

The 1871 Standard of the U. S. Book of Common Prayer,

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Contact:
Charles Wohlers
P. O. Box 227
East Bridgewater, Mass. 02333 USA
chadwohl@satucket.com
<http://satucket.com>

A FORM OF PRAYER FOR
THE VISITATION OF PRISONERS.

¶ *When Morning or Evening Prayer shall be read in any Prison, instead of the Psalm, O come, let us sing, &c., shall be read the 130th Psalm: and the Minister shall insert, after the Collect for the day, the Collect in the following Service, O God, who sparest, &c., and at such times as the Litany is not read, he shall add the Prayer, O God, merciful Father, who despisest not, &c.*

¶ *And when notice is given to the Minister, that a Prisoner is confined for some great or capital crime, he shall visit him; and when he cometh into the place where the Prisoner is, he shall say, kneeling down,*

REMEMBER not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins; spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever.

Answer. Spare us, good Lord.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, &c.
Minister. O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;

Answer. And grant us thy salvation.

Minister. Turn thy face from our sins;

Answer. And blot out all our iniquities.

Minister. Send us help from thy holy place;

Answer. For thine indignation lieth hard upon us.

Minister. O Lord, hear our prayer;

Answer. And let the sighing of the prisoners come before thee.

The Collect.

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

O GOD, who sparest when we deserve punishment, and in thy wrath rememberest mercy; We humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness to comfort and succour all those who are under reproach and misery in the house of bondage; correct them not in thine anger, neither chasten them in thy sore displeasure. Give them a right understanding of themselves, and of thy threats and promises; that they may neither cast away their confidence in thee, nor place it any where but in thee. Relieve the distressed, protect the innocent, and awaken the guilty: and forasmuch as thou alone bringest light out of darkness, and good out of evil, grant that the pains and punishments which these thy servants endure, through their bodily confinement, may tend to setting free their souls from the chains of sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ *Here the Minister, as he shall see convenient, may read the Prayer for All Conditions of Men, the Collect for Ash-Wednesday, and the Collect beginning Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, &c., or any other prayer of the Liturgy, which he shall judge proper.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister exhort the prisoner or prisoners after this form, or other like.*

DEARLY beloved, know this, that Almighty God, whose never-failing providence governeth all things both in heaven and earth, hath so wisely and mercifully ordered the course of this world, that his judgments are often sent as fatherly corrections to us; and if with due submission and resignation to his holy will we receive the same, they will work together for our good.

It is your part and duty, therefore, to humble *yourself* under the mighty hand of God, to acknowledge the righteousness of his judgments, and to endeavour that, by his grace, this present visitation may lead you to a sincere and hearty repentance.

The way and means thereto is, to examine your life and conversation by the rule of God's commandments; and whereinsoever you shall perceive yourself to have offended either by

will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess *yourself* to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if you shall perceive your offences to be such as not only against God, but also against your neighbours; then to reconcile *yourself* to them, being ready to make constitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your power, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other: and being likewise ready to forgive others who have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand. And to this true repentance and change of mind you must add a lively and steadfast faith, and dependence upon the merits of the death of Christ, with an entire resignation of *yourself* to the will of God. Except you repent, and believe, we can give you no hope of salvation. But if you do sincerely repent and believe, God hath declared, though your sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; though your wickednesses have gone over your head, yet shall they not be your destruction.

We exhort you therefore in the Name of God, and of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Saviour, and as you tender your own salvation, to take good heed of these things in time, while the day of salvation lasteth; for the night cometh, when no man can work. While you have the light, believe in the light, and walk as children of the light, that you be not cast into outer darkness; that you may not knock, when the door shall be shut; and cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice. Now, you are the object of God's mercy, if by repentance and true faith you turn unto him; but if you neglect these things, you will be the object of his justice and vengeance. Now, you may claim the merits of Christ; but if you die in your sins, his sufferings will tend to your greater condemnation. O beloved, consider in this your day, how fearful a thing it will be to fall into the hands of the living God, when you can neither fly to his mercy to protect you, nor to the merits of Christ to cover you in that terrible day.

¶ *Here the Minister shall examine him concerning his faith, and rehearse the Articles of the Creed, Dost thou believe in God, &c. And the prisoner shall answer,*

All this I steadfastly believe.

¶ *Then shall the Minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, and be in charity with all the world, and further admonish him particularly concerning the crimes wherewith he is charged; and exhort him, if he have any scruples, that he would declare the same, and prepare himself for the Holy Communion, against the time that it may be proper to administer it to him.*

¶ *Then, all kneeling, the Minister shall say as follows, from the 51st Psalm,*

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit.

Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou that art the God of my health; and my tongue shall sing of thy righteousness.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show thy praise.

For thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee; but thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.

¶ *Then the Minister shall say,*

Let us pray.

O LORD, we beseech thee, mercifully hear our prayers, and spare all those who confess their sins unto thee; that they, whose consciences by sin are accused, by thy merciful pardon may be absolved; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O GOD, whose mercy is everlasting, and power infinite; Look down with pity and compassion upon the sufferings of this thy *servant*; and whether thou visitest for trial of *his* patience, or punishment of *his* offences, enable *him* by thy grace cheerfully to submit *himself* to thy holy will and pleasure. Go not far from those, O Lord, whom thou hast laid in a place of darkness, and in the deep; and forasmuch as thou hast not cut *him* off suddenly, but chastenest *him* as a father, grant that *he*, duly considering thy great mercies, may be unfeignedly thankful, and turn unto thee with true repentance and sincerity of heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayers for Persons under sentence of death.

¶ *When a Criminal is under sentence of death, the Minister shall proceed, immediately after*
the Collect, O God, who sparest, &c., to exhort him after this form, or other like.

DEARLY beloved, it hath pleased Almighty God, in his justice, to bring you under the sentence and condemnation of the law. You are shortly to suffer death in such a manner, that others, warned by your example, may be the more afraid to offend; and we pray God, that you may make such use of your punishments in this world, that your soul may be saved in the world to come.

Wherefore we come to you in the bowels of compassion; and, being desirous that you should avoid presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other, shall plainly lay before you the wretchedness of your condition, and declare how far you ought to depend on the mercies of God, and the merits of our Saviour. Consider then seriously with yourself, in all appear-

ance of the time of your dissolution draweth near; your sins have laid fast hold upon you; you are soon to be removed from among men by a violent death; and you shall fade away suddenly like the grass, which in the morning is green and groweth up, but in the evening is cut down, dried up, and withered. After you have thus finished the course of a sinful and miserable life, you shall appear before the Judge of all flesh; who, as he pronounces blessings on the righteous, shall likewise say, with a terrible voice of most just judgment, to the wicked, Go, ye accursed, into the fire everlasting, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Your sins have brought you too near this dreadful sentence it is therefore your part and duty, my brother, humbly to confess and bewail your great and manifold offences, and to repent you truly of your sins, as you tender the eternal salvation of your soul.

Be not deceived with a vain and presumptuous expectation of God's favour, nor say within yourself, Peace, peace, where there is no peace; for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. God is not mocked; he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and without holiness no man shall see the Lord. On the other hand, despair not of God's mercy, though trouble is on every side; for God shutteth not up his mercies for ever in displeasure: but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do not either way abuse the goodness of God, who calleth us mercifully to amendment, and of his endless pity promiseth us forgiveness of that which is past, if with a perfect and a true heart we return unto him.

Since therefore you are soon to pass into an endless and unchangeable state, and your future happiness or misery depends upon the few moments which are left you, I require you strictly to examine yourself, and your estate both towards God and towards man; and let no worldly consideration hinder you from making a true and full confession of your sins, and giving all the satisfaction which is in your power to every one whom you have wronged or injured; that you may find mercy at your heavenly Father's hand, for Christ's sake, and not be condemned in the dreadful day

of judgment.

Lastly, beloved, submit yourself with Christian resignation to the just judgment of God, which your own crimes have brought upon you, and be in charity with all men; being ready sincerely to forgive all such as have offended you, not excepting those who have prosecuted you even unto death: and, though this may seem a hard saying, yet know assuredly, that without it your charity is not yet perfect. And fail not earnestly to endeavour and pray for this blessed temper and composure of mind. So may you cast yourself with an entire dependence upon the mercies of God, through the merits of our Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

¶ *Here the Minister shall examine him concerning his faith, and rehearse the Articles of the Creed, Dost thou believe in God, &c. And the Criminal shall answer,*

All this I steadfastly believe.

¶ *Then shall the Minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, exhorting him to a particular confession of the sin for which he is condemned; and upon confession, he shall instruct him what satisfaction ought to be made to those whom he has offended thereby; and if he knoweth any combinations in wickedness, or any evil practices designed against others, let him be admonished to the utmost of his power to discover and prevent them.*

¶ *After his confession, the Priest shall declare to him the pardoning mercy of God, in the form which is used in the Communion Service.*

¶ *After which shall be said the Collect following.*

O HOLY Jesus, who, of thine infinite goodness, didst accept the conversion of a sinner on the cross; Open thine eye of mercy upon this thy servant, who desireth pardon and forgiveness, though in *his* latest hour *he* turneth unto thee. Renew in *him* whatsoever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by *his* own carnal will and frailness. Consider *his* contrition; accept *his* repentance; and forasmuch as *he* putteth *his* full trust only in thy mercy, impute not unto *him* *his* former sins, but strengthen *him* with thy blessed Spirit: and when thou art pleased to take *him* hence, take *him* unto thy favour. This we beg through thy merits, O Lord, our Saviour and our Redeemer. *Amen.*

¶ *Then shall the Minister say,*

O FATHER of mercies, and God of all comfort; We fly unto thee for succour in behalf of this thy servant, who is now under the sentence of condemnation. The day of *his*

calamity is at hand, and *he* is accounted as one of those who go down into the pit. Blessed Lord, remember thy mercies; look upon *his* infirmities; hear the voice of *his* complaint; give *him*, we beseech thee, patience in this *his* time of adversity, and support under the terrors which encompass him; set before *his* eyes the things *he hath* done in the body, which have justly provoked thee to anger; and forasmuch as *his* continuance appeareth to be short amongst us, quicken *him* so much the more by thy grace and Holy Spirit; that *he*, being converted and reconciled unto thee, before thy judgments have cut *him* off from the earth, may at the hour of *his* death depart in peace, and be received into thine everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ *Adding this.*

O SAVIOUR of the world, who by thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us; Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech. thee, O Lord.

¶ *Then the Minister, standing shall say,*

IN the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?

Yet, O Lord God, most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.

¶ *Then the Minister shall say,*

THE Almighty God, who is a most strong tower to all those who put their trust in him, to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey, Be now and evermore thy defence; and make thee know and feel, that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

¶ *And after that shall say,*

UNTO God's gracious mercy and protection we commit thee. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, both now and evermore. *Amen.*

¶ *At the time of Execution, besides all, or such parts of the foregoing Office as, the Minister shall judge proper, shall be said the Commendatory Prayer for a person at the point of departure, as it is in the Visitation of the Sick.*

The Collect for the Communion Service.

O GOD, who declarest thy almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity; We beseech thee to have mercy upon this thy servant, who for *his* transgressions is appointed to die. Grant that *he* may take thy judgments patiently, and repent *him* truly of *his* sins; that *he* recovering thy favour, the fearful reward of *his* actions may end with this life; and whensoever *his* soul shall depart from the body it may be without spot presented unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Epistle. Heb. xii. 11.

NO chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.

The Gospel. St. John v. 24.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

A Prayer for imprisoned Debtors.

MOST gracious God, look down in pity and compassion upon these thine afflicted servants, who are fallen under the misery of a close restraint. Give them always a deep sense of their sins, and of thy fatherly love and correction; and the more their confinement presseth hard upon them, the more let the comforts of thy grace and mercy abound towards them. Give to their creditors tenderness and compassion, and

to them a meek and forgiving spirit towards all those who have confined them, and a full purpose to repair all the injuries and losses which others have sustained by them. Raise them up friends to pity and relieve them; give them the continued comfort of thy countenance here; and so sanctify their afflictions, that they may work for them an eternal weight of glory through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. *Amen.*
