

Justice

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**... is love. And love, justice.
The twain is met in Jesus.**

Preface

I do not know what I shall write as I begin this text; I only know that it will be on justice, and that in Jesus justice is love.

Many find these irreconcilable differences; I hope to show that one does not exist without the other.

Introduction

Justice is from above. It rains down from heaven like the gentle dew which refreshes the earth. It is true. It is holy. It is of love, the love of God for His children.

Without justice there would be no order, without justice would be no light. Chaos would rule and darkness take root, as fear grips the mortal soul.

But with justice comes light, to shine upon the ends of the earth. All is seen in its radiance, all is clear in this holy wisdom, and there is no end to its blessed life.

We choose either light or darkness. We enter life or are cast to death. This by the sword of the Spirit, which removes from the soul all stain of sin.

And so love can flourish. And so the children play. And so the heavenly kingdom is come to earth, in the sacred body of Christ the Lord.

Section I

1.

Let us love, and so find justice. Let us live and not die. Let us sing to the glory of God and find His light shining forth in our lives.

There is no beginning and no end to His love. There is no beginning and no end to His justice. He is all-holy and all-loving; Life alone He holds in His hands.

And so the sword He carries is of love and not hate. The justice it brings is life-giving, not destructive. If sin is destroyed by its piercing thrust, it is only to bring health to the body – and only He can wield such power in genuine love.

In the hands of man justice turns to destruction, yes. In the presumption of his will he devises violence. But with God is only enduring love, which never turns a curse against a neighbor, which holds only love for His fellow man.

2.

It is some forty days since the utter destruction of two of the tallest buildings on earth, and there is still smoke rising from the ashes. In these ashes are the bodies of men and women; in these ashes is the remnants of man's hatred for man.

This is not justice; this is not God's will. This is man's lust, man's lust for power and his desire to take God's place. And this is the result. Not justice. Not love... violence and destruction.

If we had but eyes in our heads we could see the love to which the Lord calls us. If we had but ears we might understand the truth: His justice is eternal, and knows nothing of our vitriolic spewing of curses against others of flesh and blood.

Today in the gospel the Lord speaks of the division He brings, of the fire He sets upon the earth. In the psalm we hear of the eternal blessing which is upon the just – who are purged from sin by the Lord's heavenly fire – and the condemnation of the wicked, who cling to their sin and so shall be burnt with it. This heavenly fire is not in our hands to cast forth; it may be in our souls if our spirit is set aflame by Truth... but it is not for us to call down fire from heaven on any man.

3.

In the kingdom. In the kingdom the Lord's justice shines like light, is light, is that which illumines all in the kingdom. It is this justice which makes the kingdom; it is this justice which is God's reign.

Around His altar, in His temple, only light shines, only justice reigns. All is perfect. All is true. All is made so holy by that light of justice.

The subjects of the king gather round; they stand and kneel and sit in His presence, around His holy altar, where only light shines.

How shall those not of His justice enter there? How shall those not of love find His light? They shall not. They cannot. His justice itself prevents them from entering. For His justice is indeed love, and if not of love, nothing can enter there.

(Do you see how justice guards love?)

4.

As justice seems to come to the land of those responsible for the attacks of terror wrought upon this nation in which I dwell, and there is hope that peace will follow, one knows that while the justice of the Lord cannot be fully known in this world, yet there may be a sign of it upon us. However poorly we strive to do what is right in the sight of God, we shall fall short; but in the honest seeking is consolation and a measure of truth.

Justice transcends punishment, certainly, and any rational retribution for a wrong done. If justice is love, it cannot be effected with the purpose of hurting another, for any reason. But if evenhandedly promoted and without anger brought to bear, there may be fruits even on this earth of the justice that is of God. We must seek to redeem what has been lost, what has been corrupted. We must allow no hatred to enter into our hearts. And the plight of a people oppressed may find a liberation, and a purposeful resolution might be known.

For myself, and as it should be for even the fiercest warrior – if he is to be just – there is nothing of the killing of human beings I can stomach.

5.

The justice of the Lord is eternal, not temporal. It lasts forever. Not bound by space and time, it ranges freely and loves openly, calling all souls to paradise.

The justice of the Lord is known in His mercy – it is this which distinguishes it; it is this which reveals His love. For if not forgiven by Him, all would be condemned: none would be found worthy of His kingdom.

It is the mercy and kindness of the Lord which the Word of God proclaims; it is this of which the Scriptures speak. And it is by this divine justice that we are brought into God's presence, if we can but meet Him in the place where He holds out His arms to us.

In this place eternity ticks. In this heart there is found the grace needed by our thirsting souls. Under the shadow of His cross we find His blessed justice.

6.

It is the First Sunday of Advent and I read in the Office this early morning the beginning of the book of Isaiah. In it God says, "Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow." And so God calls us to be like Him, who has surpassing compassion for the weakest and most lowly creatures.

It was the reading of passages like this, repeated throughout the Old Testament, through which I think I came to fall in love with God. For here was proof that the stereotyped image of a punishing God was simply false. Here in His primary concern for the widow and the orphan was the evidence of God's justice, a justice founded in truth and founded in love. Simply put: He cares.

If nothing else I could believe in this. When all else failed, I could come back to this – God is just, God loves. I could give myself to such a lover, one who is so fair... a God made known in Jesus.

7.

The Hand of God casts out all sin, all that is against Him – all that is not of love.

The greatest of the commandments is this: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

All the commandments are contained in these, Love of God and neighbor. This is the Law; this is justice. And anything that does not abide by love is cast into Gehenna. Do you understand? Do you see how love and justice are one and the same?

Cast from us all sin, dear Lord.

Let us be of love, only your love.

8.

Things grow worse in the Middle East. The fighting, the striking back and forth between brothers becomes absurd, grows out of hand. Where is Christ in this land? Where is the love of God?

There must be peace; it must come. But only Jesus will bring it. The death and destruction, the carnage of innocent civilians, shall bring nothing. Taking an eye for an eye will indeed leave everyone blind.

The peace of Jesus breathes forgiveness, breathes understanding and care. The peace of Jesus surpasses understanding, and so it holds all these things in its hands.

When shall they turn to Him, the favored son and he whose hand is against all others? When shall these brothers resolve their conflict and enter into the peace of Christ? As it is, neither is able to see the justice only He brings.

9.

Comes the justice of the Lord. In this time of Advent. To His Church, upon His people.

Like a flower that grows, blooming once in its season, so these days come with their fragrance each year at this time.

Peace shall spring out from the earth, even as He is born in our midst, even as His light comes to us from the distance.

No fear have we. This is His time: He comes in justice. He comes in love. His kingdom cannot be otherwise... And there we dwell.

There we dwell. With Him. Of Him. In Him... His presence is now with us.

This is His season, the season of justice – the season this flower blooms in our midst.

10.

Today is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas and patroness of the unborn. And I sit in one of the countries of the Americas, one which still slaughters its innocents.

It is a year to this day this country's election was finally decided after better than a month of near chaos over the closeness of the results. But the disputing would not go beyond this day, as set by the law of the land. And so it was this day that was instrumental in the presidential outcome.

An abortion extremist was defeated that day, who would have followed on the heels of an eight-year reign of one who could not have defended this "right" more vehemently. No murderous act upon the unborn would have been deemed unlawful, all in the name of "choice".

But the president we did get voices opposition to these elemental threats to life, and speaks against the culture of death which prevails. Yet we live under the shadow of this mortal sin, but yet we have hope for change.

Will justice come? Will there again be love of life? Watch over us, Our Lady, please.

11.

Without justice, what is the world? Without justice, what is anything? What meaning has life, what direction, what order?

“Logos”. The Word. Order. Logic. Light. Out of chaos the Lord brings sense to life. There is no point without order. There is no light without justice.

It fills all things, God’s wisdom. It sustains all creatures, God’s grace. There is not a thing that lives that exists apart from the Word, from light: in these hands *is* life.

And how shall He judge? How can He not judge? His is judgment, His is order – His is the command that keeps the world in place. If the axis is removed, the wheel spins out of place.

And this axis is born of love.

12.

It is the feast of St. John of the Cross and a day set aside by our Pope for fasting and prayer for peace in a world beset by hatred, one which threatens to spin out of place.

How shall we find stability again? How shall the war cease? When will men give up the sword and turn to plow the fields of peace?

We turn to the Lord now and entreat Him, to come amongst us and heal our hearts. We beg His kingdom come into our midst now, His presence as a little child. For only innocence will save us. Only His sweet justice will set us free.

We need to be redeemed. We need to be taken from the violence, in our hands and on our minds. And no other way will true justice come, except by the hand of our God.

Jesus, be with us, our gentle king and God.

13.

“In the sight of the nations He has revealed His justice.” The Wonderful Counselor has come, and brought His blessed peace, wrought by the hand of justice.

The Child walks among us; love is with us. Nothing need we fear, for He watches over – He is present to us.

None can deny: Jesus is the Christ. None can refute the Son, none can gainsay His judgment. For it is divine, it is of the breath of the Spirit.

The light rises, the voice speaks, in silence. And a heart beats, leading the just forth on this path to the kingdom.

Follow the beat of His heart within you; heed the quiet voice speaking in your soul. Walk in His way of justice.

14.

Christmas Day 2001. A world on the verge of war; a king coming to bring peace.

One nation rises against another. The United States and others fight terrorists. India threatens war with Pakistan. And, of course, the Holy Land is devoid of pilgrims as Israel and Palestine engage in their attacks one upon the other.

A dark world. But a light shines; it cannot be overcome. And it presses ever for eternal peace.

Upon my heart I feel it, hear it coming, early this morning. May it settle in and banish the sword from our midst. May the prince of justice reign in His love.

15.

Only in the Lord is found justice; only in the Lord is found peace – only in the Lord is found the forgiveness that leads us to His perfect place.

Upon this earth corruption dwells, the result of our sin. Try as we might to exact its dismissal and return eye for eye in the laws we make, we shall fall short; we shall not overcome by our own power the darkness that besets us here.

Grace is needed, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this which alone overcomes our failings; it is only this which brings true peace. Only the Lord is truly just, for only the Lord offers forgiveness.

Struggle as we might without Him to achieve order in this life, ever our attempts will fall short, and be haunted by the weakness of our hearts. We must therefore turn to Christ.

16.

It is now after New Year's Day, and the issuance of our Pope's declaration on peace. In it John Paul speaks as none before, forthrightly on the need for forgiveness. There can be no justice without this. For it cannot be fulfilled without its grace.

Some tensions ease, others increase, in a world in confusion. But the words of the Pope need to be heeded by all – for these speak the heart of Christ.

How few hear the call to forgiveness. How few seek true justice. How many fear weakness. How minds need to be opened to the Word of God. (I see more and more that only in His presence will we find true peace.)

Jesus bleeds for us. The Pope calls to us. But do we hear? Will we hear? Will the world come from the precipice of destruction and discover the justice and forgiveness of Christ? Yet He speaks to our hearts.

17.

Justice, and corruption. The two are irreconcilable. There can be no justice where wickedness rules.

How can it be that the unrighteous man will effect just decisions for those subject to his judgment? How can it be that light can have discourse with the darkness? The light dispels the darkness; truth cannot have place where lies abound.

That is why we say the kingdom of heaven is a place of light, for there no darkness, no corruption, may enter. Here on earth moth and rust destroy, but there the light is untouchable by the decay wrought by sin.

And if we wish to find heaven, we must turn aside from that which destroys in this world. If justice is our desire we must turn away from sin. For as long as sin has place in our lives, our lives will be subject to death and decay, and the wickedness of our ways will keep us bound to darkness, a darkness in which the light of justice cannot shine.

18.

The president of this country in which I dwell gave his state of the union address to the nation last night. In this time of fighting terror many must have listened in. Present was the interim leader of the country from which terrorists have currently been rooted out by military might and the will of its people.

The president spoke overwhelmingly of fighting terror, of waging war against this evil in the world which threatens civilization. His goal is certainly laudable as spoken in his address, but one is left to wonder at the sin on the soul of the country leading this effort. Only briefly did the president mention the moral turpitude our selfish country has suffered over many years.

More unborn children are killed each day here than were killed in all the terrorist attacks of September 11. Are these lives worth nothing? Are they as negligible as we make them out to be? Is this killing somehow justified by the fact of law or that licensed physicians are destroying such life with a mother's permission? Can a nation with this sin so firmly etched into its soul hope to effect any true justice in the world?

And our airwaves are filled with pornography; indecent acts are condoned in the name of a freedom which knows no bounds. And our children partake and participate in such acts with the light of media shining upon them. Pornography is the single most popular forum on the Internet, and music and radio and TV do as they please without restriction. Is there genuine hope for leadership from a country mired in such immorality?

And God is barred from our schools and our places of business. His Name is all that is deemed indecent. Except when a material need arises, the Lord is shunned by the powers that be in this nation.

Do we think He shall accept such equivocation? Do we believe He can bless us if we bar Him at the door of the places we and our children spend our days? Do we believe in Him or not? A decision must be made. For not forever will He forego abandonment of those who abandon Him.

Freedom can only be won by a nation firmly rooted in Him.

Section II

1.

Peace could come, yes. It could visit this world and find a place. For how long it could remain on the world scene may be questionable, but it could have effect.

But the peace in the heart never leaves. The peace founded in Jesus by nature remains. Though it finds no place to rest, no place to be born in this world, yet in the soul who accepts Him, He is there. And does not leave.

Peace is the fruit of justice, and justice the fruit of forgiveness... so to a heart and to a people upon whom the forgiveness of Christ and His love remain, the justice and the peace of the Lord will be present.

All could come together. All could love. All could treat the other as themselves... It is the prayer we hold and the kingdom which comes.

2.

The Pope has met in Assisi these days with the leaders of Christian denominations and other religions to pray for peace in the world, to emphasize the fact that religion should have nothing to do with violence.

A rabbi states that we are too shy in proclaiming religion's proclivity for peace on the world stage: we do not seek to influence the world of man to turn to the peace that is present in the world of God. Why? Is this not religion's call? Is it not our particular call as Christians, the followers of the Prince of Peace?

Like justice, peace we often avoid speaking of in matters of earthly significance; but it is upon the earth we work, and so must work for that which affects the earth we dwell upon. Like Francis, who sought so diligently to speak with the Muslim sultan, so should we bring the justice and peace of Christ to every corner of the world before us.

Though we know the ultimate peace and justice Christ holds in His all-powerful hand will not be fully realized upon this plane – and we should not place desire for such before faithfulness to our ultimate home – yet it is on this ground we toil, and so should seek to bring our heavenly home and its holiness to this dark place called earth.

3.

The purging must come. The sins of the people must be washed clean. Before the justice of the Lord will be made complete, before His eternal light shall shine.

In sackcloth and ashes all sinners must repent. They must cover their heads in shame. From dust man has been brought up and to dust he shall return.

So what does it benefit a man to exalt himself? To what end does the pride of the king come? Princes are not to be trusted in, but only the Son of God.

This day we must cry out to the Lord. This day we must beseech His mercy. For all the sins upon our soiled souls shall not pass the sword of His reign.

Alone we shall be left if we do not come to Him. Covered in mud shall our faces be. The only true freedom is that found in His mercy.

4.

It is Ash Wednesday. It is the day of repentance, the acceptable time to turn to the Lord. Now begins our Lenten sacrifice.

A more appropriate season could not be upon us, upon a world in confusion. The need to cast ourselves down before the mercy of God, I'm sure, has seldom been greater.

For such destruction and fear and immorality have their place in the heart of man. Such darkness is upon the land, that all turn against their brother.

Early in the morning dark yesterday, as I awoke and prayed, planes came roaring overhead and remained. They hovered for an hour or more to protect the Great City which had so recently been hit (five months before) by the attacks of terror.

Still the threat remains, and it is upon the people's soul. And what can I do but to pray for peace and the release of all from hatred and immorality? What can we do but have faith and put all in God's hands? Particularly this day when the Lord offers mercy for all who return to Him.

Come, O justice of God, upon a land in darkness.

5.

The Lord's justice comes like light to banish the chaos of darkness. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Before He came all was darkness, all stumbled blindly. Then the Word was made flesh, and light shone. Truth spoke words we could hear.

In the beginning is light and now light is come. It is light that gives us a place, a home. The discipline of the Lord keeps us on the right road.

In this house we dwell, in His light; by His guidance we move upon this earth. Without these walls to protect us, to provide shelter in which we may pray, the devil would break in and steal our souls away.

But now the Temple has come. He is here in our midst.

6.

“There has been an upsurge of violence in the past eight days,” the newscaster reads, commenting on the chaos in the Holy Land. In other words, more have died, more blood has been shed in the eternal retaliation of an eye for an eye.

Should someone not tell them that Light has come, to banish such diseased darkness? Will they hear the Word spoken plainly to their ears, or continue this dance with the devil?

His justice needs to be revealed to the eyes and the hearts of His wayward sons. How long will we continue to mock the Lord’s call to turn the other cheek?

7.

O the search for peace! Where shall we find it?
Where does it exist but in His WORD? In the
pronounced silence, remembering His NAME, we shall
discover true peace.

Here in this Blessed Sacrament I sit before, I hear
His peace speak clearly to my soul in the silence that
transcends all. Beyond our understanding is His NAME,
is His Being – yet so clearly does He speak it to our
souls.

If all could but turn to Him! If all could come and
kneel before His throne! What a world this would be in
which to dwell. No need for war would exist anymore.

One day it shall be.

Peace to you.

8.

But no peace seems to be wanted by the world. Hindus attack Muslims and Muslims Hindus in India, and bloodshed continues in the Middle East. (And let us never forget the babies slaughtered.)

The Blessed Mother has promised an era of peace. What form this shall take we do not know. When shall it be and for how long? Will it be measured in time? But rather certain I am that it will affect the Church, and bring it around to the place it should be.

Today scandal rocks the priesthood and men throw stones at whatever enemy they find. But soon... Yes, soon Truth shall come, and peace shall settle in with His people, with all who desire His presence.

9.

The world struggles, stumbles blindly as it seeks justice, as it grasps for the reins that only God holds.

It is in darkness we grope for an answer to our troubles, to the blindness which besets our souls. There must be a way out of this prison.

But continues the darkness its encroachment. Unabated the illusion threatens our minds with cackling cries of emptiness, with calls to despair for our inability to strangle the phantoms of the devil's device.

But empty they are; they are not there. If we open our eyes we see how these melt away in the light of Christ. The foundation of sand cannot stand. Only the Lord is righteous, and only His kingdom endures.

10.

It is just six months since the terrorist attacks on this nation, and on civilization. And it seems sometimes the world will stir to wakefulness.

But yet does the violence escalate amongst Palestinians and Israelies. Worse does the conflict grow. Further seems justice than ever, as all calls for peace are met with posturing and desire for revenge.

Is not this the heart of us all? Do we not all harden our souls against the Word of the Lord, even in this Lenten season? And so, how shall we awake from the sleep, from the lethargy of sinfulness and death?

Flying on March 11, I was stopped and searched for the crucifix I had nestled in my carry-on bag. The sign of the cross needs desperately to be exposed to the world. Only it will bring light to the darkness.

11.

Sinking in the mud. Floating downstream in the culture of death, comfortably... Dead bodies go.

It draws all to itself, this death, this sinful state. It lulls to sleep, then destroys the soul... gradually, pleasantly. The belly is sated.

And so, what more do we need? There is much food on this table, enough to waste, and more. Why should we care for the Blood of the Lord. The darkness sustains us fine.

But justice has its day, from which none shall escape.

12.

In America, the Pediatrics Association says it's all right for homosexual couples to adopt. In the Church, priests sexually assault little boys.

Babylon is here, in this land of the free; and why should we Catholics be any different? Taken in by the lure of greed and lust, all bow down to the golden calf, thinking it is God.

And so few leaders stand up. Little of the truth do we hear. It is easier for the dead body to float downstream than to wash itself clean in the Blood of Christ.

So it comes as no surprise that the dogs surround us. What protection from them have we who have mortgaged our souls for a piece of the pie? We are theirs to devour.

Can it be the time has come for the sleeper to awaken, for justice to shine?

13.

Unholy land, in which is but hatred and bloodshed, in which only darkness reigns. Violence is the only answer here; there is no justice.

The law of the land tells us to kill and be killed, to strike when struck and destroy before being destroyed. It is the survival of the fittest and of him who can shout the loudest.

No concern is there for our neighbor. No love is there for our enemy. We cannot see that it is the devil alone who is evil and does all that is wrong, and so into his clutches we fall... and joining his works becomes our inevitable goal.

Turn, the Lord says. Turn the other cheek. Convert your hearts. Judge not. Love. Only in this way is the enemy defeated. Only by God will the killing cease.

14.

Passover, and every day a suicide bombing in the Chosen Land. Holy Week, Easter Sunday... and tanks roll through the streets of Bethlehem.

A sixteen-year-old girl blows herself up in the marketplace – is there no end? How beastly have we become?

And these high holy days bring nothing but terror, nothing but fear of violence to the Holy Land. And can all-out war be far behind?

There is a child yet lying in the manger. There is God still upon the cross. But this Good Friday portends no resurrection for the brothers whose hands are against one another, whose stranglehold will not loosen, even at the voice of Christ.

And so the mockery of His Justice goes on. And so the devil has his hour.

Section III

1.

Is there a crack in the wall? Will the hardness of hearts be broken down? Will justice come?

In truth only will hatred be disabled. In penitence, forgiveness, and love does justice hide.

Shining out from the veil of lies, the darkness of this world will not hold it forever. The peace of the Lord is the only reality.

But disarming the prince who rules this house, who controls by deceit the domain of darkness, comes only with pains, and an absolute commitment of the heart.

Still, it cannot but come.

2.

The president of the United States has spoken, breaking the silent rhetoric, the empty phrases, with a certain truth, a certain call to peace.

He promises at the end of his speech to work for lasting peace for *all* of Abraham's children. Does he mean it? How blessed might this man be who found his office on the feast of the patroness of the Americas?

All must give, yes. All must set aside their hatred. Essentially, there must be forgiveness and a willingness to work in mutual recognition of the right of existence for the other party.

The words are there, and presume a moral high ground. But how much more effective they would be spoken by the leader of a nation that has outlawed abortion (as this president has said he would do). How free to speak we would then be, with this justice inside us.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is also patroness of the unborn. O that America were taken under her wings.

3.

The Lord comes and brings His light. This is the Easter Season. Hope springs eternal, though justice remains apart from us and our ways.

One wonders. One senses a light falling upon this earth, cleansing away all darkness. Is a new day dawning?

It seems to surround all on Mercy Sunday. His blood would pour upon us, certainly; His light He would have here.

Will hearts open? Will my own?

4.

It is true. There is a beam of light shining from the place where the World Trade Center towers stood. Though across the Hudson River and several miles away, I see it from my kitchen window soaring well into the sky.

But this is not the light of which I speak. Though it may bring hope, too, the eternal hope comes only from God, is only poured forth from Christ's side. Light and Life are known only in His Church, among His children. He alone brings justice.

The light is real, though. It is not imaginary. It is heavenly, and heaven is all that lasts.

And it opens hearts.

(As I complete this page, the prayer group in the church in which I write – before the exposed Blessed Sacrament – finishes their petitions with the Divine Mercy Chaplet. I stop to join them.)

5.

The darkness threatens to break in upon the light, always. Always waiting for its moment to attack, to wreak chaos upon the order of the Lord, to pervert His justice.

Though vain, the devil can presume an impressive shape; a large illusion he casts. He works through the powers that be and the images, the golden calves, of this world. And to see through his distractions, to find the truth he attempts to shield with his lies, takes wisdom.

But most have not time for wisdom; there are preoccupations which capture our attention and presume greater importance. But without wisdom, blindly we grope in the darkness toward the pit of death.

But the pain that the search for wisdom brings is not acceptable to the empty souls. And so, on they go, tumbling toward chaos.

6.

The events of the day appear overwhelming: chaos indeed threatens to break in; and the sharks gather for feeding.

In the Middle East, there is a standoff of violence, a classic eye for an eye situation, the cycle of retribution and revenge which never ends and seems to have no beginning. But only God is eternal. Our wars begin in our own bones, and will end with them.

The Catholic Church in America suffers repeated and magnified allegations and accusations and revelations of its priests' sexual behavior, in particular with the young. And though the numbers are relatively small, and though most offenses occurred decades ago – it matters not to the feeding frenzy. But, then again, one incident is too many according to the justice of the Lord, and much in the ways of many needs serious refining.

And so, world war threatens to break out. And so the Lord's own institution is threatened with collapse... but that which the Lord has made cannot be unmade. And His peace never leaves.

7.

Surrounding the walls of this house, this place where Jesus was born, this world into which darkness had come, is the threat of annihilation. Fragile is our exterior, though mighty are we inside.

And nothing can tear down these walls of the Temple built by the Lord; nothing can take the anointing from His altar on high. Forever shall stand the covenant He has made with His children of light in justice and in truth.

To these walls there is no beginning and no end, and so how could the devil break in; how could the darkness ever hurt us? It is simply so that light shines here in our hearts wherein Jesus was born, and here in our Church which He has made His own.

8.

For nearly a month the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem has been under siege. Israeli troops have withdrawn from most other towns in Palestine, but still they surround these walls, hoping to smoke out the accused terrorists inside. Two hundred men with arms take refuge at the site Jesus was born.

Oh that they all would take refuge in Jesus! Oh that all would turn to Him for protection and grace, instead of to the arms that would but destroy the human race. So close they are to Him, and yet so far. His house they invade with the wars of the world.

And at the same time the American cardinals meet in Rome to address the growing crisis here at home. But we shall only be renewed; we shall only be made more strong. For the devil's house is divided against itself and can only fall, as homosexual advocates unwittingly condemn their own.

Now comes the purgation of the Church. Now we are to be reborn. The windows open, and the smoke of Satan is gone.

9.

In the spring there comes a cleansing. In the spring new birth. Light returns to a darkened world, and life sprouts again from the earth.

Cleansing rain pours upon the broken soil. The roots of plants are nourished by the water which comes from above. The vine sprouts its branches out and buds begin to blossom forth.

Stretching toward the light, what has been planted grows. The light is synthesized with the flesh of the flowering greenery, and it breathes forth the spirit that gives life.

Our souls long to stand in this field where new life has come, where the earth brings forth the fragrance of fresh growth.

10.

A new springtime has been prophesied for the Church. For some time it has been awaited. After a century in the hands of Satan, the time may finally have come.

And the pruning we experience in these days is certainly necessary – how else shall new growth come? How else shall we bear fruit abundantly as branches of the vine that is Jesus? How else shall His Church progress to the ends of the earth?

The Pope has for some time called for a new evangelization. We have come through a Great Jubilee year. The light of the Lord now begins to dawn upon us, and new growth in the water of the Spirit that nourishes all cannot be far behind.

Though gradually comes the dawn, yet surely it is here. Watch for it like the sentinel on the kingdom's wall. Let its grace reach into your very soul.

11.

Man kills himself. Man kills himself and other men (and women and children...). Life takes on no meaning. The flesh God gives receives no respect.

There is but hatred, there is but anger. It goes on. In his flesh and in his bones man carries war. What of love? What of the birth of Christ into the world?

Have we no desire for light? Have we no call to the order God makes... no call to peace? Have we no divinity in us, no forgiveness, no grace?

Hatred, and this alone. No love. If love, only for ourselves and our homes. Not others. And so, not ourselves.

Man kills other men, and kills himself.

12.

There has been movement. The leader of the Palestinian people is no longer under siege; he is free. And after more than a month, the Church of the Nativity is no longer the scene of war. No longer is it surrounded by tanks; no longer are men clinging to arms inside.

But the hatred has not stopped. The suicide bombing goes on in Israel and in other lands, and new sieges are undertaken. Shall it end? Will the Lord be born again into this world of violence?

How? How has it come to be that the body so sacred in the eyes of God is cast upon the fires so easily? Why is brother set against brother? Why but sin? Why but the extinguishing of the love of God in hearts?

And in Northern Ireland, too, brother wars against brother, both siblings assuming the name of Christ. But He is not there. He does not stay where hatred reigns.

13.

But a window opens. A light comes through, shining upon the page. There is a roar from heaven, a beating of angels' wings, and peace is meant to follow.

Each passage in the Book of Life must be fulfilled, in its time, in its place, in its way. The Lord chooses whom He will and all is accomplished in His will.

In the end the mountains will crumble and fill the sea. In the end His lightning shall flash, lighting the sky from East to West. His coming will be unmistakable.

But in this process we find ourselves, there is an ebb and flow to the tide – a time of war and a time of peace. The Church and its people has been warred upon these many years, and shall never find its ultimate home here. But a time of peace and growth is upon us.

14.

There is not an Israeli troop in Palestine for the first time in over six weeks, the newscaster declares. The latest siege has been retracted. And the leader of the PLO has called for an end to terrorism.

Meanwhile, though far from complete, there is relative quiet in the news media regarding the crisis in the Church. And even a declaration of solidarity and love by leading men of one state. May we hope now for the renewal?

May we pray now for peace in this land. May men's hearts turn now to Him who holds all in His hands, and away from the sin in which they drown.

A time of light, a time of peace – a measure of the Lord's justice may be upon us.

Section IV

1.

It does not have to be so. It is not necessary that injustice reign, that violence and hatred take place. This is not the Lord's will.

The Lord's will is peace. For this He sent His only Son, for the forgiveness of all, for the restitution of justice and truth and love. To this does He call us.

The world will be set in order. The kingdom of heaven shall come, and death and destruction will be no more. Life alone will be known. In this Light God dwells, and all who seek Him will find Him there, and remain.

2.

We think so often that violence is inevitable, that it must be... that it will always be. But it is not so.

Two more suicide bombers in Israel after a lull. And I pray for the first time: "No more suicide bombing. And may the Palestinians have the land that is due them."

Why has it taken so long to utter this prayer? Why have I never asked in earnest, and with faith, for peace to come? Why have I accepted with everyone else that the violence and hatred would go on?

We can be easily lulled into believing there is some truth that says evil must go on. By its illusions it can often convince us that it is real – that it is and will always be. But only God is and will be. All else passes, including death.

Let there be an end now, I pray, O Lord. Show us now your mercy.

3.

Could it be that the nations could threaten the existence of God and His people? Could it be that the Promised Land could be destroyed? Does this world hold any power? Does the devil have any sway?

The kingdom of God is eternal and no evil can enter this house. Though all the world come crashing down, though the elements be burned as with fire, the Lord yet remains, and so His children.

What have we to fear, if we stand in the Lord's justice? In Him is Light and Life. And with Him none can touch us.

4.

Pakistan and India gather increasing troops around the borders of Kashmir, said to be the most beautiful land on earth. Behind them is the threat of nuclear destruction, both holding such weapons in their arsenal. And the question is asked repeatedly, "Will they be used?" And what shall it mean to the peace of the world, to the stability of the human race – not to mention how many would die?

The nuclear bomb. Like Prometheus' fire, burning, threatening mankind with destruction. Could this bring the end? The earth and the heavens will be consumed by fire, but not of earthly origin. The end of the world shall come, but not at human hands. And its end will mean nothing to those who are not of this world, nothing but the coming of heaven, where God's justice reigns.

And it is not far from us. This is the end of the age. God's Justice has come in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the world now passes away.

5.

Blood is shared between us all – all are two brothers, and Jesus conquers the divide.

One heart. One Father. One Lord. One Spirit. One Life. Though there are two arms and two legs, there is but one heart and one mind.

Oh make us all so one in you, dear Lord! Break down the barriers that divide us. No more let there be war.

6.

Tensions ease between India and Pakistan; these brothers seem to back away from war...

But in the Middle East, at the heart of the world, the killing and the destruction do not stop. They stagger forth.

And in the Church there is war as well; she still cannot breathe with both lungs. The Orthodox cannot trust the Catholic, though our Pope visits their lands carrying the cross of Christ – this saint dying before the world's eyes, seeking reconciliation at whatever cost to his life.

And today the bishops meet in these United States to bridge the divide between pastors and their flock. And will liberal take the hand of conservative? Will we be but one true Church in God?

Your blood pour over us, Lord.

7.

Enveloped by darkness, some are set so comfortably within its confines. It is indeed a given in their lives.

They rule their days by hatred, but a hatred so deep it has become as a member of the family, asked to take a selected seat. And this hatred they share against their enemies is welcomed by each as a special friend.

Perhaps they do not know where it is they dwell, killing, death having become so commonplace. War becomes just another sporting match, a game to play, never sensing the abomination of the blood they shed in the eyes of God; never realizing the condemnation of the Lord for their ignorant acts of violence, on they go, quite dispassionately, to the next soiree.

And in the name of God all is done. No greater sin could there be. No greater darkness than that which eclipses the light.

8.

Two of the worst suicide bombings in this intifada, in the holy city of Jerusalem. And the Israeli's incursions into Palestine resume and intensify. Is each so blind to the darkness they breed? Must each continue in the hell which they assume as their own? This eye for an eye is certainly leaving all blind, and yet both claim they see so clearly. And yet they would seemingly die without their hatred for one another to keep them thriving.

What I have been considering most in these days is the statement of an Israeli army commander at the end of the siege at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem: "This is the way we live here..." This is how life goes on in the Middle East. So matter-of-fact. So acceptant. And the shaking of hands by the combatants at the end of their struggle – a sign I find so uplifting at the end of a sporting match when the two sides are able to put the game aside – seems particularly macabre in this light; for here indeed blood is shed, and that rather indiscriminately.

But the justice of God shall come and open all eyes.

9.

Fire comes. Fire burns, burns up all in its path, purging the land.

It spreads. It passes from place to place, and what can escape its heat?

Behind it, it leaves ashes – behind it nothing remains.

But when the smoke has gone, when it clears away... when the fire dies, in the place it has been, new life begins.

10.

In the Western half of the United States, in Colorado and Arizona and other states, wildfires have been raging for weeks – spreading over hundreds of miles, destroying forests and towns – the worst blazes that have been seen... And there is little firefighters can do.

There has been drought upon the land, and how the dried timber and brush go so quickly up in smoke. And there seems no end in sight.

I cannot help but make analogy to the scandal that has passed through the Church like wildfire, going from diocese to diocese, each day a new media report on an accused priest or bishop. And I cannot help but think its cause has been the dryness of the trees, which, void of the water of the Spirit, have produced little fruit in this drought-stricken land.

And I cannot but hope for new life to come from the embers, cannot but hope the bishops hearing the stories of those abused and seeking to right the wrongs that have been done will bear fruit. I cannot but hope for a renewed, steadfast Church.

O Lord, send us cleansing rain.

11.

Hope for peace. Pray for its coming. The light of justice shine in your hearts.

Unite your soul with that of the Lord; may the Spirit overtake you.

Unto His kingdom all shall come, with His angels and saints. Songs of joy we shall sing in His heavenly presence.

The Day is not far from us. Turn to Him now in Truth. When it arrives you shall but smile, for all tears will be wiped away.

Now comes the shining of light. Now will be revealed the justice of our God. All His lambs shall be gathered home into His waiting arms.

12.

Has a turn come? On a dime will all change? Do we see the opening through which the angels may fly and bring to earth God's light?

The president makes a speech, a call for peace – a challenge to choose life. He refers to the conflict in the Middle East, but could as easily be referring to the culture of death upon his own country, enshrouding the world.

Appropriate indeed are Joshua's words, his challenge to the people: Choose life by serving God, or death by embracing His fallen minions. For in the span of a day the Pledge of Allegiance is deemed unconstitutional by a circuit court for the words "under God" in its text and then the ruling put on hold by the same judge who made it... even as vouchers for students to use at the school of their choice are declared constitutional by the Supreme Court. (They had been thought not so since many are used at parochial schools.)

Has justice come? Is the door of truth and "common sense" as the president says – quoting the Declaration of Independence' reference to our rights coming from God, the Creator – now opening? And all the members of Congress stand and pledge allegiance, a daily moment usually sparsely attended.

Is it time, finally, to wake from sleep and declare our dependence on God? And may all the world follow suit, unashamed of His Name, embracing His love – living according to His grace and justice.

Epilogue

All the world does fall apart, but it shall be put back together again. In addition to the crisis in the Church there is one in Business as well, as scandal follows upon scandal among the biggest companies. Science seeks to manipulate life, controlling our genes and cloning, using human embryos, the seed of life, as if it were so much putty. Yes, hell threatens to break out among us, a violence perhaps best characterized by the warring brothers in the Middle East.

But it is really against God we war. It is His presence and His truth from which we turn our faces. And so a moment of decision comes upon the earth and all of its people: Will we bow before the Lord of all and find the justice that is forgiveness, or harden our prideful hearts against His will and find the destruction our hands do wreak, the justice that is our own.

My prayer is for all to turn to His light and peace, His justice and life.

June 28, 2002 – morning

St. Anthony's, Union City

(alone before the exposed Blessed Sacrament
in a small chapel)