

Spiritual Torrents

A Service of Tenebrae Venerating the Women of the Passion



St. Bridget of Sweden (1315-1373) before the Cross of the Crucified Christ. Book of Hours, use of Rome, France, 1525. Lewis E 112. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department.

The Passion stories in the Gospels tell us of the women—some named, some anonymous—who witnessed the suffering and death of Christ. In this service for Holy Wednesday, we pay attention to the women who appear in Scripture accounts of the Passion, the roles they play in Jesus’s last hours, and what their perspectives from the margins of the Gospels reveal about Jesus’s faithful followers. By dwelling on the margins, we encounter important new perspectives.

The theme of viewing Christ from the margins shapes the reading selections for this service of Tenebrae. Paired with Gospel texts are women’s mystical writings dating from the Middle Ages through the 1960s. Mysticism has lived on the margins of Christianity for centuries—dabbled in by many of the great minds and hearts of the church but rarely sanctioned by authorities, who feared its radical potential. Women spiritualists in particular have embraced mysticism, and for some, mystical visions of agony and ecstasy have placed them in devotional closeness to Christ.

The writings of four women mystics appear throughout the service. The Prayers of **St. Bridget of Sweden (ca. 1303-1373)** were composed after the famous mystic had visions in which Christ supposedly revealed to her the number of wounds he received during the passion (5480, according to Bridget); her prayers became popular among the laity but were frowned upon by both Catholic and Protestant clergy. Martin Luther referred to her as “die tolle Brigit,” or “the foolish Bridget.” An excerpt from the book *Spiritual Torrents* by **Madame Guyon (1648-1717)**, a pious French laywoman who was imprisoned in the Bastille for a time after angering King Louis XIV with her mysticism, explain the encounter of a human soul with the divine. Guyon’s works were known, read, and copied out by hand by Pietists living on the banks of the Wissahickon just a few miles from St. Timothy’s as early as 1709. A page from their manuscript of Guyon’s work is included in this program. A verse by the pious English poet **Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)** reflects on the emotions of the women who witnessed the Passion. Finally, a selection from the memoir of **Mercedes de Acosta (1892-1968)**, a Hollywood screenwriter, celebrity socialite and intimate friend of screen legends Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich who read deeply in mysticism, applies mystical ideas to coping with the stresses of human life. Paired with Scripture readings, these insights from women mystics help us think more deeply about the Gospels, and the role of suffering in drawing us closer to God.

Music by women mystics punctuates this evening’s service. Contemplative pieces by **St. Hildegard von Bingen (ca. 1098-1179)**, a German Benedictine abbess, philosopher, scholar, author, mystic, and musician, explore the role of the arts in catalyzing experience of the divine. A musical composition by **Schwester Föben (Christianna Lassel, 1711-1784)** of the community of mystical pietists at Ephrata, Pennsylvania invites God, the divine potter, to mold the believer “out of...pure earth.” The accomplished women featured in tonight’s service each pushed back against the gender limitations of their different eras, as they offered unconventional spiritual insights and claimed positions of power within their societies.

The Latin word “tenebrae” most commonly means “darkness” or “night,” but can also refer to death and the underworld. Tenebrae services in the Episcopal Church today are based on ancient monastic patterns of worship meant to mark the passing of time. The service is characterized by the gradual extinguishing of candles while the story of Jesus’s death is

related—as well as a “strepitus” (clatter, crashing, or rumbling) at the end of the Gospel readings, to symbolize the closing of Christ’s tomb.

We hope this contemplative service draws your attention to characters in Gospel accounts of the Passion who may have gone unnoticed before, while introducing you to the spiritual sojourners of later centuries. Like Bridget as depicted in the medieval artworks seen here, may we find ourselves in awe at the Cross, separated from the Beloved by neither time nor space.

—Alex L. Ames, for the Parish Life Committee at St. Timothy’s in Roxborough

Nocturn 1

Antiphon

Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

V: Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked:

R: From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

Lesson: Lamentations 1: 5

¹How deserted lies the city,
once so full of people!
How like a widow is she,
who once was great among the nations!
She who was queen among the provinces
has now become a slave.
²Bitterly she weeps at night,
tears are on her cheeks.
Among all her lovers
there is no one to comfort her.
All her friends have betrayed her;
they have become her enemies.
³After affliction and harsh labor,
Judah has gone into exile.
She dwells among the nations;
she finds no resting place.
All who pursue her have overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.
⁴The roads to Zion mourn,
for no one comes to her appointed festivals.
All her gateways are desolate,
her priests groan,
her young women grieve,
and she is in bitter anguish.
⁵Her foes have become her masters;
her enemies are at ease.
The LORD has brought her grief
because of her many sins.
Her children have gone into exile,
captive before the foe.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus Christ! Eternal sweetness to those who love Thee, joy surpassing all joy and all desire, salvation and hope of all sinners, Thou Who hast proved that Thou hast no greater desire than to be amongst men even to assuming human nature during the course of time for love of men, recall all the sufferings that Thou hast endured from the first moment of Thy conception, and especially during Thy Passion, as it was decreed and ordained from all eternity in the Divine plan.

Remember, O Lord, that during the Last Supper with Thy disciples, having washed their feet, Thou gavest them Thy Precious Body and Blood, and while at the same time Thou didst sweetly console them, Thou didst foretell to them Thy coming Passion.

Remember the sadness and bitterness which Thou didst experience in Thy soul as Thou prayed: "MY SOUL IS SORROWFUL EVEN UNTO DEATH."

Remember all the fear, anguish and pain that Thou didst suffer in Thy delicate Body before the crucifixion, when, after having prayed three separate times, bathed in a sweat of blood, Thou wast betrayed by Judas, Thy disciple, arrested by the people of a nation Thou hadst chosen and elevated, accused by false witnesses, unjustly judged by three judges, all this in the flower of Thy youth and during the solemn Paschal season.

Remember that Thou wast despoiled of Thy garments and clothed with the garments of derision; that Thy face and eyes were veiled, that Thou wast buffeted, crowned with thorns, a scepter placed in Thy hands, that Thou wast fastened to a column and crushed with blows and overwhelmed with affronts and outrages.

In memory of all these pains and sufferings which Thou didst endure before Thy Passion on the cross, grant that before I die, I may make with true contrition, a sincere and entire confession, make worthy satisfaction and be granted the remission of all my sins. Amen.

Nocturn 2

Antiphon

The kings of the earth rise up in revolt, and the princes plot together, against the Lord and against his Anointed.

V: They divide my garments among them:

R. They cast lots for my clothing.

Lesson: *The Song of Hezekiah*, Isaiah 38:10-20

¹⁰ I said, "In the prime of my life
must I go through the gates of death
and be robbed of the rest of my years?"

¹¹ I said, "I will not again see the LORD himself
in the land of the living;
no longer will I look on my fellow man,
or be with those who now dwell in this world.

¹² Like a shepherd's tent my house
has been pulled down and taken from me.
Like a weaver I have rolled up my life,
and he has cut me off from the loom;
day and night you made an end of me.

¹³ I waited patiently till dawn,
but like a lion he broke all my bones;
day and night you made an end of me.

¹⁴ I cried like a swift or thrush,
I moaned like a mourning dove.
My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens.
I am being threatened; Lord, come to my aid!"

¹⁵ But what can I say?
He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this.
I will walk humbly all my years
because of this anguish of my soul.

¹⁶ Lord, by such things people live;
and my spirit finds life in them too.
You restored me to health
and let me live.

¹⁷ Surely it was for my benefit
that I suffered such anguish.
In your love you kept me

from the pit of destruction;
you have put all my sins
behind your back.
¹⁸ For the grave cannot praise you,
death cannot sing your praise;
those who go down to the pit
cannot hope for your faithfulness.
¹⁹ The living, the living—they praise you,
as I am doing today;
parents tell their children
about your faithfulness.
²⁰ The LORD will save me,
and we will sing with stringed instruments
all the days of our lives
in the temple of the LORD.

Lesson: Matthew 26: 1-13

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²“As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴ and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵ “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸ When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. ⁹ “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you,^[a] but you will not always have me. ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! true liberty of the angels, Paradise of delights, remember the horror and sadness which Thou didst endure when Thy enemies, like furious lions, surrounded Thee, and by thousands of blows, insults, lacerations and other unheard-of cruelties, tormented Thee at will.

Through these torments and insulting words, I beg of Thee, O my Savior, to deliver me from all enemies, both visible and invisible, and under Thy protection, may I attain the perfection of eternal salvation. Amen.

Interlude

St. Hildegard von Bingen (Germany, ca. 1098-1179), *O Eterna Deus* – Solo Celtic Harp



Illustration of King David playing the harp at the beginning of the Penitential Psalms,, Book of Hours, use of Rouen, Rouen, France, ca. 1500. Lewis E 126, Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department.

Nocturn 3

Antiphon

I have become like one who has no strength, lost among the dead.

V: He has made me dwell in darkness:

R: Like the dead of long ago.

Lesson: John 19: 1-28

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ²The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.

⁴Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

⁶As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

⁷The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

¹¹Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

¹²From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

¹³When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). ¹⁴It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵ But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

²³ When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

²⁴ “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said,

“They divided my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.”^[a]

So this is what the soldiers did.

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman,^[b] here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! Heavenly physician, raised aloft on the cross in order that through Thy wounds ours might be healed, remember the bruises which Thou didst suffer and the weakness of all Thy

members which were distended to such a degree that never was there pain like unto Thine. From the crown of Thy head to the soles of Thy feet there was not one spot on Thy Body that was not in torment, and yet, forgetting all Thy sufferings, Thou didst not cease to pray to Thy heavenly Father for Thy enemies, saying: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO".

Through this great mercy, and in memory of this suffering, grant that the remembrance of Thy most bitter Passion may effect in us a perfect contrition and the remission of all our sins. Amen.

Lesson: "Mary Speaks" by Madeleine L'Engle

The Images In My Head

O you who bear the pain of the whole earth,
I bore you.

O you whose tears give human tears their worth,
I laughed with you.

You, who, when your hem is touched, give power,
I nourished you.

Who turn the day to night in this dark hour,
light comes from you.

O you who hold the world in your embrace,
I carried you.

O you who laughed and ate and walked the shore,
I played with you.

And I, who with all others, died for,
now I hold you.

May I be faithful to this final test,
in this last time I hold my child, my son,
His body close enfolded to my breast,
the holder held: the bearer bare.

Mourning to joy: darkness to mourn.

Open, my arms: your work is done.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! mirror of eternal splendor, remember the sadness which Thou experienced, when, contemplating in the light of Thy Divinity the predestination of those who would be saved by the merits of Thy Sacred Passion, Thou didst see at the same time the great multitude of reprobates who would be damned for their sins, and Thou didst complain bitterly of those hopeless, lost and unfortunate sinners.

Through this abyss of compassion and pity, and especially through the goodness which Thou displayed to the good thief when Thou saidst to him: "THIS DAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN

PARADISE". I beg of Thee, O sweet Jesus, that at the hour of my death, Thou wilt show mercy to me. Amen.

Interlude

“At the cross her vigil keeping” (*Stabat Mater dolorosa*; Hymn #159) – Solo Celtic Harp

Schwester Föben (Christianna Lassle), 1711-1784, “Former mein Töpffer, mich aus,” Ephrata Cloister, ca. 1746 – Solo Celtic Harp

Nocturn 4

Antiphon

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and he opened not his mouth.

Lesson: Luke 23: 13-31.

13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. 15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. 16 Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." [17] [b]

18 But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" 19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

22 For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

23 But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided to grant their demand. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

26 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then

"they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"

and to the hills, "Cover us!"[c]

31 For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! King most loving and most desirable, remember the grief which Thou didst suffer, when naked and like a common criminal, Thou wast raised and fastened to the cross, when all

Thy relatives and friends abandoned Thee, except beloved Mother who remained close to Thee during Thy agony and whom Thou didst entrust to Thy faithful disciple, when Thou saidst to [Mary](#): "WOMAN BEHOLD THY SON!" and to [St. John](#): "BEHOLD THY MOTHER!"

I beg of Thee, O my Savior, by the sword of sorrow which pierced the soul of Thy holy Mother, to have compassion on me and all my afflictions and tribulations, both corporal and spiritual, and to assist me in all my trials, and especially at the hour of my death. Amen.

Lesson: "Good Friday" by Christina Rossetti

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter, weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! inexhaustible Fountain of compassion, Who by a profound gesture of love, said from the cross: "I THIRST!" suffered from the thirst for the salvation of the human race. I beg of Thee, O my Savior, to inflame in our hearts the desire to tend toward perfection in all our acts; and to extinguish in us the concupiscence of the flesh and the ardor of worldly desires.

O Jesus! sweetness of hearts, delight of the spirit, by the bitterness of the gall and vinegar which Thou didst taste on the cross for love of us, grant us the grace to receive worthily Thy Precious Body and Blood during our life and at the hour of our death, that it may serve us as a remedy of consolation for our souls. Amen.

Interlude

St. Hildegard von Bingen (Germany, ca. 1098-1179), *O Pastor Animarum* – Solo
Celtic Harp

Nocturn 5

Antiphon

They shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child; for the Lord, who is without sin, is slain.

Lesson: Mark 15: 33-47

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).^[a]

³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died,^[a] he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph,^[a] and Salome. ⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! Royal Virtue, joy of the mind, recall the pain that Thou didst endure when, plunged in the ocean of bitterness as the approach of death, Thou didst cry out in a loud voice that Thou wast abandoned by Thy Father, saying: "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Through this anguish, I beg of Thee, O my Savior, not to abandon me in the terrors and pains of my death. Amen.

Lesson [*Spiritual Torrents* by Madame Guyon]

As the torrent, when it enters the sea, loses its own being in such a way that it retains nothing of it, and takes that of the sea, or rather is taken out of itself to be lost in the sea; so this soul loses itself in the diving, which becomes its being and its subsistence, not essentially, but mystically. Then this torrent possesses all the treasures of the sea, and is as glorious as it was formerly poor and miserable.

It is in the tomb that the soul begins to resume life, and the light enters insensibly. Then it can be truly said that "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Mat. Iv. 16).

O you who are coming out of the sepulchre! You feel within yourselves a germ of life springing up little by little: you are quite astonished to find a secret strength taking possession of you: your ashes are reanimated: you feel yourselves to be in a new country.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! Who art the beginning and end of all things, life and virtue, remember that for our sakes Thou wast plunged in an abyss of suffering from the soles of Thy feet to the crown of Thy head. In consideration of the enormity of Thy wounds, teach me to keep, through pure love, Thy commandments, whose way is wide and easy for those who love. Amen.

O Jesus! deep abyss of mercy, I beg of Thee, in memory of Thy wounds which penetrated to the very marrow of Thy bones and to the depth of Thy being, to draw me, a miserable sinner, overwhelmed by my offenses, away from sin and to hide me from Thy face justly irritated against me, hide me in Thy wounds, until Thy anger and indignation have passed away. Amen.

O Jesus! Mirror of truth, symbol of unity, link of charity, remember the multitude of wounds with which Thou wast afflicted from head to foot, torn and reddened by the spilling of Thy adorable Blood. O great and universal pain, which Thou didst suffer in Thy virginal flesh for love of us! Sweetest Jesus! what is there Thou couldst have done for us which Thou hast not done?

May the fruit of Thy sufferings be renewed in my soul by the faithful remembrance of Thy Passion, and may Thy love increase in my heart each day, until I see Thee in eternity, Thou Who art the treasure of every real good and every joy, which I beg Thee to grant me, O sweetest Jesus, in heaven. Amen.

Interlude

“O sacred head, sore wounded” (*Herzlich tut mich verlangen*; Hymn #168) – Solo Celtic Harp

Nocturn 6

Antiphon

From the gates of hell, O Lord, deliver my soul.

Lesson [*Here Lies the Heart* by Mercedes de Acosta, 1960]

Many people I have written about in this book are now dead. Death—that supreme sculptor—has chiselled much of my heart away with the dying of each one. And yet the core of my heart remains. It remains to battle, to struggle, and ever to seek peace. Perhaps just this lesson I in the end must learn: that struggle itself is the peace of life, and that real peace—that envied peace—belongs to another shore. Another shore so close that it is within ourselves. But we must become mariners to reach it. We must cross the sea of our own nature to reach that peaceful shore where dwells our Divine Soul.

Is there anything outside ourselves? Do we not hold within our own hearts the Beloved, and Life and Death? And do we not hold within our own souls the Divine Self? But the illusions created by both Life and Death must initiate us into their dark mysteries before we can comprehend all this. And it may be, too, that in this initiation we cannot reach our full maturity until we have bled deeply from a wound, pierced far into the garden of our hearts by the hand of the Beloved. Until we have gone in despair and loneliness through foreign lands, and heard the echoes of our once cherished dreams proclaimed in the mouths of gossipers and vulgar people—distorted—deformed—until we ourselves no longer recognize them.

So at last we are forced to return to some simple thing we once loved—perhaps only the delight in a streak of sunlight across the floor.

But in this a small contentment: to know that some things are together and hold forever tightly, and some things are never to be more than dreamed.

Prayer of St. Bridget

O Jesus! Strong Lion, Immortal and Invincible King, remember the pain which Thou didst endure when all Thy strength, both moral and physical, was entirely exhausted. Thou didst bow Thy head saying: "All is consummated!"

Through this anguish and grief, I beg of Thee, O Lord, to have mercy on me at the hour of my death, when my mind will be greatly troubled and my soul will be in anguish. Amen.

O Jesus! only Son of the Father, Splendor and Figure of His substance, remember the simple and humble recommendation Thou didst make of Thy soul to Thy Eternal Father, saying: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit", and when Thy Body, all torn, and Thy Heart broken, and the bowels of Thy mercy open to redeem us, Thou didst expire. By this precious

death, I beg Thee, O King of Saints, comfort me and give me help to resist the devil, the flesh and the world, so that, being dead to the world, I may live for Thee alone. I beg of Thee at the hour of my death, to receive me, a pilgrim and an exile returning to Thee. Amen.

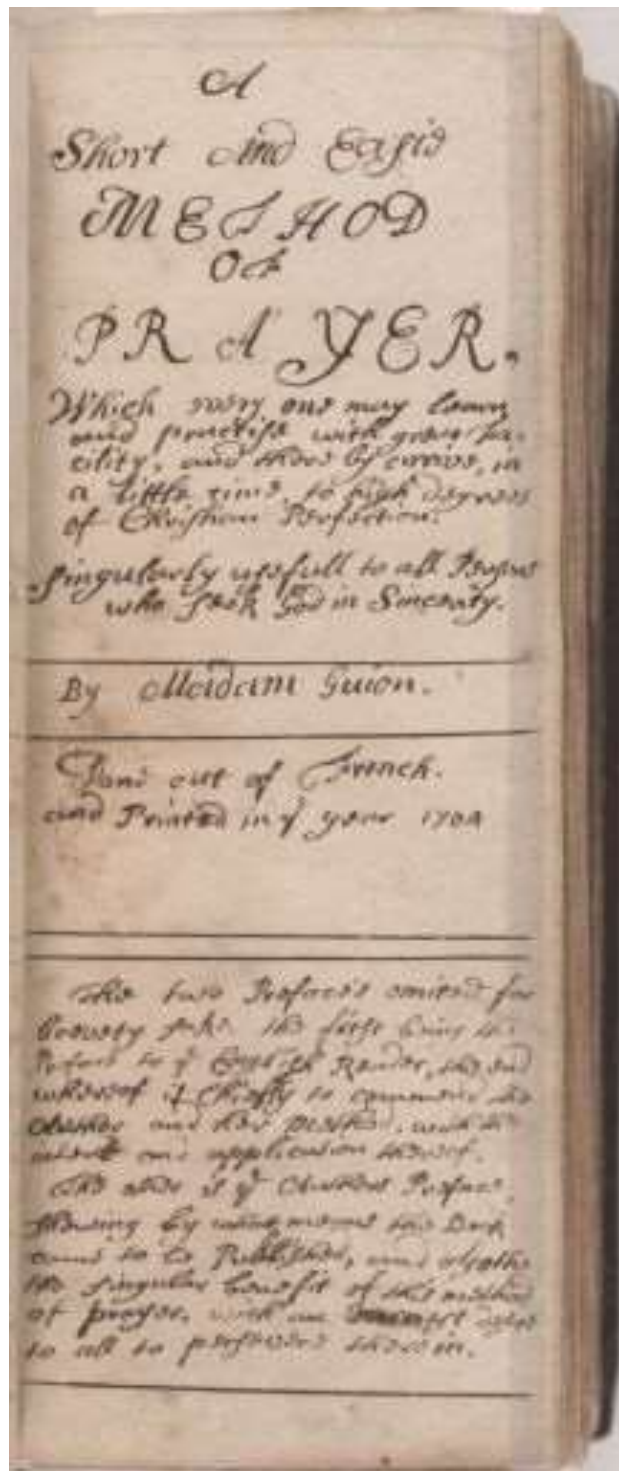
O Jesus! True and faithful Vine! remember the abundant outpouring of Blood which Thou didst so generously shed, pressed down and running over as the grape crushed in the wine press.

From Thy side, pierced with a lance by a soldier, blood and water issued forth until there was not left in Thy Body a single drop, and finally, like a bundle of myrrh lifted to the very top of the cross, Thy delicate flesh was destroyed, the very substance of Thy Body withered, and the marrow of Thy bones dried up.

Through this bitter Passion and through the outpouring of Thy Precious Blood, I beg of Thee, O sweet Jesus, to pierce my heart, so that my tears of penitence and love may be my bread night and day. May I be converted entirely to Thee, may my heart be Thy perpetual resting place, may my conversation be pleasing to Thee, and may the end of my life be so praiseworthy that I may merit heaven and there, with Thy saints, praise Thee forever. Amen.



Miniature depicting St. Bridget of Sweden, Germany, 1499. Lewis E M 17:4. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department.



Madam Guion [Madame Guyon], "A Short and Easie Method of Prayer," copied by the Pietists of the Wissahickon, ca. 1709. FLP Borneman Ms. 1. Courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department.