

LENT/SPRING:

preparation and journey to the cross

self reflection/examination

determining priorities

sharing in Christ's suffering in the world

repentance

Christ's royal rulership as a suffering servant

spiritual retreat

preparation to celebrate liberation

giving birth to new hopes and dreams

becoming who we are meant to be

journey of the caterpillar: from cocoon to butterfly

sprouting out and upward

nature giving up new life

a week of holiness: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday  
& Easter vigil

hidden purposes of God

weakness made strong

hope springing eternal

A LENTEN REFLECTION: "Kenosis/Self-emptying"

Because of the short length of this piece, it will work better memorized. The meter and rhythm should be stressed both by the Chorus(C) and Everyperson (E). C & E enter in a single line facing the congregation with arms linked over shoulder. They walk in rhythm to their chant-like speech, which is regular and solemn. The line begins to form a circle once it has reached the center of the area and continues revolving.

C: Behold something which has existed since the beginning,  
that which we have heard,  
and have seen with our own eyes;  
that which we have watched  
and touched with our hands:  
the Word, who is life.

In the beginning was the Word,  
the Word was with God.

Through it all things came to be,  
not one thing had its being but through God.

All that came to be had life in God  
and that life was the light of humanity,  
a light that shines in the dark,  
a light that darkness could not overpower.

(suddenly Everyperson breaks their link with the Chorus, rushing forward and falling on their knees in despair, the Chorus opens up to them...)

E: O Lord I am not worthy...  
that your Word  
should pass through my lips...

C: Come back, return again...

E: (quickly in disgust) I...can't!

(Chorus reforms circle and repeats the first section again, rotating slowly, in a barely audible voice as a background for Everyperson)

E: (raising head and slowly standing) You poured forth  
your lifes blood  
for me and my sins...  
giving yourself entirely  
in trustful love  
to your Parent.  
But in my humanness...  
I can't reach out  
barely beyond myself.  
Fear blocks all  
my attempts;  
I am not divine,  
but base  
as the ground  
which supports me.  
How could I ever  
reach a point  
of self-emptying  
in completeness  
as you did?  
I am too selfish...  
for only I come first.  
Yet by your death  
you were raised to completeness...  
my soul's heart  
beckons me  
to do the same.  
Dare I give myself  
so completely...  
as wet clay  
in the potters  
loving hands?  
Only in you  
through you  
and with you...

E: Only you are worthy...  
because you were sacrificed  
and with your blood  
you won for us God...  
only you are worthy!  
You are first in every way...  
in you all perfection abides.  
All things are reconciled through you...  
when you made peace  
by your death on the cross.  
Who am I...but dust to be trampled or??  
How can I approach you?  
Your brilliance blinds me...  
for in your presence  
I stand in fear!  
I am a sinner...  
bound by a humanity  
that is stained by sin.  
Reach down your hand  
and show me the way...

(By this time the Chorus has finished repeating the first section. All stand in Chorus in silence in an expectant pause...then the Chorus in the same rhythmic fashion speaks the following section while standing still, arms still on shoulders. Every person is still forward on knees with head lowered.)

C: Though their state was Gods,  
yet they did not cling  
to their equality,  
but emptied themselves  
completely  
taking the form of a slave...  
becoming as us in all things.  
In this they humbles themselves  
even to accepting death...  
death on a cross...

E:(cont.) could I begin  
to speak such words  
of abandonment.  
Even the words  
can't be my own...  
on the cross of sin

I cry out:

Creator, I abandon myself

into your hands,  
do with me as you will.

Whatever you may do

may my life

be a thank you.

Let only your will

be done in me

and in your creation...

this is all

I wish and desire.

Into your hands,

I freely commend my life...

offered to you

with all the love

of my heart

and the need

to completely surrender myself...

without reserve and in boundless confidence

for you are my Creator!

(Chorus opens up to Everyperson...)

C: Come let us return to Yahweh...(Everyperson turns & rejoins

Provide yourself with the Word

and come back to Yahweh...(Chorus reforms circle & rejoices

For we have been torn to pieces,

but God will heal us;

we are struck down with sinfulness,

but God will again bandage our wounds.

C: (cont.) God will create us again whole  
raising us up  
to live in God's presence always!  
God will love the unloved  
whispering gently: "You are my people"  
as we cry out: "You are our God!"  
(circle begins to break & slowly exit as a chain facing  
the congregation)

Let us set ourselves to know Yahweh,  
returning God's gift of self  
with ourselves;  
for God says:  
"I will betroth you to myself forever,  
betroth you with integrity and justice,  
with tenderness and love,  
in faithful constancy  
and you will come to know  
and love Yahweh!"

HOLY THURSDAY BIDDING PRAYERS:

(Each leader will read in front of the gathering, after their petition is read they will walk into the congregation and pass out their colored badges and remain with the gathering.)

ALL: Dear Lord, hear the prayers of your people.  
Bring to life for us in our memory and person  
the holocausts which have occurred  
and those which we allow to continue  
in the name of bigotry  
and the narrow perception of truth  
and righteousness.  
May the choosing and wearing of a badge  
that once was used in Nazi Concentration Camps,  
remind us that persecutions still continue  
even more subtly today...

#1: The Pink Triangle for Lesbian & Gay People:  
Lord, how narrow of us to dwell  
only on the suffering of our group,  
for there are seven other minorities  
that were set aside too.  
May we begin to see persecution & oppression  
in all people and not only against ourselves...

#2: The Brown Triangle for Gypsies:  
Lord, how safe we are with our home & possessions  
and how we guard them from others...  
how would we live if we had no home or country?  
May we see around us the displaced people  
on our pathway of life  
and begin to share more of our resources  
with all of your people...

#3: The Red Triangle for Political Undesireables:  
Lord, it may not be fashionable  
or popular to live a Christian lifestyle today.  
For some it is no longer radical or different...

#3: (cont.) there is no "good news" to be found  
in their proclamation!

May we experience the new life in Christ  
and begin to witness by our lives  
the values we profess...

#4: The Purple Triangle for Jehovah Witnesses:  
Lord, how easy it seems to call one way right  
for everyone and the rest  
untrue or wrong.

There must be many paths to you  
as there are hearts to contain your love.  
May we learn understanding & openness to others  
whose beliefs are not exactly the same as ours...

#5: The Black Triangle for anti-socials:  
Lord, it's hard to allow socety to tell us  
how to act & behave all the time...  
where is the freedom to be "me"?  
May we allow others & ourselves  
the uniqueness of our individuality without expecting  
everyone to be just like "me"...

#6: The Green Triangle for Criminals:  
Lord, when they wrong us,  
how are we to forgive? And how often?  
Should we lock them away safely removed  
from ourselves,  
or should we be so bold as to help them  
and invite them into our homes?  
May we forgive others  
as we wish to be forgiven by them...

#7: The Yellow Triangle for Jews:  
Lord, how easy it is to label one group  
as scapegoats for all our problems  
and focus on one wrong  
while neglecting the many who are injured.  
May we share the responsibility to change  
the wrongs we have done together  
and those done to us in the name of justice.



#8: The Blue Triangle for Illegal Immigrants:

Lord, when did we see you hungry,  
thirsty, homeless, or naked?

When did we not invite you into our homes?

Are we not the land with open arms

to all people who come to our doorsteps,  
the hope of the oppressed.

May we be not confused

by the many faces of Christ in others,

especially the most least likely...

ALL: We are healed

by the punishments they suffer,

made whole

by the blows they receive.

May "they" become "we" by your grace,

for it is because of our hatred as a people & nation

that they are wounded,

by the wounding of ourselves

and crushed by the injustice

we allow to happen & go unnoticed!

The Suffering and Triumph of God's Servants:

A Passion Account

(#1-4: Proclaimers C: Congregation)

#1: My Servants shall succeed in their task-  
so much so that they will be lifted up  
and highly honored.

Many people are shocked when they notice  
my Servants-

for they are so marred by hatred  
and injustice that their appearance  
is no longer human.

They startle many nations-  
and leaders are speechless  
with amazement!

#3 & #4: For those who have not been told shall see...

#1 & #2: those who have not heard shall ponder it.

C: How can we believe what you report?

Where is God's hand in all this?

#2: Who is it that you want?

C: Jesus the Nazarene.

#2: I am the one.

#3: Who is it that you want?

C: The Jews, the Blacks, the Lesbians, the Gays...  
anyone who is different from us.

#4: I have told you...I am those.

If I am the one you want,  
let the rest go.

#3: It was the will of God that the Servants  
would struggle for life...

like a plant trying to take root  
in a parched ground.

They have no dignity or beauty  
to make anyone notice them.

There is nothing even attractive about them.

They are despised...

and rejected by all...

#4: 'Are you not one of Jesus' followers?

C: Not I.

#1: Are you not a disciple of Jesus?

C: I am not!

#4: The Servants endure suffering and pain  
but no one will even look at them...  
they are ignored as if they are nothing.

But they endure in their persons

the sufferings which should be ours...

the pain we should be made to bear.

How convenient to think that their punishment  
is sent by God!

#2: I have spoken publicly to anyone who would listen...

I always taught openly in your schools and churches.

There was nothing secret about anything I said.

Why do you question me?

Question those who heard me.

It should be obvious that they will know  
what I said...

if I said anything wrong produce the evidence,

but if I have spoken the truth

why beat me down?

#1: It is because of our hatred

that they are wounded...

crushed because of the injustice we do...

C: Yet, we are healed by the punishment they suffer,  
made whole by the blows they receive.

All of us are like sheep that are lost  
each going our own way.

#3: But didn't I see you there with Jesus  
in the garden?

C: No! I don't know Jesus!

#4: It's you who say I am King.

The reason I was born,

the reason I came into the world,

is to testify to the truth.

Anyone who committed to the truth hears my voice.

C: Truth? What does that mean?

#2: They are being arrested, sentenced,  
and led off to die...

but no one seems to care.

They are put to death  
for the sins of our people...

When will it stop?

#1: Look at your King!

C: We have no King, but Caesar!

#1: I find no case against Jesus...  
what am I to do?

C: Crucify! Crucify!

#1: Where do you come from?

Do you refuse to speak to me?

Do you not know that I have the power to release you  
and the power to crucify you?

#3: You would have no power over me whatever  
unless it was given to you.

That is why the ones who handed me over to you  
are guilty of a greater offense.

#2: God seems to lay upon them  
the guilt of us all.

For they are treated harshly...

#4: I thirst.

#3: but endure it humbly  
barely saying a word.

Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,  
like a sheep to be sheared.

#1: It is finished.

#4: They are buried in common graves of neglect  
even though they never committed a crime...  
or even told a lie.

Who would even think any more of their destiny?

Who remembers them?

C: How can we believe what you report?

Where is God's hand in this?

#1 & #2: For those who have not been told shall see..

#3 & #4: those who have not heard shall ponder it.

#1: The Servants suffer  
as a means of forgiveness  
for their oppressors...

#2: soon the will of God will be accomplished  
through them...

#3: For they will justify many  
by healing us  
and making us whole...

#1 & #4: as our eyes and ears and hands  
are opened up to them.

#4: They are the redemption  
from ourselves...

#1 & #4: this is their gift!