

St. Michael's Notebook

in Four Parts

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Part One

St. Michael's Notebook

"St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him we humbly pray and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."

Under thy protection I place this writing.

Guide it unto all truth.

May thy sword cut away all that is not of the LORD.

conceived 3/4/03

Brief Note

This work was composed on successive Tuesday mornings before the exposed Blessed Sacrament in St. Michael's Church, Jersey City, New Jersey.

A statue of St. Michael, sword in hand, stood nearby.

Tuesday, 3/11/03...

The Sword

I feel the sword of truth pierce my soul,
separating soul from spirit,
bone from marrow.

Through my throat and lungs it travels;
like the nails which fixed our Lord to the cross,
so does it penetrate my bowels,
this truth.

There is no escape, my friend,
from the light of Christ
or His Angel's sword;
through it now you must pass
to find the Paradise.

Here beside a statue of the LORD's winged messenger
I sit in a church that bears his name:

 "Who is like God" -
 none is as HE IS,
 but all His faithful He makes as Himself.

May the Angel's shield defend me,
 and his sword destroy all sin...
Let the evil one flee from me,
 as I am called to the throne
 where Jesus now sits on this altar.

To Pray

What greater call can there be
than to rest in the presence of the Lord?
What harder work can one accomplish -
what could be more fruitful?

This above all He calls us to: to pray.

And so in prayer to unite with Him.
So in prayer to share His graces.
In prayer we are filled with His Word,
with His Most Holy Presence,
and like a river must spread this love
wherever we travel.

I can hear now in the steam of the heat
rising from these radiators
in this old church,
the river flowing to the ends of the earth,
pouring like rain upon the land of our birth;
the river comes from and returns to heaven.

There is nothing left to say: silence takes over
as the Blood of Christ touches our palate,
and we die in His glory.

St. Michael,
Do you remain nearby.

Do not fly like the bird past the stained glass window,
away from my sight.

Let me see you, let me know you,
Dear Michael,
who are so far beyond my eyes.

I have need of your sword to pierce my heart.
Stay nearby.

The Last Drop

Once I approached the Cup,
in prayer questioning if there would be anything remaining
for me,
 a sinner so undeserving.
I was last in line.

All else drank as they desired,
 but as I stood waiting,
 the one holding my life in her hands
 leaned the cup to one side,
 looking for a trace of blood.
Another passed between us.

I bowed my head, but heard:
 "A drop left" -
and from the walls of that sacred palace
I drew my King unto my tongue,
 and found the redemption He'd won.

3/18/03...

Without the Angel to guard us,
so soon would we wander,
for we are all but sinners -
but miserable creatures.

Evil ever we would open our hearts to;
ajar we ever leave the door...
and he needs but little space to enter
and take control of our souls.

And so for the preservation of our salvation,
we must call the Angel near,
that never we shall know the loss of redemption,
that never we fall into the pit again.

The Worst of Sinners

I am he. No one else.
No one else is as sinful as I am;
no one has a soul so black.
My pride assures my downfall;
my lust gives the devil matter.

But he seems so holy, you might say.
I have seen him in prayer.
But you see only that which is without;
your eyes cannot peer within.

But you have not murdered, you have not committed
adultery...
you might insist on arguing.
Have I not? Then is the Lord a liar
when He says that anger is killing,
that a look makes us impure.

Oh, but all... Stop there, my friend.
You have no discernment, and you do not see that
to which I am called,
to which all are called.

You belittle the corruption inside me
which would keep me the worst sinner of all.

If there is no truth, there is no life;
and so the sword is needed.

If we do not cut back that which is rotten,
it shall fester and overtake whatever is good.

And we shall be left with nothing
but a mass of blackened,
dying matter.

The Spirit we should then never know.

Lent 2003

We are dust. Nothing more.
Only this and nothing more.
Dust.

We should think ourselves nothing more than this,
and nothing less -
for we are not spirit as our *God* is.

We are dust, but dust.
But of dust *God* can make a creature,
a man in His image,
if he remember
he is but dust.

O Blessed Angel,
you stand there with sword in hand
and I sit here
so far away it seems.

Come closer, my Protection.
Reach across the chasm that separates
we creatures of the Divinity.
Let us work as one to do the Father's will.

I give you my spirit, O Spirit,
that it shall be made whole by thee.

Arm of the Lord, be with me.

The Annunciation

Today I have vowed my allegiance
to the Blessed Mother
and taken her ring upon my finger
as proof of this marriage.

And it is true what the saint says -
in her hands all becomes easy:
even as I receive Communion prayerfully,
I see it is she who receives for me.

All is indeed done through her;
on her we should depend...
in faith this truth comes to me now -
I pray it shall ever remain.

In Mary is the Word made flesh.

O Mother of my Lord and my Mother,
pray the Angel's sword
shall ever guard my way.

In you I find the peace I need
and find myself safe from all sin -
may your presence never leave me.

Wrap me in the swaddling clothes,
carry me in your womb -
surround me now with your love
and let your wisdom lead me forth.

Heart, Mind, Soul, and Strength

All must be given to Him;
nothing can be held back.
If your heart you do not give to God,
your offering will fall short.

In your heart must be only love,
no judgment of others or yourself;
In your mind must be the Lord's true wisdom,
that all your work will be blessed
and bear fruit unto heaven.

Your soul must be set in peace,
with no fitful anxiety or pride
(you are one with all others);
and your body must be strong -
cast out sloth and gluttony.

Then, above all, be chaste:
be wed unto the Father alone.
Whatever your state in life,
in Him your spirit must make its home.

How shall we find our way to God?
By what channel shall we pass?
She will conduct you to Him,
with the Spirit standing watch.

As He has come to us by her,
so we reach Him by this passageway...
and find thereby the perfection we seek,
in fullness of His grace.

The Angel of God smiles upon this chosen one;
joining her affirmation with our own,
we shall reach our home.

In the Wake of the Annunciation

All our "yes"es follow her "yes";
all our wills join to the Lord's own
in the wake of the Annunciation -
we could not be Christian otherwise.

Here is the call to accept His will;
here is the Angel speaking:
there is but one voice that calls us all,
and to her heart it is first spoken.

Her "yes" brings the Lord into all our lives;
her will makes His birth possible -
and now every soul does offer praise
by virtue of her proclamation.

We all follow in the wake of the Annunciation;
in us, too, now Jesus is born...
but she is first, by the will of God,
and we are all her children.

O Spirit, O Michael,
Guard our souls
From all that is not of Jesus.

She Carries Me To Communion

In her arms
 she carries me to Communion;
With her risen Lord
 she makes a place for me.

Without her
 I could not approach Him -
Apart from her love and wisdom,
 the sword would vanquish me.

For I am indeed but a sinner,
 but she is formed in purity,
and so like her Lord that there is no division
 between our Lady and Him who has set us free.

And so, to her I come as I approach Him,
 begging her to receive for me,
that this poor, lowly sinner might be welcome
 with all the saints in eternity.

Sweet is your sword, dear Michael,
to those prepared by the grace of God;
those held in the arms of the Blessed Mother
bleed only unto eternal life.

As a sword pierced her soul,
so it pierces our own
when she is standing by;
and the sword brings the soul to salvation
when sweetened by her precious eye.

And so, dear Michael,
let thy sword fly
to separate soul from spirit,
for the Mother of us all watches over
and with her I know the grace of God.

In This Land...

In this land we kill
the child in the womb
rather than face the life
that would have been.

In this land we prefer death
to compassion for the sick and elderly,
for of what worth is such a life
that has no utility.

In this land we worship
the works of our hands;
"In God We Trust" is written not on our hearts
but on our dollar bills alone.

In this land we must not speak
His Name in any place of learning;
our children must not be taught to know Him -
better their eyes view pornography.

In the end this land will disappear,
yet He will remain -
then where shall we find ourselves,
who have made our home
in this land?

The flesh is cut away -
it dies; it cannot live.

The Spirit is all that remains,
bringing life to all in Christ...
in His flesh we are redeemed.

And so, hold not to this earthen vessel
or with it you shall be broken;
but as the sword of the Spirit comes speaking,
comes piercing,
leave what is not eternal.

Only Heaven Matters

All else is illusion, a passing image...
no more than a watch in the night.
Let us keep our eye upon
the Lord's transcendent presence.

Here He stands, here He waits,
for us to turn from blindness -
in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood
He calls us all to heaven.

See Him now upon the altar;
His sacrifice is clear -
He has laid down His body
to lift us far away from here.

All around the Spirit is breathing
light upon all souls aflame -
From the ashes the truth of all ages rises:
Heaven is our only home.

In this Bread, this bread of angels,
We taste our everlasting home.
We come there now, even in this mortal coil,
and find secure our promised room.

Incarnate is the Lord now;
Here in our midst He stays,
And will not leave us before the end of the ages...
in body and soul He remains.

Do Not Leave

Do not leave the Lord's presence
carelessly or without concern;
He desires you to remain with Him
wherever you may be.

Do not think there is a place you will not find Him:
from one end of the earth to the other He is...
Hold Him fast within you;
speak always to your God.

"I love you, my son, my daughter,"
He says so compassionately.
To all He would reveal His kingdom
and find you sharing in His glory.

Love lasts. Do not leave.
There is no other place to go.

4/18/03...

O dear St. Michael,
when afflicted by temptations,
when afflicted by sin,
 withhold thy sword not from me.

On it I shall depend
 to save my soul from condemnation,
 from separation from the Almighty God:
 without it where should I be?

I give thee all permission -
 let the sword of the Spirit
 cut away all that is not from thy King.

Adoremus

Here before the altar of the Lord
the angels sing the praises
of our Almighty King.

Gathered 'round His throne
they never cease their adoration -
they find their all in Him.

And we too join with voices lifted,
with hearts aflame,
raising our shouts of joy with them.

And all this in silence,
in the silence of the Word.
Alleluia!

How short the time
we have upon this earth,
yet how long it can seem to be
if apart from thee.

O Lord, forever we would praise thy Name;
for eternity we would stand before thy glory,
yet here we sit in imperfect adoration,
in our limited exultation.

Yet a sense of the eternal reign
falls upon our failing minds -
a light of grace you do provide
to keep us here alive.

Till the Day we come to thee,
never leave us, dear Jesus.

Rising Steam

This well-heated water
rises like the angels' wings
unto heavenly glory.

Its sound in my ears,
filling my eyes,
enables me to grasp
the rising light.

It fills me, the Spirit of
the healing water,
our baptism -
as if in an expansive sea
I am washed clean.

Let the Spirit upon the waters envelop thee.
(In this hour I have confessed my sin.)

Faithfully He bears our sins.
The Lord Jesus is our salvation.
Every hour of every day,
let us remember Him.

I Lift My Eyes

I lift my eyes up unto heaven,
unto the ceiling of this church -
from Jesus to Jesus they go...
 from the altar to the clouds of heaven,
 all is of the only Son.

My eyes rise up from this page
and I see -
 I see Him who has died for me.
And this vision raises my mind to heaven.

There is a light at the center of my skull
when I gaze upon the Lord,
 when in grace I look upon His presence...

and then my eyes can but rise to heaven.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit,
into your light this black-brown earth
that is me.

Stay

How shall I stay here with you, Lord;
How shall I never leave,
 when I come to this church but once a week?

Though every day I do receive you,
every day I seem to forget you're with me.
Though an hour in your arms,
here in your presence,
here where your light so faithfully shines
I remain each morning...
 yet how quickly the cloud can pass away.

Stay, Lord. Stay with me.
Let me ever stay with thee.

I love you.

You, dear Michael,
must bring your sword to bear,

else I shall too soon pass
from here,

else too soon I shall forget

the Lord's presence everywhere.

Through the Night

The sword passes through the night,
through the dark of night,
bringing light
to the heart.

Here where darkness reigns,
here where the hour has come,
the devil indeed seems to reign.

But just then
the Lord lifts up
the sword He has held hidden
so long.

Just at this time
the truth does come
to lead all just souls home.

O Lord, in this dungeon
leave us not alone,
but transport us to thy grace;

for we here below
long eternally
to look upon thy face.

The Winged Messenger

Swiftly he flies to our rescue
at a word breathed forth
by the Lord.

Quickly he comes to stand by our side,
the Angel in whose hand
is the sword.

Michael, our protector,
Michael, our defender,
May you do the will of your God -

That we might be freed
From the snares in our path
And know Him as our own.

He rides on angels' wings
and the clouds of heaven
do His bidding.

None is there apart from His power
for He is the Spirit
of all the living.

Light

Light breaks upon us now;
salvation buds forth.
Even in this darkness we begin to know
that He has come to this earth.

Though it seems we have little hope,
though all we see around us in these days
is death,
is the encroaching darkness...

Only light,
only light shall remain -
and it shall be quick to come.
(Fear not, my brother, my sister...

Soon, very soon.)

Thank you, Lord, for the grace of your comfort;
in time of trial you are there...
you are here with us this day.

Open our eyes to see your light,
only your light.

Angelic Voices

From the heavens I hear angelic voices sing,
carrying the Lord's Spirit forth.

To the ends of the earth,
surrounding this church...

Here they bring His peace;
to our hearts they bring His light.

Our souls are anointed by their words,
by the music they chant
for our sakes.

4/22/03...

Fill the silence with your voices;
O angels of *God*, rejoice!
There is never a moment
you are apart from Him,
never a time when you do not sing.

Let us hear you even where we sit.

Oh the Persistence of Sin!

Even in these Easter days,
sin persists;
it seeks to drag us down
into the mud of our existence.

Even as the sun shines,
a new day dawning,
the devil is plotting destruction
for future moments of weakness.

And so, ever we must be on our guard;
ever do we need the sword
to cut away
the stain in which the devil rejoices.

Yes, come with your sword, dear Michael,
and guard us well.

Take up that power given you on high;
for we below are in need of thy protection,
even in the brightest of our days
on earth.

Let Us Read Your Word, O Lord

Let us read your Word, O Lord;
let us hear the beating of your heart.
Let your voice pierce our souls,
that from your side we shall never depart.

Let not the preacher be silent
in the face of the world's corruption;
let not the priest cover the Spirit
for fear of earthly powers' detection.

Write a letter of truth upon our hearts,
and in the pages of holy books.
Let all read well what is written there,
that none will drink from poisoned brooks.

Let pure water be ours in the fire of the Spirit.

You speak to us so clearly, Lord,
from your place upon the altar,
but our ears are so deaf to your call -
how we need to be taught not to falter!

And so all righteous souls seek thy instruction,
that somehow through the meandering roads of this life
they might find the holy way open...
and avoid the surrounding emptiness and strife.

In This Day

In this day we celebrate
the resurrection of our Lord,
the manifestation of our God
and His power over all darkness...

In this day the light does come
to banish fear from our hearts,
to banish sin from our souls -
to bless us and make us whole...

Yet there is that trace of the devil's clawprint
needing to be rooted from our midst;
though the Lord has already removed him,
still in our weakness we feel him enter in.

But in this day in its fullness,
in this day as it is...
when we look finally upon the face of God,
no darkness shall remain.

This and this alone I beg, O Lord,
from thy gracious hand:
let me draw ever closer
to the Promised Land...

Where I shall look upon your glory
and my gaze never turn away -
where with your saints and angels
I shall forever sing your praise.

Resting in the Spirit

Resting in the Spirit,
In Him we make our home.
Guided by His blessing,
We pray never to roam.

Far from the ranks of Jesus
Is only restlessness -
Apart from our Savior,
We shall ever be put to the test.

And if the fire of the Spirit
Be not our constant guide,
We shall find ourselves forsaken,
Wrested from our Lord's side.

Where it wills the wind does blow,
led only by the word of the Lord.
And we too must be so obedient
To every breath from the mouth of the Spirit.

God speaks and we must listen
And walk on even paths with Him.

Let Me Be Dead, O Lord

Let me be dead, O Lord,
To myself and all that holds me
To this earth.

Let me be dead, O Lord,
Free from every spirit that is not
Of thee.

Let not the darkness enter my soul,
This sin that sways us from remaining whole,
But let be destroyed
All that is diseased.

Let not distractions linger:
Let them be buried in your tomb
This day.

Sweet death,
the nailmarks in His hands and feet
and side,
the sword that cuts away all disease -

Oh darkness that brings such relief,
as the sun sets upon our sin -

O tomb of Christ,
in you let me take my refuge.

Joyful Morn

On that joyful morning,
the first streaks of sunlight
piercing the sky -

In that indescribable dawn,
our souls rise up shouting
from prison -

On that day we are reborn,
what words could match
our hearts ecstatic...

Only this can we manage to say,
with all the breath within us:
"He, the Lord, is risen!"

Only for this joyful morning,
only for the glory of this Easter day -
only for this and nothing more
do we live, and die, at all.

Wings, Flapping

I hear the wings of Michael
flapping in all sounds,
in all movement made
by anything around me.

In the pen upon the page,
in the papers shuffled;
in the keys lifted and cast
upon the table...

In people walking,
doors crashing,
voices rising...

In all this and my own breath,
the angel is so close -
the Spirit is upon me.

The wings of the angels
bleed in the sounds
of all movement.

The heartbeat of God is in all things.
(All is made in and through our Savior,
and through Him all continues in being.)

Listen for Him speaking
in the angels' wings.

Do Not Be Disconsolate

Do not be disconsolate
for the sins paraded before your eyes,
the moral collapse upon this generation.

Do not be terrified
at the chastisements that must come
to redeem a few from straying.

Do not lack faith, as others do,
when even within the House of the Lord
there are those who celebrate their shame and sin.

All these things will be, and more,
but the Spirit never leaves us.

Stand guard and give us strength,
dearest Michael,
against the forays of a darkened world.

Give us light to combat
the desecrations of the Lord and His Word.

Confidence instill in us
by the power of the Commander Spirit,
that none shall be lost on the day of trial,
but all rejoice in the kingdom.

If But One

If but one soul there were upon the earth
who did not grieve the Spirit;
If but one heart upon this plane
did love as God intended;
If but one mind had light
to discern the ways of justice...
 all would be saved -
 for then the Lord would have compassion.

And so we must rejoice this day
and turn from the path of destruction,
for in our midst is this One Man,
died for our sins and risen.
And by His Body He feeds us now, and eternally,
 with bread that will lift us up
 and make us one with the Father.

How I love you, my dear *God*,
for this gift you give me.
How can I thank you, Lord,
for the food you provide?

Though among the dead, you give us life,
and call us into your kingdom;
By your sacrifice you redeem our souls
to praise you in highest heaven.

Into Your Presence

Into your presence let us come,
let nothing hinder our entering.
Let sin and death be cast aside
by the sword of heaven.

Let no doubt inhibit our journey to you;
let no impediment of the devil stand in our way -
let our eyes be fixed upon your light
and our hearts set in your love.

Nothing there is to make the righteous stumble,
for the angels guard His pathways.

Along this road Satan sets up
traps to catch the traveler.
On this path snares he lays
to deter the passage of pilgrims.
Into a pit he would have us fall,
for he seeks company in his dark prison.

But vain are all his efforts indeed,
for the angels of God are greater than these -
and the Son the evil one cannot get near.

On Our Knees

On our knees we must come
Before the Lord of all;
From this place we shall prevent
A careless and deadly fall.

He is great and marvelous,
Though seated at our side;
And though we receive Him into our beings,
Still we must for mercy cry.

Do not presume or forget His greatness,
Lest you slip into the ditch;
Keep yourself carefully on your knees,
And in your soul you will preserve His graces.

There is no substitute for humility,
no way to realization of our salvation
without recognizing the dust we are.

For though called by *God* to oneness
with Him and His saints and angels,
yet ever we must have as our foundation
the humble earth from which we are made.

A Blind Eye

How often our vision is covered o'er
by the pale cast of sin,
 keeping us blind to His presence
 within and all around.

Like scales, like a suffocating glaze,
shining with the glamorous light
 of emptiness -
 in vain do we look upon Him.

And how soon our minds forget,
how quickly we turn from His grace...
 as if we'd never seen Him
 in His Sacrament.

Why does this fog come upon my vision?
Why do I fail to come to the light
and make my home there?

In the monsterness He waits patiently,
and to my soul He has just come...
but do I welcome Him?

Christ, True Light

Descend upon us, Christ, True Light;
in this state of exile, leave us not alone.
You who have deigned to be our very brother,
lift us up to where you are.

Not here, but by your Father's side
let us sit, in the light of eternity.
To us you come and with us you remain -
with you let us commune.

Dispel the darkness of this earthly night;
let us know the heavenly glory,
O Christ, True Light,
Surpassing Radiance of the Father's Face...

An image in this light make us, dear Lord,
that we might be suffused with your grace.

Incomparable is the glory Jesus knows,
like in kind to that of the Father;
for one with Him He has ever been
and calls us now to be

Bathed in the light of eternity.
Alleluia.

Part Two

Colloquy

1.

Hell

Jesus, let me ask, if I may,
why are some souls condemned to hell?
Why need they suffer such torment if you are an all-good God?

Because I am an all-good God, James.

And so none can enter your presence that is not good?

Yes, James, none that rejects the light of goodness
can know anything but darkness.

But why, forgive me, have you made it possible
that some reject you and your goodness, Lord?

It is not God who makes it so, James;
it is the evil within the soul.

But why is the devil permitted to sow such evil,
and why has he himself fallen, O Lord?

It is the Father's will that all come to Him.
Know this, James, that He permits evil
only for the greater cause of good.

Shall evil then cease to exist?

It cannot cease to exist; it can only be cast from God's sight.

Into hell?

Yes, James. That the good might find the peace of heaven for which they were created.

Forgive me, Lord, and may your Angel be near to cut away any untoward thought, but, Lord, were the evil created for hell, then?

No, James. All were created for heaven.

Perhaps this is the torment they suffer, those who do not come to you... that they are intended for that which they reject.

Yes, James, this is its source.

James, you must remember the freedom that is God: He does what He wills and is who He will be - and He shares Himself with His creatures, much as He has shared me with you.

Yes, Lord, I am free, like my God.
And I praise you for this grace!

You could not praise Him so if you could not choose evil; if you had no choice, you would not know His light.

I begin to see, my Jesus. Let me always come to you.

2.

Purgatory

What is purgatory, Lord?

James, you know well what purgatory is;
it is how your sins are purged for heaven.

Yes, Lord. And we must be made pure to enter there,
to be with you eternally.

Yes, James.

3.

Heaven

What can you tell me of heaven, Lord?

Heaven is where you are intended to be, James.
It is your home, and the home of all God's children.

The Father desires all to be there with Him?

Yes, certainly.

Lord, may I come directly to you after death?

If you live faithfully here.

Am I doing so as it is?

The Father is pleased, James,
but you must seek more firmly His will.

Will you help me? What shall I do?

You must resolve to stay in His presence,
and then His presence shall not leave you.

O let me not forget! Teach me, Lord.
Lead me... Help me.

I will, James, but you must be obedient.
And kind.

Praise you, Jesus. I love you!
Let me be as you are.

4.

Purity

Mother, how shall I become as pure as you are,
as perfect in the eyes of God?
You are our great cause for rejoicing, our great hope.
But how shall we attain to your fullness of grace?

James, I love you. Jesus loves you.
The Father desires you to reach such beauty in His eyes.
The Spirit is with you to lead you. You need but trust.

May the Spirit breathe upon me, Mother.
May He wash clean from me all vestiges of sin.
I want to be like you; I want to be your son.

You shall be, James. The Lord will shine upon you.
But guard your eyes and your tongue.

Yes, Mother, may God forgive my straying heart and mind.
May He purify my soul. May my body be like thine own.

Breathe as one with the Spirit, James.
He will make you whole.

5.

Sacrifice

Why such utter sacrifice, my Lord? Why the wood of the cross?
Why did you need to suffer so? Why these nails in your hands
and the sword in your side?

I had to die, James.

But why? Why could you not have stayed in the Temple
at the age of twelve? Why could you not have continued
to teach the leaders and convert the people?
Why is the Hill of Golgotha necessary?

For the weakness of the flesh.

But when Joseph took your hand
and led you from the Temple
to your death in our human skin,
when your Mother fell to her knees before you,
a tear in her eye and a fear in her heart -
could you not have made them ready?
Could you not have but spoken a word to all your children
that we might have understood?

Only in flesh and only in blood
are eyes opened to truth, James.

Yes, Lord, but what a weight you bore,
and still bear in us...

But glory is at the end of this road, for all.

Let me share in your sacrifice, O Lord.

You shall, my son, you shall.
And love will be your own.

6/10/03...

6.

Love

Love, Lord. I wonder sometimes, what is love?
So often do I hear the word, but so little do I understand.

Of love I have just spoken, James.
You must lay down your life.

7.

The Way

But how, Lord? How do I lay down my life?
In what way?

Do not think too precisely of your call.
You understand it in your heart. I am with you.

It is you I must follow, I know...

Do not speak, James. Trust, in your heart.

8.

Sin

But my heart does seem too often to stray.
How can I know that I am with you?
Does not my sin keep me from your way?

Sin will indeed keep you from following me.
But my measurement of sin you must understand.

How do you measure, O Lord?

You know, James. You see well when your heart does stray -
you know the lustful glance that is against my will.
And you know well, too, of my forgiveness and grace,
and the way that my voice does lead you,
protecting you from serious sin.
Do not willfully sin, my son,
and I shall keep you from the devil.

9.

Marriage

Am I yet to marry, my Lord?
You have told me I have none but you and your Mother,
that I am wed to heaven, and yet...

And yet you hear me lead you to accept a woman
into your arms even here on earth.

Yes, Lord! Do you see my confusion?

I am trying to resolve your confusion, James.
Your confusion is deep and you do not understand
how sacred marriage is.
You do not see with eyes of heaven.

O Lord, forgive me! Teach me of your way.
Lead me on true paths to love.

Love, James. Love is where you began this day,
and love is where you shall now end. Love.
You must offer sacrifice.

Be with me, Jesus.

I am with you always.

Part Three

Following the Man with the Water Jar

“On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’ He sent two of His disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, “The Teacher says, ‘Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.’ The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.”

Mk. 14:12-16

**Between parishes, suspended animation...
Where shall I go to celebrate the Passover?
Where to attend Mass?**

**I shall follow the man with the water jar;
I shall trust in the word of the LORD,
day to day to lead me...
and by this I pray
each day's sacrifice
shall be offered anew.**

June 22, 2003

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ
(St. Nicholas Church, Jersey City, N.J.)

June 23 (anniversary of sister's death)
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

A general Confession of past sexual sin and offenses against woman precedes Mass. A rose taken from my sister's grave given to a blessed woman, with whom I then pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy before the Lord exposed on the altar. And there is a certain ecstasy; and there the silence is deep and whole. And here is the reconciliation.

And so I set out as Abram.

June 24 (Birth of John the Baptist)
St. John the Baptist Church, Jersey City

How many in the Church follow Lot to the land of Sodom.

On this the feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist I chastise a priest acquaintance for his ready acceptance of the abuses of Church teaching which surround this day, and close in.

Oh how the children mock their Mother!
Oh how the Spirit is grieved!

And Christ is crucified once more.

June 25 (anniversary of Medugorje messages)
Our Lady of Victories Church Chapel, Jersey City

"Putting into life" the Blessed Mother's messages brings joy in the midst of the sorrow and suffering of enduring a faithless generation. Though darkness envelop me, I know the word of my Mother is true, and I shall remain in prayer with her, that I might bear good fruit.

And the Church remains open long enough to complete my Joyful Mysteries, to look upon the Child Jesus with my sister in the Lord. (Oh the mystical wonder of our Rosary meditation!)

June 26
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

Houses shaken, houses standing... Strong preaching: when tested, faith is proven; otherwise one house looks much like another, since we cannot see the foundation.

Upon what are we set, rock or sand? Is it the will of God or our own we do? Let us not take matters into our own hands. Fail not to consult with the Lord before any decision. (How Abram fails to do this today.)

June 27 (Sacred Heart of Jesus)
Sacred Heart Cathedral Basilica, Newark

In weekly Confession I speak of the liturgical abuses I've witnessed, and the priest requests offering of Mass for all in the Church to work together to serve God well... then proceeds in his Mass following to omit the first reading and half of the second. I cannot stay.

But in Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral Basilica later, the preaching is strong (and all readings are said), and a seminarian afterward assures me he knows many holy priests and that the Lord will not abandon the Church. This I know, but this country seems set upon demeaning the faith at every turn.

O Lord, the blood and water from your side pour upon your Spouse.

June 28 (Immaculate Heart of Mary)
St. Nicholas Church, Jersey City

On this day we commemorate the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I fail to go to a Marian church, coming instead to a Mass for healing. Yet it is ironic that the psalm for the day is Mary's Magnificat; and so she is recognized anyway.

May the faith of the Church find healing by the grace of our Lord and the intercession of His Blessed Mother.

June 29 (Sts. Peter and Paul)
Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Hoboken

Things get only more troubling, as a priest prays for an end to bias against sexual orientation at a certain church, and again I must depart, not in communion with his teaching. Not until evening do I receive.

Is there no adherence to the faith of Peter, the faith of the apostles, the faith of the Catholic Church? Where are we without the truth that comes from on high? Certainly we are not heavenly.

June 30 (First Martyrs of the Church of Rome)
Our Lady of Victories Church Chapel, Jersey City

My prayer is that if the whole city cannot be saved, at least the Lord might spare the one to whom I speak the words He gives me. (That this reading should appear today is quite remarkable.)

I must be silent now, after again being moved to Confession for any criticism undue. I must trust that He will act, will complete what I have failed to accomplish – and simply follow in His way. (May prayer be my daily practice, as the Blessed Mother instructs.)

July 1 (Bl. Junipero Serra)
Our Lady of Victories Church Chapel, Jersey City

Today we hear of Lot's escape from the destruction of Sodom, to which I had alluded in a prayer (a letter) to a woman just two days before. I have left Sodom; I must not look back.

Forward the Lord leads me now. I cannot say who will follow. I pray now only for peace. (And the Lord has pity on me, His poor, faithless child.)

July 2
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Priest addresses the irony I had noticed: at this time when peace seems more a possibility in the Middle East than it has been for some time, so we hear of the beginnings of the division between the sons of Abraham. Yes, how the Scriptures are played out in our day.

And the Lord hears my own cries this day, bringing answer to my prayer, healing my wounded soul.

July 3 (St. Thomas)
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

Love of enemies is integral to keeping faith in Christ, for this is who He is. And so I pray for those by whom I have been wounded, and whom I may have wounded by my words that were not of prayer or love. And in this is a release from troubles; in this is the peace of healing – in this is understanding of the others, with a forgiveness, and, I pray, forgiveness for myself.

Indeed we cannot judge another. (Thank you for the light of reconciliation, O Lord.)

July 4 (First Friday/ U.S.A. Independence Day)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Welcoming to all, we Christians must be – not judging, not condemning others in our hearts, but praying for them, and leading them as necessary to the truth, to good health.

I pray the little Pharisee in me might die, that Christ's love might pour forth from me for all those in need, all those who seek faith in Him. May it be Him I follow; to Him let me be wed.

July 5 (First Saturday)
St Aedan's Church, Jersey City

What do we eat? Do we eat the Body and Blood of Christ, or do we feed the belly? Are we spiritual men, or physical?

The Lord's blessing is upon the spiritual man; to him does His Word go. It is the new covenant by which we must bind ourselves.

I write for you, O Lord.

July 6 (14th Sun. B)
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

I watch a man carry a full flask of wine to the altar at offertory time in the charismatic church I attend (a two-hour plus) Mass. The priest preaches the need to speak the truth, to go on the offensive, not to go along with the spirit of the age... and there is later a prophecy to speak only the word the Lord gives.

I am published for the first time in a Catholic newspaper dated today, and give my book, *Our Daily Bread*, to the above priest through a woman who serves with him.

Lord, your words alone, and all of them.

July 7
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Jacob's stairs lead to heaven; set on earth, they rise to the highest realm. And here in the Sacrament is that path fulfilled – the Lord's sacred Body is our way to the kingdom. For He is present there. Upon Him the angels ascend and descend. Here He reaches down to us to lift us up to where He is... to raise us to life with the Father.

Does the Lord bring me another special gift as well, a gift of His love – a woman's heart? Or am I distracted again?

July 8
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

The Lord opens my mouth and sets my tongue on fire with the Spirit as I speak with my woman friend about the dangers surrounding her in her parish, and how they might enter in.

There is a struggle here, with God and men, but as the priest says this morning – in God we are strong, and our battling is by prayer. By prayer we can prevail upon Him. Though always weak in His sight, He can make us strong in facing the world.

July 9
St. Aloysius Convent Chapel, Jersey City

After Mass (and the devotional prayers to Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, said in this full chapel) an elderly woman comes to me as I finish my Rosary and says, "You are a special child of God. From this day forth I shall pray for you." I am quite overwhelmed and touch and kiss her cheek. She says that we need good examples, referring, I suppose, to my praying of the Stations before Mass.

And only a few weeks before, an elderly Polish (Capuchin) priest – whose difficulties walking, etc. reminded me of our own Pope's struggles against the ravages of time and the body's limitations – said to me after Mass as I spoke to a friend outside in the sun: "You are a man of wisdom" as he traced a circle upon my forehead... How can I deserve such blessings?

July 10
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

My mother arrives here for a month-long stay. I pray I shall give her welcome and this time shall be a blessing for us both – that God have good purpose in this and I fully accept His will.

O my Lord and Lady, watch over this house, that we might be fed well and there be no famine among us. Your wisdom and patience be known in me.

July 11 (St. Benedict)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

As I read a second column I'd written in a Catholic newspaper and see how much the words have been altered and added to, I wonder if I have been true to the inspiration of the Spirit by publishing in this way...

And perhaps the hermit cannot marry.

In this land of exile, watch over me, Lord, that after death I may find your blessing.

July 12 (BVM)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Words of reconciliation this morning, in homily, in petitions, in this place. A strong spirit upon me in prayer alone afterwards.

Does the Lord now call me to be thoroughly dead to myself? Is He founding that spirit now in me?

In His Spirit may I rise, and may He bless His every child.

July 13
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

There is a call for "new enthusiasm and joy" in the Blessed Mother's most recent message from Medugorje. Could she be calling me to attendance at this most charismatic of parishes? (And today I hear that the Friars of the Renewal – to whom I once thought myself called – will soon open a house near this church.)

I cannot say for certain, but I can say I yet need patience, and trust in the Lord. We must *receive* His Spirit, receive it as a gift. (When we speak His NAME – YHWH – it is He who speaks, not we, *for He silences our tongues.*) And we must watch the Spirit act in our lives, watch it grow, even as Mary watched Jesus grow within her and before her.

July 14 (Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha)
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

Today I find myself with a lot of work (re teaching at a local college) and with little rest, but indeed the Lord is faithful and I am strengthened, accomplishing all without weariness.

Why should we fear whatever cross lay before us? Why have we not faith that the Lord will carry us through any troubles? Why do we not keep Him first and find that He thereby takes care of all things?

July 15 (St. Bonaventure)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

If the miracles done in us had been done in Sodom, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. The priest points out that this could indeed refer to us of the Catholic faith and the great grace of the sacraments we receive – yet do we realize the gift upon us?

And how I fail to recognize the great gift given me in understanding the NAME of God, failing to come into His presence in prayer. To new enthusiasm and joy I am called, but instead I seem to sleep.

May we come with St. Bonaventure to gaze upon the face of God.

July 16 (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel)
St. Aloysius Convent Chapel, Jersey City

On this the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, dozens of souls sing to the Blessed Mother in this small chapel as I pray my Joyful Mysteries. We are children of one Father, children of one Mother. And His glory is not far from any of us.

And abortion debate in college class shows many young students to be pro-life. May there be yet hope for a fallen world, whose even Catholic countries promote promiscuity.

July 17
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

His NAME He gives to us for all generations; and this WORD, His Presence, He calls me to remember always.

How shall I find the patience needed to remain with Him always? As I trust in Him my burden is light. As I allow Him to drive my car, to guide my steps, I have no worry.

May it ever be His work I accomplish. May He accomplish all things in me.

July 18 (St. Camillis de Lellis)
Holy Rosary Church, Jersey City

As I pray my Stations of the Cross (for plenary indulgence) this morning before Mass, I sense the presence of the Giant. How immense is the intercession of the Blessed Mother, how immense the prayers of the Holy Father – for how immense is the mercy of the Lord, so much larger than we ourselves.

And later before the Sacrament in exposition, I offer the woman in front of me into the Lord's hands, into the Blessed Mother's arms, praying to take her pain, that the light of the Lord might shine upon her and within her.

Wipe away the tears of sorrow; He is near.

July 19 (BVM)
St. Paul of the Cross Convent Chapel, Jersey City

How evident is the split in the Church this morning at Mass. In front of me is an elderly woman with hair covered who kneels while the rest of us are standing – for opening prayers, the readings, sign of peace, etc. – and must emphatically state “*my soul* shall be healed” instead of “*I*” (a change I believe is in the process of being made but which she has insisted upon doing for some time, conflicting with what all else say). And behind me is an elderly sister who long ago abandoned her habit and cannot say the male pronoun “He” when referring to the LORD but must substitute “God” wherever it appears – again, against what is prescribed and what the rest of the faithful say. And neither shows obedience to the Church. (Will the Lord look upon my tears?)

July 20 (16th Sun. B)
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

Oh how the shepherds have abandoned the flock! How they thirst for teaching with famished souls, but are left dry. And how the devil picks off one after the other on the edges of the fold.

Why is the Word not preached (as even I hear it today)? How can there be faith if we do not hear the word of God? It cannot be so. And so my tears are my bread. For a people dying with the wayward world I cry: Please, O Lord, save us!

July 21 (St. Lawrence of Brindisi)
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

Like a beating heart, we must go out to the world as sent, yet continually return to the altar of God for nourishment. But the blood must be pure; it must admit no taint of the world.

There is a certain agony upon my soul for the desecration of the Body of Christ, and how I must wipe such dust from my feet.

The priest grasps the standing crucifix as he proclaims the gospel and calls us to go forth and then return, as the blood flowing from the heart.

July 22 (St. Mary Magdalene)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Repenting of sin we shall look upon His face, as has Mary Magdalene. All our guilt will be drowned in the sea and we shall become the Lord's holy family.

Violent thunderstorms roll through the area throughout the afternoon. My phone line is cut so I can't respond by e-mail to an error-ridden column published with my name... Patience.

Let us set our spirits on Him whom our heart loves.

July 23 (St. Bridget of Sweden)
St. Aloysius Convent Chapel, Jersey City

In accord with the priest's call to find the depth of soul necessary to know Jesus well, my times of prayer indeed are profound this day, His presence with me as I give myself to being with Him. Here, really, is my salvation, is where I shall bear fruit.

"May prayer be your daily practice." May it be deep and true and consistent. On this day (actually two days) before a new message comes from Medugorje, I glean the meaning of the current one: Prayer is the bread I must eat.

July 24
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

We have seen Him, and now may be at rest with the prophet Simeon. His glory has shone, and our eyes have been opened. What need we fear?

I kneel and lie prostrate and sit before my Eucharistic Lord as I meditate on and pray the Joyful Mysteries after Mass this morning, and He is near; and my vision is clear. And I am most comfortable in His presence.

July 25 (St. James)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Praying the Stations before morning Mass on this the feast of St. James, the first apostle martyred for the faith, I find an understanding not only of the centrality of the cross in all our lives, but of the Trinity itself. What has the Son come to do but to die? And why does He do so but that it is the Father's will? And how could it be accomplished except by the Spirit's power?

The Father, the Logos, the WORD, desires His Son's death because He desires our own death, our death to ourselves, to our flesh, to the world, that he might draw us unto Himself, unto Life, in the encompassing Light of the Holy Spirit. And so we must die.

Forcefully the priest speaks of the necessity of the cross, that it is the only way to conquer our sin and come to God's glory.

July 26 (Sts. Joachim and Anne)
St. Paul of the Cross Convent Chapel, Jersey City

The weeds should not be pulled up. Not today. Not now. Final condemnation cannot come from us, but from God only, and that at the end of time. Let us not judge our neighbor.

The priest rightly compares this gospel parable to the desire of James and John to call down fire upon the towns that would not welcome Jesus – but Jesus rebukes them. He has come now to die, not to judge. When He returns it will be to judge.

This does not mean, however, that we are free from correcting one another, and ourselves; it is most necessary that we do this in this time, that we might avoid God's wrath on the last day. It is condemnation we must avoid: not condemning others now, and finding salvation by turning from sin while encouraging others to do the same (though the change must come from within, as the priest also wisely says, and not be imposed from without).

July 27 (17th Sun. B)
Queen of Peace Church, North Arlington

Led to pick up my mother at my aunt's house and take her to this nearby church, I seek, too, the peace of which the Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, speaks in her message... and the love we are called to witness.

And though all seems well in a busy day as I encounter various people, I see not how I am forgetful of the Lord. The devil is not easily overcome; we must be steady witnesses to God's abundant love. Then the peace, which in communion we find – which upon receiving lately, my Queen promises me, calls me to accept – shall be ours.

July 28
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

So gradually we must grow unto the kingdom. So patiently we must wait. Not anxious or disbelieving as the Israelites, who took matters into their corrupted hands, but trusting in the Lord.

The Lord would teach me to give myself entirely to prayer for the time I am praying. Not to be anxious for its end or concerned for any other matters in my life. These will be cared for if I give myself to Him. After prayer providence will take care. Pray.

July 29 (St. Martha)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

I've begun reading St. Augustine's *Confessions*. He calls upon the Lord's mercy.

The Lord is kind and merciful, indeed. He has compassion on His wayward creatures. Yet He will judge those who stubbornly refuse to turn to Him.

Have mercy on my soul, O Lord.

July 30 (St. Peter Chrysologus)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

I believe I have found the man with the water jar, the place from which I am to find my direction.

There is water and blood that pour forth as light from the heart of Jesus in the image of Divine Mercy before which I pray. This morning as I seek confirmation of the church I am to attend Mass, despite the vain attempts of the devil to distract, the Lord blesses me with the sign of the cross. Confidently I go.

The kingdom of heaven is indeed a fine pearl to be sought with all one's heart.

July 31 (St. Ignatius of Loyola)
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

After Confession and Mass this morning, how real my meditation on the Joyful Mysteries becomes again as I pray before our exposed Lord. In each I see the touching of Mary's cheek – by the angel, by Elizabeth, by Jesus, by Simeon... and I cannot control my tears.

In the Finding of Jesus in the Temple I see Mary fall to her knees before Jesus as He sits among the teachers. He reaches His hand to her face, lifts her eyes to His and whispers so gently and with such love: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

And does our Lord not say the same to wayward man, who seems so universally to have forgotten that God is found in His Dwelling, in His Church?

August 1 (First Friday)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Yes, Mary is known to be His Mother, and how deep is the communion between this Mother and Child – how one they are! When their eyes meet, how well they see each other’s soul... the Son would have it no other way but that she who is as the Church He has come to save, she who is as we are called to be – she who precedes us in union by the Spirit with the only Son of the one Father – should know Him well. He hides not Himself from her, but a sword pierces her soul as well, and there is a crown upon her head.

All of us are called as His brothers and sisters through His Mother to wear the same crown she shares with her Lord by sharing in His holy cross. Then we shall celebrate the Feast of the New Jerusalem.

August 2 (First Saturday)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

We must indeed speak against the evils of this world: against divorce and remarriage, against abortion and contraception, against homosexuality and all fornication – these sexual sins are at the root of the culture of death.

Reading today of Pope Paul VI’s warnings, of St. Augustine’s confessions, and of course John the Baptist’s outcry.

Lead us not into temptation, O Lord. Deliver us from evil.

August 3 (18th Sun. B)
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

In addition to speaking of the holy NAME of God, that Jesus is the great “I AM”, the (Carmelite) priest confirms the understanding I have found of what it is to be wed spiritually.

He says that when we receive the Body of Christ, we unite not only with Jesus but with all those who are united to Him. This precisely defines my spiritual union with a sister in the Lord. We have become one in the Spirit – she in me and I in her – by means of the Blessed Sacrament.

We are all united just so, brothers and sisters. And who can put this marriage of souls asunder?

August 4 (St. Mary John Vianney)
St. Anthony's Church Chapel, Union City

A remedial writing class, which I have been teaching for six weeks for incoming college students, culminates today as they take their placement essay test. It has not been easy to carry them as a foster-father and, though they seem generally to have learned well, I have not always been patient. My anxiety for them shows itself in a measure of anger today.

O Lord, let me commend them into your hands.

August 5 (Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary in Rome)
Our Lady of Victories Church Chapel, Jersey City

Miriam is made white as a leper and David cries for his own sins – and I must seek forgiveness from the one who intercedes for us with the Lord.

We must not presume upon the Lord and the graces we are given. His gifts must be respected, as must His chosen. Who is as meek as Moses? Who is there humble as Christ?

August 6 (the Transfiguration)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Jesus shines like light, more brightly than the sun, more purely, more perfectly... To see this light, to dwell in this light – to pitch our tents in His presence – we must die, die to self and the world and the devil: we must live.

He lives in us; let us come to Him. His glory is indeed near.

August 7 (St. Sixtus II and his companions)
Holy Rosary Church, Jersey City

Sanctity. To show forth the Lord's sanctity. To maintain His grace within us by genuine devotion to His Name.

Laying down our lives, simply, without concern for the things of this world, for its suffering and dying...

Quietly, almost imperceptibly, we must come to Him by the Church He has founded.

August 8 (St. Dominic)
St. Anne's Church, Jersey City

We must take up His cross, we must keep His statutes and commandments, if we are to find long life in the land, if we are to come to everlasting life in the kingdom.

I prostrate myself before the Lord, offering all of my life to Him, begging Him to accept this sacrifice, to guide my days. I would my whole life were a prayer of incense before Him.

Yes, I speak to the exposed Sacrament while alone in a small chapel, and He answers. Will I listen? Will I remember His NAME? "Do not be afraid. I love you." And I love you, my Lord.

August 9 (BVM)
St. Paul of the Cross Convent Chapel, Jersey City

I must confess to forgetting the Lord, not remembering His Name – not remaining in prayer... and a little closer He comes, a little closer I stay.

And would He have me begin an order on the Divine NAME, that so many of the lost souls of this world might find peace, might find recollection... might find God?

Into your holy hands let me put all things, O Lord, in faith.

August 10 (19th Sun. B)
St. Nicholas Church, Jersey City

The priest speaks of the Eucharist as the food which sustains us through difficult times (a thought that had already been on my mind as I listened to the first reading about Elijah's despair and strengthening, upon which the priest keys); and he also makes clear that homosexual acts (as all sexual acts outside marriage) are always morally wrong.

But I overeat of the food of this world and my own pride – and so do not find rest in Christ. (And will the woman still in the church from which I have escaped find her own release?)

August 11 (St. Clare)
St. Francis Hospital Chapel, Jersey City

This holy virgin gave up all things to follow Jesus; her way of life she placed in God's hands, striving to serve Him in all things. Oh to be as she was!

Poverty I thirst for, though it seems to elude me. It is in the order of prayer, beginning with waking at 2:00, I will find it.

Take all things from me, Lord. Be my only treasure.

August 12
St. Mary's Hospital Chapel, Hoboken

How I yet need to be lowly before the Lord; how I am yet unworthy to be called His son. I am not an obedient child in His presence.

Continued and compounded problems with computer (six hours on the phone, back and forth to service center...) cause me to become forgetful of God, forgetful of prayer – I fail to trust in Him, to bring all things before Him, to be His child.

There is a willfulness that is not childlike. Only trust in the Lord will strengthen us for any battle, will enable us to carry any cross.

August 13 (Sts. Pontian and Hippolytus)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Priest speaks well of the difficulty of brotherly correction, of bringing another's faults to light, not in accusatory fashion or in gossip, but in love.

The people seem to listen attentively, reflectively, to his words on the need for parents to correct children, priests to correct their flock, spouses one another, etc.

It is in this way we will defeat the devil, and the Church will be built up.

August 14 (St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe)
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

My mother flies home early this morning. Confession and Mass, then three funerals I pass as I drive along. Another delivery of computer to service center – “You have patience,” the worker says. I have it not, but I am learning it (and to forgive).

This afternoon the lights go out: a blackout covering much of the northeastern United States. It is another test, another blessed opportunity to exhibit patient endurance. But I do not see it this way and do not pass: I falter in fear and do not maintain prayer. (Should there not now be an emergent need for this, as well as any security or medical force?) And so, how shall I bear up on the last day, a soul as weak as my own?

(I write this at dawn of the next day – electricity still out.)

We must be prepared as Maximilian Kolbe.

August 15 (the Assumption)
St. Aedan's Church, Jersey City

Oh to be as she was! Incorruptible, pure, holy. I pray I may begin to walk that path this day: As I receive the Lord's Body, my mind become as His own, that the light she knew, that the light she is, I may share in as well.

When will the light go on in my mind, shining in my eyes and hands, and tongue?

August 16 (St. Stephen of Hungary)
St. Paul of the Cross Convent Chapel, Jersey City

The priest blesses us three times: at the end of Mass, of course, but also during his homily and benediction time of Holy Hour. And so he imitates Jesus' laying His hands on the children.

Let us pray for one another. Let us offer each other into the hands of God. In His hands we are all blessed, while our own hands only make false gods.

It is my joy to offer a woman friend to Jesus and His mother this day.

August 17 (20th Sun. B)
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

Charismatic priest gives most powerful sermon on the Eucharist, on the complete communion with the Lord we are called to in the Blessed Sacrament. Tears I have as I pray with him for Jesus to come to me, as I surrender myself to the Lord...

Let us be pure of heart, brothers and sisters. Let us be pure of heart.

This is no symbol we receive.

August 18 (St. Jane Frances de Chantall)
Queen of Peace Church, North Arlington

We are all called to perfection, for we are all called to Christ as our one, true God. There is no other way.

Stained glass windows of the Joyful Mysteries, Mary on her knees, surround us in convent chapel as we pray these same mysteries before our Eucharistic Lord.

Let the joy of the Lord go forth through all the world!

August 19 (St. John Eudes)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Today I see a sister I have not seen for several months – may God bless her. May God bless all who give up everything to follow Him. And may I empty myself of all possessions, of all distractions, that I may follow Him so truly, that He might be with me.

O Lord, what is your call? Let it be accomplished by your Word. In your way let me walk; in your cross let me glory.

(Pieces of third part of a book organized and written out, by His grace.)

August 20 (St. Bernard)
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

Priest speaks well of St. Bernard and his (and others') devotion to the Blessed Mother: To Jesus through Mary – To Jesus through Mary – *To Jesus through Mary!*

Into the covenant of love let us come. Let us be set apart like the hermit who wrote the Salve Regina (like Bernard who composed the Memorare) to do the work of the Lord as He calls us, when He calls us, and so find our blessed reward.

Come, Lord Jesus, rule over us!

August 21 (St. Pius X)
Holy Rosary Church, Jersey City

We must offer our hearts to God, not just our actions. Our sacrifice must be true, must be in accord with God's will – must be of love.

I need the Lord's discernment on how I should offer myself to Him. Though He continue to bless my path to Mass each day, the wedding garment I have not fully founded.

Though I lay down my life, yet there is question re marriage, work (including computer I finally receive back from service), vocation... May the Lord gather me into His arms.

August 22 (Queenship of Mary)
Blue Army Chapel, Washington (N.J.)

A blessed day at this sacred Marian shrine. What holiness I sense upon entering the chapel – Sacrament exposed, incense in the air, sisters all around, Glorious Mysteries being prayed, Confessions heard... And how beautifully the priest speaks of our Queen, our Mother.

Walking the outdoor Stations, through the woods in the heat of the day with female companion, how all sin is washed away. Just being on the grounds of this place is a blessing.

O Mother, into your hands – into your hands I commend all things. Alleluia, my Queen, my hope, my love.

August 23 (St. Rose of Lima)
St. Paul of the Cross Convent Chapel, Jersey City

I carry heavy burdens all the day, helping childhood friend and family move from the block on which he and I have lived virtually all our lives. I bear up fine, but there is pain following... May it be of the cross of which St. Rose of Lima speaks in the Office today. And may the Lord bless my friend's new home.

Looking at the Sacrament, exposed – Do not fear; Jesus is here! And I see in my Rosary how Mary enters the sanctuary before us all; and Augustine speaks of the silence of God.

August 24 (21st Sun. B)
St. Antoninus Church, Newark

As the priest preaches so well, we who live in the wonder of the Lord, who eat His Body and drink His Blood – who believe in Him – become His sign for others in this world. For do we not become as He is?

After receiving Communion I kneel in the pew and allow Him to enter deeply within me, to overtake me, He the husband of my soul. We must be broken and poured out as He has been, as He is at every Mass.

August 25 (St. Louis)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Forgiveness from a sister – a heavenly grace!

What awaits us, brothers and sisters, in the heavenly gates? To what communion are we called already on earth by our sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ! We are one in the Spirit; we have but one Lord. And in receiving Him, He indeed becomes us.

There is a communion of saints.

August 26
St. Michael the Archangel Church, Bayonne

Filled with loot and lust, I fear I am. Is this not what the Lord sees when He looks upon my soul?
How shall I escape my presumption?

I do fear there is a dishonesty in me as I pursue a marital relationship. Has the Lord not told me I have no wife in this world? And in the process of this pursuit, do I not lose my soul, do I not turn from His will and forget His presence?

Oh that my motives were only pure, and that He were with me. Where is your wisdom, Lord?
Where is your cleansing? All I have is an outburst of anger.

August 27 (St. Monica)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

On this feast of St. Monica, she who poured out tears for her wayward son – who would become a great bishop of the Church – the priest speaks beautifully and clearly of the power of prayer, that we should not so much speak of God to others (to convert them) but speak to God of others. Has He not the power to do all things? And will He not listen?

A day of fasting and a return to work, to my call – to the Lord. I breathe a certain order, a certain wholeness. (Stay in communion with God.)

August 28 (St. Augustine)
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

Priest does not speak on Augustine or the readings, but discusses issue of monument of Ten Commandments being removed from a courthouse and the increasing marginalization of religion in America's secularist society.

How can a country ask God to bless it if it removes Him from itself, from the very institutions of school and law and business which define it? And when will this absurd irony be recognized and peacefully resolved?

I pray it shall not come too late.

August 29 (Beheading of John the Baptist)
Sts. Joseph and Michael Church, Union City

Each day must be lived as if it were our last, the priest emphasizes. For truly it might be, and truly we must be always ready for the coming of the Lord – for truly He is always coming to us.

The Lord knocks, but I do not listen. Anxious am I about so many things, particularly as I continue to struggle with my computer. But do I bring this and all else to Him?

And purity of life I must indeed find; His love and that of the Blessed Mother I must accept with all my heart, for it casts out all fear and all sin. (Shall I return now to a former parish?)

August 30
St. Nicholas School Chapel, Jersey City

A fruitful day on this Labor Day weekend – we hear the Parable of the Ten Talents, and the work the Lord gives me comes to the fore. I finally mail in the third in a series of three books (along with a redoing of the second) I am self-publishing; I receive another book (on readings for Mass) back from a priest with kind comments and helpful suggestions, and pass it to another priest – who emphasizes doing for others with what we have; continue typing other works... But I see the labor to which I am principally called is prayer (prayer for a deceased fellow Eucharistic minister, Rosary in line at post office...), and perhaps to found an order, a house of prayer.

And to this parish I believe I shall return, here where are my sister and my family. To this parish I must be wed.

August 31 (22nd Sun. B)
St. Nicholas Church, Jersey City

A relatively uneventful Mass, though priest speaks well again of marginalization of religion in American society, in sparsely populated church (on this holiday weekend); but I do realize this is where my brothers and sisters are, this despite the fact principle sister is not present. I had doubted before that I was finding a home here, but I see now that I have – and it is time to return. And so this work ends. (And again I return to where I have been, a changed man.)

I have so much to say, so many things that become clear at the end of this writing, at the end of this time of trial and exile. How this vision in the end contrasts with the confusion that has generally reigned.

This work began on the anniversary of the death of my sister, and reflects the search for her which has been so much a part of it and my life. Here in the end I have a dream that helps me to understand what I have gone through.

I have written these passages in the midst of my vigil prayer, in each following night/morning. I thought to write this final entry last night before bed, having already received from the Lord in prayer before the Divine Mercy image that the writing was indeed over, that I would indeed return to my parish. But I remembered my thought that I do not really understand a day until I have slept following it, allowing it to process through my rest and dreams.

I dreamt just before waking I was lying in a small cleft of a steep cliff. Someone had recently been rescued (by another) from the cliff, but I, who had apparently first gone down to help, was now in a precarious position. I thought to try to stand in the minimal space I had, and looked up to see where I might find holds to climb... but the possibility of falling was greater than climbing – really, there seemed no way.

There were, however, people above me (whom I could not see), and I thought (after waking) that I could have had them pull me up by a rope... but what I did instead was pray to the Lord. Even upon beginning my prayer for rescue, I awoke from my dream.

What does it mean? A few facts:

- My sister died upon standing up at the edge of a cliff and tumbling down thirty feet (when her knee gave out). The entire cliff was hundreds of feet high. I was in about the same position on a high cliff.

- The church to which I had gone (and had problems) is in the area of town below this cliff – I passed along its base on my way there each day – and the devout woman whom I met there and became friendly with (whom I gave the rose in the first entry, whom I tried to save as Lot from Sodom, and with whom I went on pilgrimage about a week ago) works in a hospital virtually directly before the spot my sister died. (This same woman said I was dreaming when I eagerly asked her on the phone to join me the next Sunday for a visit to the charismatic church mentioned herein... She also said one person cannot save another, about which I agreed... Note: this church I thought I might join, but I believe it and, of course, the powerful priest, served as a lifeline to pull me up out of the near despair into which I'd fallen over the problems I'd witnessed in other churches, and the Church in general.)
- This afternoon I was at the nursing home I visit twice a month, which overlooks the place my sister died (as well as the area below). It was while looking out the window here and mentioning to the religious sister referred to herein how I suppose I am looking for a replacement for my sister that it seemed our relationship began to rupture. The next time I saw her and asked if she'd go again with me to the nursing home (to give communion), she very curtly said no, and essentially cut off concrete communication with me until our resolution to put things in the past this last week. (She it is whom the Blessed Mother had said I would "wed" "spiritually" – I think of a line toward the end of a song about my sister: "I know we will be one. I know we are one" – and with whom I had found a remarkable communion upon receiving the Body and Blood of Christ at daily Mass... and the epigraph of this writing was composed on Corpus Christi Sunday.)
- Another curious note is that as I waited for my fellow Eucharistic ministers (to go to the nursing home) outside the main doors of the church at which I was a member the first forty years of my life, I saw the current administrator, now pastor, who had necessitated my leaving and going to the parish to which I now return, standing in the center aisle. There was a silent moment of recognition, which I understand only now: he was firmly within, I without, but bathed in sunlight.
- Finally, in the Office of Readings (which I prayed just before writing this and all these entries) the first antiphon read: "Bow down and hear me, Lord; come to my rescue"; the first reading included Jeremiah's prophecy of the Babylonian exile, which would last seventy years – this work lasted seventy days; and in the second reading the holy man (in the *Imitation of Christ*) in the voice of Jesus, after first chastising those who try to understand His Word "by human senses alone," according to their "vain pleasure" – my main criticism of current Biblical understanding by theologians in the Church (hearing the world instead of God) – emphasizes the need to have His Word written on our hearts to overcome temptation, and states: "I am the rewarder of all good men, the one who rigorously tests the devoted." Indeed, He tempts and consoles.... And the responsory is from Proverbs, instructing, "Keep your eyes on my footsteps" and "open your heart to my wisdom."

May I walk now with you on solid ground, my Lord,
 n the light, the order, of your NAME.

Part Four

Other Pieces

Write your Name upon my soul, Lord;
Let it be engraved in my heart.
May your light alone be my guide,
That I might always walk with you.

Holy Thursday '03

My eyes fix immediately upon
the Host, the Cup,
as I lift my head
to see each raised aloft...

In the Consecration He has come;
in this sacrifice He is known -
and with Him I become one.

Good Friday

A moment alone -
kneeling at the altar in the quiet
of an empty church,
before the Stations of the Cross begin,
before the voices of the crowd enter in.

Holy Saturday

On this day Jesus descended to the dead
to preach to waiting souls,
I pray.

At the cemetery, in the mausoleum
and passing the graves,
I call upon the Lord's name
that all might be raised.

On this day Jesus descended to the dead
to preach to waiting souls.

Easter Vigil

On this night He was raised
we stand and pray,
holding each a candle
and waiting.

The Spirit does not disappoint.
An inexpressible joy
wells up within.

On this night Jesus was raised,
we, too, rise with Him.

Easter Sunday

The weight of the grave
seems to weigh down on me.
I accept it,
looking to see what will be
as the coffin lid closes upon me,
as it has my sister.

But in that moment it closes -
how it can be I know not -
rather suddenly, slowly...
completely,
light, like the light of the sunrise,
but eternal,
shines
and fills all around me.

I am no longer in the grave.

B.

Moment by Moment

Family life moves along hour to hour;
Work life goes day to day -
Prayer life, life with God,
is lived moment to moment...
for God Is,
always and everywhere,
and we must be with Him.

A Walk Through A City Park

The wind moves everything.
It moves the leaves in the trees,
of course,
but it also moves me -
breathing life into and through me
as my knees rise and fall...
And so it moves all who are like me,
and, in turn,
moves all the things they move.

I see the wind moves
even the roaring engines
of the trucks that travel
outside this park
I step through.

Ukrainian Proverb: When Laziness Enters In...

"Religion stood alone,
and all was right;
it joined with others
and proved the most solid leader.
It began to do nothing,
and..."

Laziness is the bane of religion.
When rules and discipline break down,
the devil is given room,
and chaos reigns.
Order must be maintained.

"The Father is working still..."
The Light never ceases to shine;
and the rest we take in Him
is not a cessation of action
but a spiritual comfort
that makes even the heaviest burden
as nothing to bear.

("Day and night, without pause, they sing:
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.'
And there, there is no night anymore.)

Remember David and his sin -
refraining from going to war
at the appropriate time of year,
he took to strolling on his roof.
There he spied Bathsheba;
there his lust took hold.
His lust led to murder,
and the grave disruption of his kingdom.

(But Christ has come;
Christ has come.)

"They never stopped teaching and preaching
the good news of Jesus the Messiah."

"One thing I ask of the Lord;
this I seek:
To dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life."

The Word must be spoken, always.

Forever is in the Moment

Today is founded in eternity;
It would not be otherwise.
In the hand of *God* this world is held -
It is He who sustains even this hour.

At Any Given Moment

At any given moment, He is present;
At any given moment, He may come.
In any given place, at any given time...
We must ever be ready.

C.

Labyrinth

Justifying Untruths by convoluted logic,
in such state is the soul
of modern man.

And who shall redeem him of such thoughts
if he cannot see before himself
the Son of Man.

There Is A Wall

There is a wall with no doors;
It is sealed on all sides
And keeps the soul from going unto heaven.
This wall cannot be knocked down
By the power of hammer or pickaxe:
Only the breath of the Spirit can destroy it,
Can cause it to disappear.

In the Name of Jesus

In the Name of Jesus
is power to conquer sin,
to cast out devils
lurking within.

In the Name of Jesus,
if you believe,
comes the Spirit's strength
to do all things.

In the Name of Jesus
let us take our refuge,
not just in word
but in deed.

Love God and Neighbor

To love God is to have faith in Him,
to believe, to trust,
and this love will but be shown (or not)
in the love we have for one another.

Ghost Town

When I was a child
these streets were alive
with children playing.

In the houses there were mothers
watching us from the windows
as they prepared the evening meal.

My father stood on the porch at dinner time
and whistled,
and from the park we'd come
rushing home.
Never late.

But now a child is not heard:
there is no movement on these streets,
and the houses are empty.

The neighborhood is filled
with those who stay a year or two,
maybe three,
as they milk money
from the big City across the way.

Soon they will be gone to another house
for a year or two...
No roots.
No roots, no branches, no leaves...
No roots - no tree.
Four walls, empty.
Four walls: a vacuum.

And they do not seem to mind
that they have no home,
no children - well, maybe one,
despite the houses they own...

(What makes them so diligent in their pursuit?)

The womb, our first home,
that place of sacred wonder,
no longer brings life;
yes, it
is empty.

Four walls: a vacuum.
Empty.

A third of a generation has never been,
and no one seems to notice;
no one seems to care.
The loss is hardly felt
as we celebrate our freedom
in this
ghost town.

D.

Body of Christ

Are not the saints upon our altar, too -
those who have filled up what is lacking
in His sacrifice,
those who have given their lives,
those who, like Him, have been ground up like grain
to make the wheat
that is His Body...?

One Mother

"Mary and the Church are one mother, yet more than one mother;
one virgin, yet more than one virgin."

Bl. Isaac of Stella

And if there is a problem with the Church,
there must be a problem with the woman,
whose nature stands for the Church.

If the woman is not pure, as is our Blessed Mother,
how shall the man be pure;
if she is not obedient,
how shall She, the Church, be obedient?

And so the crisis in the Church may rightly be said to be
a crisis of motherhood, of woman.

Self-Sacrifice

A man finds his life
in dying for his wife;
and a woman dies to sin
by living for her children.

(Do you hear the call to self-sacrifice?)

E.

YHWH

The voice - of God
as it opens, the mouth,
readying to speak...
in that moment, in that pause,
the Name of God is spoken.
(As a breath is drawn, and the lips are poised...)

Here is the thought, the idea, the WORD, the Logos,
that precedes (and surrounds) every spoken word...
Here is the Spirit, is God,
the light of our minds.

("When I think about what I am going to say,
the word or message is already in my heart."
and
"The voice passes away but the divine Word remains."
St. Augustine

- Having been conveyed to another heart by means of the voice,
the message stays.)

The Will of God

If wisdom is doing the will of God
and the will of God is like the wind -
"I will be what I will be" -
then you may say:
"I can't hold the wind in my hand,"
and how true this is.
But yet the Lord says,
"You can,"
though only in Him.

The Lord will be what He will be
and you must stand with Him.

Four Corners of the Universe

"Let there be light"

The WORD, the NAME, is the Spirit,
and the four corners our existence.
But there is that of ours which is heavenly,
and not earthly.

The sky and the sea, the wind and the water,
are primordial,
from a time when the earth was void
and darkness upon the face of the deep.
In the beginning there was the wind moving upon the
waters:
only later did God bring light
and form with His hands the land.

This is as the difference between our heart and soul
and our mind and body,
for the heart and soul, our blood and our breath,
mimic the water and the wind -
in these they find their source.
And the mind and the body
are like the light of the sun and the dry land of earth...
their scope is much more limited in time and form.

And is it any wonder in this materialistic age
when the spirit is thought a thing of the past
that man judges life by his mind alone,
that the brain and body are to him what truly matter...
and the heart and soul have become stagnant and lifeless.
(How else could we justify killing our own,
whether in old age or in the womb?)

We must be transformed by the renewal of our minds,
and this is done only in Christ.

Night Words

The words of man's discovery
that bring about God's Recovery
go from heart to heart
and pierce all souls.

"To err is human; to forgive, divine"

We sin. This is what we do. "To err is human."
But God forgives. And with forgiveness comes grace,
 grace to do good.
And so it is only God who accomplishes any good in us.

No Writer

There is no writer or speaker,
there is no reader or listener
 when God is present.

When God is present, He is the writer.
When God is present, He is the reader.
God is the speaker and the listener in all things.

The tongue must be dead;
it must be silenced,
it must be stilled...

if the Lord is to speak,
if the Lord is to live in us.

The still sky speaks the Name of God.

At the Grave of Father and Sister

James : How's Lynn, Dad?
(inquiring of his approach to her advanced state)

Dad: (sacrificial animation)
There is light on the horizon!

James: (in tears)
I pray it is so. I pray it is so.

Dad: (quietly, but clearly)
It's already here, James.
We just can't see it yet.
We just can't see it.

(Indeed, clear light shines all around these trees and headstones
as I begin to see where it leads.)

To The Reader

I do not wish to become known;
I do not want to win a Pulitzer Prize.
Not until the writing is done
Could I bear criticism or adulation.

And when will the writing be done?
It will never be done
as long as I breathe upon this plane.

I do not wish to show my face,
Do not want you to view a picture of me,
So that you can think you see
Who has written this poetry -

When the author is no one of our race.

The truth is, it is not I who have written these poems;
(if they are written at all)
they are written on your heart.
I am only doing my job,
for better or worse (in the Spirit),
till death do us part.

Then it will be clearly seen
I have not written a single line,
For how can these words be spoken by me

when I am gone?