard what you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything. In the church you shall acknowledge your sins, and you shall not come to prayer with a bad conscience. This is the way of life.

**Chapter 5. The Way of Death.** And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and accursed: murders, adultery, lust, fornication, thefts, idolatries, magic, witchcraft, robbery, false witness, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, foul speech, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing a reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for that which is good, but for that which is evil; from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, having no mercy for the poor, not laboring for the afflicted, not recognizing Him Who made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the work of God, turning away from him who is in want, afflicting him who is distressed, advocates of the rich, unjust judges of the poor, utter sinners. May you be delivered, my children, from all these!

## II. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING EATING, BAPTIZING, FASTING AND PRAYING

**Chapter 6. Against False Teachers and Food Offered to Idols.** See that no one causes you to err from this way of the Teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you cannot, then do what you can. And concerning food, bear what you are able; but against that which is sacrificed to idols be exceedingly careful; for it is the service of dead gods.

**Chapter 7. Concerning Baptism.** And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in flowing water. But if you have no flowing water, immerse in other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour water three times upon the head in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.



**Chapter 8. Fasting and Prayer.** But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation Day (Wednesday and Friday). Do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in his gospel, like this:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the power and the glory forever.*

Pray this three times each day.

**Chapter 9. The Eucharist.** Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup:

*We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be the glory forever.*

And concerning the broken bread:

*We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you revealed to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory for ever. Just as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.*

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."



**Chapter 10. Prayer after Communion.** But after you are filled, give thanks this way:

*We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name which you tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be the glory for ever. You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake; you give men food and drink to enjoy, that they might give you thanks; but to us you graciously bestow spiritual food and drink for life eternal through your servant [Jesus]. Above all things we thank you that you are mighty. To you be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, your church, to deliver it from all evil and perfect it in your love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not, let him repent. Maranatha (Come, Lord)! Amen.*

And let the prophets give thanks as much as they wish.

### III. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING TEACHERS, PROPHETS, AND TRAVELERS

**Chapter 11. Concerning Teachers and Prophets.** Whosoever, therefore, comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself having been turned around and teaches another tradition to the destruction of this, hear him not. But if he teaches so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the decree of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain more than one day; or two days, if there is a need. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he arrives at his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord.



Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit shall not eat it, unless he is indeed a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself does, shall not be judged among you, for with God he has his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever says in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, you shall not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.

**Chapter 12. Reception of Christian Travelers.** But receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove and know him afterward; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a traveler, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is a craftsman, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he will not do this, he is a Christ-peddler. Watch that you keep away from such.

**Chapter 13. Support of Prophets.** But every true prophet who wants to live among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

#### IV. DIRECTIONS FOR THE CHURCH

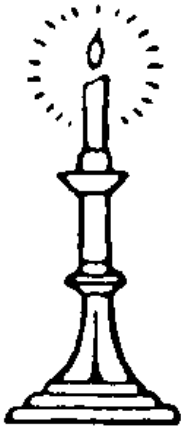
**Chapter 14. Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day.** But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his companion come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations."

**Chapter 15. Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof.** Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men gentle, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Therefore do not look down on them, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers.

And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the gospel. But to anyone that wrongs his brother, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds do thus as you have it in the gospel of our Lord.

#### V. CLOSING APOCALYPTIC WARNINGS

**Chapter 16. Watchfulness; the Coming of the Lord.** Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will be of no use to you if in the end time you have not been perfected.



For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate. For when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another. Then shall appear the deceiver of the world as a son of God, and he shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do unlawful things which have never happened from the beginning of time.

Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and third, the resurrection of the dead – yet not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord shall come and all his holy ones with him." Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

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*Translations by Peter Kirby, Aaron Milavec & Ben Swett*

## Reflection Questions – Cherishing Our Christian Faith

1. **“Christians are made, not born.”** Consider your own conversion, your own “becoming” a Christian. How did it come about? Even if you were born into a Christian family and baptized as an infant, at what point (or points) along the way do you feel that you truly *became* a Christian? Spend some moments recalling your journey, and see God’s hand at work. Thank the Lord for this gift of faith and for the ways it has changed your life. Ask him to continue to move you along this path of “becoming.”
2. **Read Chapters 1-6 of the *Didache*.** What passage or passages from the *Didache* strike you? Which are your favorites because they comfort or encourage you? Which are your favorites because they challenge you?
3. **Pray over the challenge.** Consider one or two of the passages that challenge you. Ask Jesus to help you meet that challenge, and make it part of your Lenten journey. Jesus, I love you. *Change me with your love!*



**Fresco of a Woman Praying**  
Found in the Christian Catacomb of St. Calixtus, Rome  
Early 4<sup>th</sup> century









## Second Reflection – The Wisdom of the *Didache*

Rather, be meek, since the meek will inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and merciful and harmless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, nor give over-confidence to your soul. Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with the righteous and humble you shall walk. Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass (Didache 3:7-10).

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mt. 11:28-30).

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.... When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Lk. 14:1,7-11).



**The Lily**

The Lily was an early Christian symbol of purity and humility.

Yield and overcome;  
Bend and be straight;  
Empty and be full;  
Wear out and be new;  
Have little and gain;  
Have much and be confused.  
Therefore wise men embrace the one  
And set an example to all.  
Not putting on a display,  
They shine forth.  
Not justifying themselves,  
They are distinguished.  
Not boasting,  
They receive recognition.  
Not bragging,  
They never falter.  
They do not quarrel,  
So no one quarrels with them.  
Therefore, the ancients say, 'Yield and overcome.'  
(Tao Te Ching 22)

The wise man is shy and humble – to the world he seems confusing. Men look to him and listen. He behaves like a little child (Tao Te Ching 49).

One treasure which I hold and keep is to dare not to be ahead of others (Tao Te Ching 67).

If too much energy is used, exhaustion will follow (Tao Te Ching 55).

Yen-tzu was born in chaotic times. He lived down a little alley, had a single bowl of rice to eat, a single cup to drink. Other men couldn't have put up with it, but Yen-tzu didn't let it spoil his fun. Confucius called him an intelligent man (*M* IV, ii, xxix).

## Reflection Questions – The Wisdom of the *Didache*

1. **The Loving Heart of Jesus.** Pray the Litany of the Heart of Jesus, Lover of Solitude, included on the following page. This litany beautifully captures the quiet and peace of Jesus, known in the *Didache* as “Servant” and depicted by early Christians as the “Good Shepherd.” Choose an intention before you begin to pray, and especially, ask Jesus, “Haven of Repose”, to speak to and change your heart so that you can remain peaceful and harmless in the midst of the struggles and pressures of this life.

*Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine!*

2. **Praying for others.** The *Didache* shows tender concern for the people in our lives who have nurtured our faith and who we love and pray for. Consider the following two passages in particular:

*You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life (2:7).*

*My child, the one speaking to you the word of God, you will remember night and day, and you will honor him as the Lord. For where the dominion of the Lord is spoken of, there is the Lord (4:1).*

Spend some time thinking of those you feel called to pray for this morning, especially the one(s) who first spoke to you the “word of God” as well as those around you who continue to nurture your faith. Pray also for those you “love more than your own life” – dear friends and family who depend on your love and prayers.



***Christus Helios* – Christ as the Sun**

Mosaic dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century

Early Christian art associated Jesus with the Sun, replacing pagan sun-gods.

The pagan god Dionysius' grape leaves have become the vines of Christ.

## Litany of the Heart of Jesus, Lover of Solitude

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

God the Father of Heaven, *have mercy upon us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy upon us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *etc.*

Holy Trinity, One God,

Heart of Jesus, dwelling in solitude,

Heart of Jesus, enclosed in the womb of Mary,

Heart of Jesus, reposing in the bosom of the Father,

Heart of Jesus, lover of retirement,

Heart of Jesus, haven of repose,

Heart of Jesus, ever watching over your chosen ones,

Heart of Jesus, detached from the world,

Heart of Jesus, passing whole nights in prayer,

Heart of Jesus, absorbed in contemplation,

Heart of Jesus, adoring the Father in spirit and in truth,

Heart of Jesus, raised above temptations,

Heart of Jesus, inflamed with love,

Heart of Jesus, delight of those in solitude,

Heart of Jesus, speaking to the solitary heart,

Heart of Jesus, revealing thy secrets to those living apart from the world,

Heart of Jesus, strength of the solitary,

Heart of Jesus, refuge of the solitary,

Heart of Jesus, uniting yourself to the solitary heart,

Heart of Jesus, peacefully reigning in the solitary heart,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

I will lead the soul into solitude, *And there I will speak to her heart.*

Adorable Savior, lover of solitude, inspire my heart with the love of retirement, so that, withdrawn from the tumult of the world, I may hear the sweetness of your voice in the silence of creatures, and faithfully follow the whisperings of your heart and the inspirations of your Love. Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.









## Closing Prayer

We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name which you tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. To you be the glory forever.

You, Almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake; you give men food and drink to enjoy, that they might give you thanks; but to us you graciously bestow spiritual food and drink for life eternal through your servant Jesus.

Above all things we thank you that you are mighty. To you be the glory forever.

Remember, Lord, your church, to deliver it from all evil and perfect it in your love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours is the power and the glory forever.

Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David!

If anyone is holy, let him come; if anyone is not, let him repent.

Maranatha! Come, Lord!

**Amen.**

Didache 10:2-6



**Pelican**

The pelican was an early Christian symbol for Christ and the Eucharist. Pelicans were thought to peck at their own breast, providing their own blood and flesh for their young if necessary for their sustenance.

# More Early Christian Wisdom to Ponder

## **St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop & Martyr**

“You can do me no greater kindness than to suffer me to be sacrificed to God while the place of sacrifice is still prepared. Thus forming yourselves into a chorus of love, you may sing to the Father in Jesus Christ that God gave the bishop of Syria the grace of being transferred from the rising to the setting sun. It is good to set, leaving the world for God, and so to rise in Him.... Beg only that I may have inward and outward strength, not only in mind but in will, that I may be a Christian not merely in name but in fact. For, if I am one in fact, then I may be called one and be faithful long after I have vanished from the world.... Christianity is not the work of persuasion, but, whenever it is hated by the world, it is a work of power.

I am writing to all the churches to tell them that I am, with all my heart, to die for God.... Let me be thrown to the wild beasts; through them I can reach God. I am God’s wheat; I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts that I may end as the pure bread of Christ....

Neither the kingdoms of this world, nor the bounds of the universe can have any use for me. I would rather die for Jesus Christ than rule the last reaches of the earth. My search is for Him who died for us, my love is for Him who rose for our salvation.”

*Written by St. Ignatius of Antioch around the year 100 A.D. in his letter to the Church in Rome as he was on his way to Rome to be executed by the Roman government. Ignatius was to be killed by lions in the Roman Coliseum.*

## **Pionius, Martyr**

“It is good to live, but the life for which we yearn is better. And good it is to see the light of day, but to see the true light is better. And all these things are good: but the reason we flee from them is not that we long for death...but because of the surpassing greatness of other things.”

*Spoken by an early Christian elder named Pionius in the moments before his martyrdom alongside another Christian man and a young girl described as a slave.*

## **Pliny the Younger to the Roman Emperor Trajan**

“I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent... In the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished.... Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ – none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced

to do – these I thought should be discharged.... They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food – but ordinary and innocent food.... Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.... The contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it.... It is easy to imagine that a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.”

*Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor who wrote this letter to the Emperor Trajan around the year 112 A.D., inquiring about the persecution of Christians in his province.*

### **Tertullian, Early Christian Theologian & Defender of the Faith**

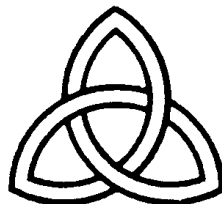
"At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign."

*Tertullian wrote these words around 204 A.D. to describe the apparently already established custom of making the sign of the cross. At this point, it was apparently made on the forehead.*

### **St. Justin Martyr**

“For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God’s word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.”

*Justin Martyr wrote very early, thorough accounts of the Eucharistic liturgy, among other things. He wrote this description of the Eucharist ca. 155 A.D.*



**Triquetra**

#### **Early Christian Symbol for the Trinity**

Symbols such as this were used by early Christians (and are still used today) to try to explain and understand the Trinity: one God, three persons.

Tertullian, who wrote around 200 A.D., is credited with coining the term “Trinity”, a word not actually used in the New Testament.

# Notes



## **Phoenix**

The phoenix was an early Christian symbol representing the resurrection. It is another example of Christianity adopting and giving new meaning to a pagan symbol.

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