



LENTEN READINGS

As part of the Lenten Season, a number of churches prepare a Lenten Reader of day-by-day meditations, prayers and thoughts. Saint Mary's Adult Education Committee is considering having the members of the parish prepare a Lenten Reader for next year.

To gauge the parish's interest and to show what we might like to do, we have obtained permission from St. Albans School, in Washington, D.C., to reproduce, with current Lenten dates, the Lenten Reader its Vestry prepared in 2002. We think you will find their selections to be both timely and timeless.

The St. Albans "Lent: Day By Day" reader can be found on our website at www.smvsf.org

The Adult Education Committee

February 2012

LENT

DAY BY DAY



Compiled by
St. Albans School Vestry
2002

Dear St. Albans Family,

Antoine de Saint-Exupery writes

"It is necessary to enrich the community, since it alone enriches man. One is a member of a country, a profession, a civilization, a religion. One is not just a man. A cathedral is built with stones; but the cathedral enables each stone, which becomes a cathedral stone. In the same way, you will only find brotherhood in something larger than yourselves, because one is a brother "in" something, not merely a brother. People need to find a bond between them."

To the brothers and *sisters* of this community who have enriched us with literally hundreds of responses to our request for readings, we are enormously grateful. Rest assured we have passages for Lenten booklets for many years to come! While we have covered daily readings, Sundays will be found in your Sunday liturgy. Special thanks to Ann Selinger, David Ware and Issa Abdulcadir for their efforts to make this Lenten booklet possible.

It is our hope that this publication will continue to strengthen the bond between us and that we will continue to grow closer to God and one another.

Gratefully,

The Rev. William P. Billow, Jr.
Senior Chaplain

Ash Wednesday, February 22

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson

Life's disappointments are often God's opportunities.
Over a century ago an anonymous soldier of the War between the States wrote this revealing piece:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve -
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey...
I asked for help, that I might do greater things -
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things...
I asked for riches, that I might be happy -
I was given poverty, that I might be wise...
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men -
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God...
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life -
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things...
I got nothing that I asked for -
But everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men, most richly blessed.

Thursday, February 23

“Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing. While we are permitted to scorn nothing but indifference, and do not pretend to undervalue the worldly rewards of ambition, we have seen with our own eyes, beyond and above the gold fields the snowy heights of honor, and it is for us to bear the report to those who come after us. But, above all, we have learned that whether a man accepts from Fortune her spade, and will look downward and dig, or from Aspiration her axe and cord, and will scale the ice, the one and only success which it is his to command, is to bring to his work a mighty heart.”

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes

Friday, February 24

Moral courage compels truthfulness, makes a dependable quality, and gives a man the courage of his convictions. Whereas, physical courage is an unnatural thing and exists only when a person's character is strong enough to overcome the fear instinct sufficiently to prevent its taking charge.

Edward C. Raymer, CDR, USN

The sanguine baseball fan knows, of course, that his game, more than most, is not about the final score. It's about the stories along the way. Yes, just like life, where you know the final score before you start. Death wins. So what? Let's play.

Thomas Boswell

Saturday, February 25

Put Everything in God's Hands

"God is there in these moments of rest and can give us in a single instant exactly what we need. Then the rest of the day can take its course, under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace.

And when night comes, and you look back over the day and see how fragmentary everything has been, and how much you planned that has gone undone, and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed; just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with him. Then you will be able to rest in him - really rest - and start the next day as a new life."

Edith Stein
Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross,
Carmelite Order

Monday, February 27

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think
I am following your will
does not mean that
I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire
to please you
does, in fact, please you.
And I hope I have that desire
in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything
apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this
you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore, I will trust you always
though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear,
for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me
to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton
Thoughts in Solitude

Tuesday, February 28

The Christian discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results
in an outward lifestyle.

Richard Foster

We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements
in life, when all that we need to make us really happy is something
about which to be enthusiastic.

Charles Kingsley

Praise and blame,
gain and loss,
pleasure and sorrow
come and go like the wind.

To be happy, rest like a great tree
in the midst of them all.

from Buddha's *Little Instruction Book*

Wednesday, February 29

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you NOT to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us - it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Quoted by Nelson Mandela

Thursday, March 1

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sun and sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, "There she goes!"

Gone where? Gone from my sight...that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the places of destination.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at that moment when someone at my side says, "There she goes!" there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!"

Henry Van Dyke

I have yet a lot to learn, but I do know this.
There is a God and she is with Him.

Stephen McGregor, STA '96
at the memorial service for his
mother

Friday, March 2

What we need is to love without getting tired. Love is a fruit in season at all times and within reach of every hand. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life; faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking and of acting.

Do not look for Jesus away from ourselves. He is in you. Keep your lamp burning and you will recognize Him. Love must come from within; loving must be as normal as living and breathing.

Mother Theresa

Saturday, March 3

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well-pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little, when we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore. Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of the things we possess we have lost our thirst for the water of life.

Stir us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery, where losing sight of land we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes, and to push us into the future in strength, courage, hope and love.

We pray in the Name of our Captain, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Monday, March 5

- * Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
- * When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
- * Follow these three R's:
 - Respect for self
 - Respect for others and
 - Responsibility for your actions.
- * Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
- * Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.
- * Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
- * When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
- * Spend some time alone every day.
- * Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
- * Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
- * Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time.
- * A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
- * In disagreements with your loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.
- * Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve immortality.
- * Be gentle with the earth.
- * Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.
- * Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.

The Dalai Lama

Tuesday, March 6

Patience, my heart:
Night's length will pass
And we shall see tomorrow rise with shining faces.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Security is not the absence of danger, but the presence of God.

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be
fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but the heart to
conquer it.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved, but hope
for the patience to win my freedom.

Security is not the absence of danger, but the presence of God.

Rabindranath Tagore

Wednesday, March 7

I must become convinced and penetrated by the realization that without my love for (other people), they may perhaps not achieve the things God has willed for them.

Thomas Merton

For the ending of our life would not threaten us if we had not falsely made ourselves the center of life's meaning.

Reinhold Niebuhr

An education has been a failure, no matter how much it has done for the mind, if it has failed to open the heart.

J. A. Rosenkranz

Thursday, March 8

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis, all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

Frederick Buechner

Teach us, O Lord, not to hold on to life too tightly.
Teach us to hold it lightly, not carelessly, but lightly, easily.
Teach us to take it as a gift, to enjoy and cherish while we have it and to let it go gracefully and thankfully when the time comes.

The gift is great, but the Giver is greater still.
Thou, O God, art the Giver and in Thee is the life that never dies.
Amen.

Friday, March 9

I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true.
I am not bound to succeed,
but I am bound to live up to the light that I have.

Abraham Lincoln

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings,
Sunward I've climbed and joined a tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace,
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie May, Jr.
(WWII, killed, shot down
in action, age 19)

Saturday, March 10

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes.

e.e. cummings

He who knows not and knows he knows not is a child -
teach him.
He who knows and knows not he knows is asleep -
waken him.
He who knows not and knows not he knows not -
he is a fool - counsel him.
He who knows and knows he knows -
he is wise - follow him.

quoted by Nancy Kimball Heppe

Monday, March 12

To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of
children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and
to endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a
garden patch or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life breathed easier because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Tuesday, March 13

Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
You press upon me behind and before
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
Where can I go then from your Spirit?
where can I flee from your presence?
If I climb up to heaven, you are there;
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there your hand will lead me
and your right hand hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me,
and the light around me turn to night,"
Darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.
For you yourself created my inmost parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb,
I will thank you because I am marvelously made;
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

Psalm 139
Book of Common Prayer

Wednesday, March 14

And not only that, but we also glory
in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces
perseverance;

And perseverance, character; and
character, hope.

Now hope does not disappoint, because the
love of God has been poured out in our hearts by
the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5: 3-5

Thursday, March 15

On This Day

Mend a quarrel. Search out a forgotten friend. Dismiss
suspicion, and replace it with trust. Write a love letter. Share
some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest
your loyalty in a word or deed.

Keep a promise. Find the time. Forego a grudge. Forgive
an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Try to under-
stand. Flout envy. Examine your demands on others. Think first of
someone else. Appreciate, be kind, be gentle. Laugh a little more.

Deserve confidence. Take up arms against malice. Decry
complacency. Express your gratitude. Worship your God. Gladden
the heart of a child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of
the earth. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it still again.
Speak it still once again.

Friday, March 16

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too,
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master,
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build them up with worn-out tools

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

Saturday, March 17

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most
fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over
grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the
prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor
to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are
given and the pain you are giving back - in many
ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is
that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The
skeleton at the feast is you

Frederick Buechner

Monday, March 19

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances—to choose one's own way.

Viktor Frankel

When you can't see the future ahead, trust the power which lies beneath the process and relationships of life. Trust, do the best you can. Things may not turn out the way you want. But for those who trust, life is in God's hands. It will be all right. That message doesn't undercut struggle... or suffering... or loss. But it undercuts frenzy and anxiety and despair. Our life is in God's hands. Things will be all right. They may even surpass our wildest dreams.

The Rev. Charles P. Price

Tuesday, March 20

Peace and understanding are not vague,
distant and unattainable;
They come, in time, to those who seek
and are ready to receive.
Understanding comes not from will,
though effort is required,
But from calm reflection on teaching
and experience, until the pieces fit.
Peace requires reconciliation
of expectations and experience,
Amends for wrongs done,
forgiveness for wrongs endured,
And unconditional love for all.

Erling Hustvedt

Wednesday, March 21

Thou mastering me
God! Giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea;
Lord of the living and the dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

Thursday, March 22

...on my bookledge for the two years my wife and I have mourned
the early death of her brother by an accidental overdose of heroin:

"It is those we live with and love and should know who elude us.
Now nearly all those I loved and did not understand when I was
young are dead, but I still reach out to them."

Norman MacLean, *A River Runs Through It*

Friday, March 23

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,
Where knowledge is free,
Where the world has not been divided into fragments by narrow
domestic walls,
Where words come out from the depths of truth,
Where tireless striving reaches toward perfection,
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit,
Where thoughts can expand without end,
Into that haven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Oh, to be free.

Rabindranath Tagore, nobel laureate

Saturday, March 24

Perhaps love is the process of my leading you gently back to
yourself.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

I believe life is made up of peaks and valleys. But the thing to
remember is that the curve is always going up. The next peak is
a little higher than the previous peak, the next valley isn't quite
so low.

Dr. Thomas F. Frist, Sr, M.D.

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair grows in me
and I wake in the middle of the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry

Monday, March 26

To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold—brothers who know they are truly brothers.

Archibald MacLeish,
on the 1968 Apollo 8 flight to the moon

Thus wisdom about our destiny is dependent upon a humble recognition of the limits of our knowledge and our power. Our most reliable understanding is the fruit of “grace” in which faith completes our ignorance without pretending to possess its certainties as knowledge, and in which contrition mitigates our pride without destroying our hope.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Tuesday, March 27

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand;
Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand

Herman Melville
on the death of Abraham Lincoln

I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study paintings, poetry, music, architecture, statuary tapestry, and porcelain.

John Adams

Wednesday, March 28

Going to church doesn't make one a Christian,
any more than going into a garage makes one a car.

Contributed by Dan Rasmussen

On mentors and apprentices:

Partners in an ancient human dance, and one of teaching's great rewards, is the daily chance it gives us to get back on the dance floor. It is the dance of the spiraling generations, in which the old empower the young with their experience and young empower the old with new life, reweaving the fabric of the human community as they touch and turn.

Parker Palmer

Thursday, March 29

A healer needs to see beyond the present and tomorrow. She/he needs to see years and decades ahead, because healers work for results so firm they may not be wholly visible till centuries have flowed into millennia. Those willing to do this necessary work are the healers of our people.

Ayi Kwei Armah, in *The Healers*

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

I will rise to the occasion, which is life.

Virginia Euwer Wolfe,
True Believer

Friday, March 30

It proves to be an illusion that everything can be reversed, that there is always time for everything, and that everything somehow returns.

H. C. Gadamer

We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil
is for good men to do nothing.

Edmund Burke

I do not know what path in life you will take, but I do know this: if, on that path, you do not find a way to serve, you will never be happy. We are not alone. We are part of something bigger, and we experience the connection by giving with grace a portion of our time and talent to service.

Albert Schweitzer

Saturday, March 31

Freedom from anxiety is characterized by three inner attitudes. If what we have we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God, and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety. This is the inward reality of simplicity.

Richard Foster

Monday, April 2

You really only possess what you can dare to give away. Otherwise, it possesses you. If I cannot dare to give away my time, I am possessed by time. If I cannot dare to give up my children, I am their possession, and the fulfillment of my life is dependent upon them.

If I cannot dare to offer the money that is under my control, it possesses me; I do not possess it. The nature of freedom is discovered by the very ability both to be able to use responsibly what is yours and also to discover the extent to which you can give away the sum total of yourself and your possessions.

A. Heath Light
Bishop of Southwestern Virginia, Ret.

Tuesday, April 3

We are not God,
we are simply the image of God.
And our task is to gradually discover that image
and set it free.

Michael Quoist

We must not cease from exploration, and the end of all
our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to
know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot

Know that your true home is in the Holy Presence.
It is that simple. Don't wait for your calendar to be
empty, or your permanent address to be changed, before
recognizing that reality.

Wednesday, April 4

It is not the critic who counts; nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but he who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least failed while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt

My grandparents had to live their way out of one world and into another, or into several others, making new out of old the way corals live their reef upward. I am on my grandparents' side. I believe in Time, as they did, and in the life chronological rather than in the life existential. We live in time and through it, we build our huts in its ruins, or used to, and we cannot afford all these abandonings.

Wallace Stegner

Maundy Thursday, April 5

Learn to value spiritual things over material things. They last longer, cost less, bring more.

Linus Mundy

To handle yourself, use your head;
To handle others, use your heart.

Eleanor Roosevelt

A faithful friend is a strong defense,
And he that hath found such, hath found a treasure.
Change not thy friend for any good thing.
A faithful friend is the medicine of life.

The Apocrypha

Good Friday, April 6

Death is nothing at all... Whatever we were to each other, that we are still. Call me by the old familiar name. Speak of me in the easy way which you always used. Put no difference into your tone. Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow. Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Let my name be ever the household word that it always was. Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it. Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was. There is absolute and unbroken continuity. What is death but a negligible accident? Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight. I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well.

Rosamunde Pilcher

Holy Saturday, April 7

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.

Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.

Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance, fall away.

We are not so much maddened
as reduced to unutterable
ignorance
of dark, cold caves.

When great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always irregularly.
Space fills with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.

Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Maya Angelou

Easter Sunday, April 8

Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the
 molecules reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall.

It was not as flowers,
each soft Spring recurrent;
it was not as His Spirit in the mouths and fuddled
 eyes of the eleven disciples;
it was as His flesh: ours.

The same hinged thumbs and toes,
the same valved heart
that—pierced—dies, withered, decayed and then
 regathered out of His Father's might,
new strength to enclose.

Let us not mock God with metaphor,
analogy, sidestepping transcendence;
making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the
 faded credulity of earlier ages:
let us walk through the door.

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache,
not a stone in a story,
but the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
 grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
the wide light of day.

And if we will have an angel at the tomb,
make it a real angel,
weighty with Max Planck's quanta, vivid with hair, opaque
 in the dawn light, robed in real linen
spun on a definite loom.

Let us not seek to make it less monstrous,
for our own convenience, our own sense of beauty,
lest, awakened in one unthinkable hour, we are embarrassed
 by the miracle.

John Updike