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[sōtēr - saviour]

Veneration of the Cross

[face to face with the Lord]

Introduction / Explanation

Through venerating the Holy Cross we come face to face with our Lord and Saviour who is the Good News, Love, Mercy and our Hope. It is an opportunity to be saved, as we prostrate ourselves and offer ourselves just as we are; with all our burdens and our joys. This is a moment—in reality, an *attitude*—where our focus is just on Him, in His act of infinite love, so that our hearts are converted to Him (and therefore *turn* to Him). He knows us more than we even know ourselves and He is inviting us to open ourselves to Him like a book, so we can read the pages of our lives, our past and our present, and journey onward together.

God, in His mercy, holds our hands with maternal tenderness to pull us back up when we fall and He shines on us a ray of light when darkness engulfs us. He is ever close to us, but we may be ignoring his presence because our hearts are so full of preoccupations that we forget to make space for Him.

The act when we venerate the image of Christ Crucified is where we fix our gaze upon Him while He fixes His gaze upon us and thus, as our eyes meet, our heartbeats are synchronised with His own and once again, in silence, we create a space where He can turn the pages of our lives, the troubled as well as the joyous pages.

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Act of Presence

Here I am Lord. You are my resting place; in your presence my hurts and wounds are healed. You know well what is going on in my life; you are with me in my suffering and, when wounds stab at my heart, there you are, right beside me. When I stagger under the weight of my worries, you are there to support me; you hold me close in your embrace even when all I can see is darkness engulfing me, weighing me down. Like the sun still shining through the night, you are with me always, as you promised.

A selection of music for this moment of prayer

Behold the Wood of the Cross – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baxQqo89itw>

Misere mei, Deus – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3v9unphfio>

Veneration of the Cross (Gregorian Chant)

– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1B3sF59XOk>

Moments of Reflection

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46, 10). Allow the Word of God to guide you during this moment of silence.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (28: 16-20)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Some points for reflections on the text (a moment of silence)

- **They went to the mountain** – the favoured place where God meets man and woman. Go to the mountain like the apostles, allow God to encounter you. Let your heart soar upwards and allow it to encounter the very heart of God.
- **They worshipped him ... but some doubted** – as you prostrate yourself in his presence, you also may feel doubtful. Your past or your present may make you question God’s love, his existence, and whether, after all, we are not all alone, left to our own devices. Allow this moment of silence to be a space where God hears the clamour that rages within you; allow the stillness to lead you into listening to the voice of God.
- **I am with you always** – there is a paradox in the fact that as Jesus is leaving, he is always with us. Do you feel him close to you? If not, do you desire to feel his closeness?

Self-Examination

We praise you, Lord, for your constant presence in our lives. God's presence in our midst is not for our sole benefit. Our God is a personal God, He is not an individualistic God. God is not calling us to form a small exclusive club huddled around Him. He calls us to Him so that, after we stay with Him for a while, we can go forth and bring Him to others wherever they are. He calls us to drink of His love's goodness so that we can then carry it and transmit it to others.

This love is the fount of our healing; it is the source of our strength which enables us to stand back on our feet and start our journey towards recovery. The medicine that we need is in the presence of Jesus among us. The wounds and hurts in our lives will always be there and they can become like balls and chains from which we cannot rid ourselves. They can nail us to the cross.

Points for reflection (a moment of silence)

- **Listen** to the Lord as He tells you to "Get up and walk," (Mt 9: 1-8; Mk 2: 1-12; Lk 5: 17-26; Jn 5: 1-18); "Talitha, cum ...little girl, get up!" (Mk 5: 21-43).
- **Choose** one of these passages and pray that the Lord may enter into your life and heal it.
- **Ask:** What are my personal hurts and wounds? What are the hurts and wounds of my family, of that acquaintance whom I would like to bring to God?
- **Allow a space in your heart through which God can enter.** What is the Lord asking me to do in order to start my healing process and so that the chains of my hurts and wounds may loosen (little by little) and I may reclaim my freedom (without forgetting)?

Mt 9: 1-8

And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." And he stood up and went to his home. When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

Mk 2: 1-18

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in

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this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Lk 5: 17-26

One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting nearby (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home." Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

Jn 5: 1-18

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started

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persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Mk 5: 21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Collective and Self-examination

We have not always accepted and transmitted this love. This act and attitude of worship opens us to the hurts and wounds of those around us and allows us to identify the times where we ourselves were the obstacles for God's love to reach others.

The wounds and hurts of others are also ours; they affect us negatively and may become our own wounds.

- **Consider:** So many have been victimised by those who represent the Church. Church structures have caused many hurts; there are divisions between members of the Church; many feel rejected by Mother Church; so many feel disconnected from the Church, strangers in their own home, due to a personal reality or their sexual orientation.

Ask: Could I have caused this suffering? Could I, albeit unknowingly, have perpetuated this attitude? Did I, out of fear or self-interest, remain silent when faced by an injustice?

- **Consider** all the toxic relationships within families, between couples, between siblings. Love can be absent in intimate relationships and instead there can even be abuse. Many have suffered sexual, psychological and financial abuse within their family circle.

Ask: Could I have caused this suffering? Could I, albeit unknowingly, have perpetuated this attitude? Did I, out of fear or self-interest, remain silent when faced by an injustice?

- **Consider** the times you may have been irresponsible with the surrounding environment. There were times when you disregarded what was happening around you and you did not take any steps to protect and restore the environment.

Ask: Could I have caused this suffering? Could I, albeit unknowingly, have perpetuated this attitude? Did I, out of fear or self-interest, remain silent when faced by an injustice?

- **Consider** the negative attitude towards groups of people whom we consider to be 'different'; of different ethnicity, different groups within the Church, different band clubs. So much mud-slinging takes place, so much defamatory propaganda and false rumours are spread around due to thoughtlessness or, even worse, out of a lack of responsibility.

Ask: Could I have caused this suffering? Could I, albeit unknowingly, have perpetuated this attitude? Did I, out of fear or self-interest, remain silent when faced by an injustice?

The presence of the Lord heals and saves. Choose one of these passages and pray to the Lord that he may heal your heart. Turn your gaze towards him, open your ears to his gentle words, surrender yourself, as you are, to his loving embrace and worship in his loving presence.

Listen, choose and ask

Have I shut off my ears? Mk 7: 31-37

Have I closed my eyes? Mk 8: 22-26; Mt 20: 29-34; Lk 18: 35-43; Jn 9: 1-12

Am I slow to take action? Mt 9: 1-8; 12: 9-13; Mk 2: 1-12, Lk 5: 17-26; Jn 5: 1-18

Have my words or actions contaminated my surroundings? Mt 8: 1-4; Mk 1: 40-45, Lk 5: 12-16, 17: 11-19

Have I **shut off my ears**?

Mk 7: 31-37

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus[i] ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Have I **closed my eyes**?

Mk 8: 22-26

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”

Mt 20: 29-34

As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, “Lord,[h] have mercy on us, Son of David!” 31 The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!” 32 Jesus stood still and called them, saying, “What do you want me to do for you?” 33 They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.” 34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

Lk 18: 35-43

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

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Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Jn 9: 1-12

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

Am I slow to take action?

Mt 9: 1-8

And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” Then some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” And he stood up and went to his home. When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

Mt 12: 9-13

He left that place and entered their synagogue; a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?” so that they might accuse him. He said to them, “Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

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Mk 2: 1-12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Lk 5: 17-26

One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting nearby (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home." Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

Jn 5: 1-18

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead

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of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

Have my words or actions contaminated my surroundings?

Mt 8: 1-4

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Mk 1: 40-45

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Lk 5: 12-16,

Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, “I do choose. Be made clean.” Immediately the leprosy left him. And he ordered him to tell no one. “Go,” he said, “and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.” But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would

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gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. 16 But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

Lk 17: 11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

Conclusion

The Lord knows you better than you know yourself. Conclude this moment of reflection by resting in God's presence through contemplating Psalm 138.

Psalm 138 (139) 1-14

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.*