**Friday Morning Prayer – Terce**

Bell x3

O God, come to our aid.

**O Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory be to you, Source of all Being,

eternal Word, and Holy Spirit,

**as it was in the beginning,**

**is now, and ever shall be,**

**world without end.**

**Amen.**

*Silence is kept.*

You move us to delight in praising You;

for You have made us for Yourself,

**And our hearts are restless**

**until they rest in You**.

We adore you, Christ, and we bless you.

**By your cross you have redeemed the world.**

**Hymn: O Sacred Neck**

**Stations Of the Cross – Malcolm Guite**

**I Jesus is condemned to death**

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice

With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers

Of perception and discrimination, choice,

Decision, all his years, his days and hours,

His consciousness of self, his every sense,

Are given by this prisoner, freely given.

The man who stands there making no defence,

Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.

And he bears Pilate’s heart in his and feels

That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts

It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.

He gives himself again with all his gifts

Into our hands. As Pilate turns away

A door swings open. This is judgment day.

Bell

**II Jesus is given his cross**

He gives himself again with all his gifts

And now we give him something in return.

He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,

Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,

And from these elements he forged the iron,

From strands of life he wove the growing wood,

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion

He saw it all and saw that it is good.

We took his iron to edge an axe’s blade,

We took the axe and laid it to the tree,

We made a cross of all that he has made,

And laid it on the one who made us free.

Now he receives again and lifts on high

The gifts he gave and we have turned awry.

Bell

**III Jesus falls the first time**

He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion

And well he knows the path we make him tread

He met the devil as a roaring lion

And still refused to turn these stones to bread,

Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,

This darker path into the heart of pain.

And now he falls upon the stones that bruise

The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.

He and the earth he made were never closer,

Divinity and dust come face to face.

We flinch back from his via dolorosa,

He sets his face like flint and takes our place,

Staggers beneath the black weight of us all

And falls with us that he might break our fall.

Bell

**IV Jesus meets His Mother**

This darker path into the heart of pain

Was also hers whose love enfolded him

In flesh and wove him in her womb. Again

The sword is piercing. She, who cradled him

And gentled and protected her young son

Must stand and watch the cruelty that mars

Her maiden making. Waves of pain that stun

And sicken pass across his face and hers

As their eyes meet. Now she enfolds the world

He loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared

Who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled

In desperation on this road of tears,

All the grief-stricken in their last despair,

Are folded in the mantle of her prayer.

Bell

**V Simon of Cyrene carries the cross**

In desperation on this road of tears

Bystanders and bypassers turn away

In other’s pain we face our own worst fears

And turn our backs to keep those fears at bay

Unless we are compelled as this man was

By force of arms or force of circumstance

To face and feel and carry someone’s cross

In Love’s full glare and not his backward glance.

So Simon, no disciple, still fulfilled

The calling: ‘take the cross and follow me’.

By accident his life was stalled and stilled

Becoming all he was compelled to be.

Make me, like him, your pressed man and your priest,

Your alter Christus, burdened and released.

Bell

**VI Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

Bystanders and bypassers turn away

And wipe his image from their memory

She keeps her station. She is here to stay

And stem the flow. She is the reliquary

Of his last look on her. The bloody sweat

And salt tears of his love are soaking through

The folds of her devotion and the wet

folds of her handkerchief, like the dew

Of morning, like a softening rain of grace.

Because she wiped the grime from off his skin,

And glimpsed the godhead in his human face

Whose hidden image we all bear within,

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain

The face of god is shining once again.

Bell

**VII Jesus falls the second time**

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain,

Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,

He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again

When we are hurt again. With us he bears

The cruel repetitions of our cruelty;

The beatings of already beaten men,

The second rounds of torture, the futility

Of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.

And by this fall he finds the fallen souls

Who passed a first, but failed a second trial,

The souls who thought their faith would hold them whole

And found it only held them for a while.

Be with us when the road is twice as long

As we can bear. By weakness make us strong.

Bell

**VIII Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**

He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again

But still he holds the road and looks in love

On all of us who look on him. Our pain

As close to him as his. These women move

Compassion in him as he does in them.

He asks us both to weep and not to weep.

Women of Gaza and Jerusalem,

Women of every nation where the deep

Wounds of memory divide the land

And lives of all your children, where the mines

Of all our wars are sown:

he reads the signs

And weeps with you and with you he will stay

Until the day he wipes your tears away.

Bell

**IX Jesus falls the third time**

He weeps with you and with you he will stay

When all your staying power has run out

You can’t go on, you go on anyway.

He stumbles just beside you when the doubt

That always haunts you, cuts you down at last

And takes away the hope that drove you on.

This is the third fall and it hurts the worst

This long descent through darkness to depression

From which there seems no rising and no will

To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.

Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,

And you could almost wish for that defeat

Except that in the cold hell where you freeze

You find your God beside you on his knees.

Bell

**X Jesus is stripped of His garments**

You can’t go on, you go on anyway

He goes with you, his cradle to your grave.

Now is the time to loosen, cast away

The useless weight of everything but love

For he began his letting go before,

Before the worlds for which he dies were made,

Emptied himself, became one of the poor,

To make you rich in him and unafraid.

See as they strip the robe from off his back

They strip away your own defences too

Now you could lose it all and never lack

Now you can see what naked Love can do

Let go these bonds beneath whose weight you bow

His stripping strips you both for action now

Bell

**XI Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross**

See, as they strip the robe from off his back

And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,

And love is firmly fastened onto loss.

But here a pure change happens. On this tree

Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.

Here wounding heals and fastening makes free

Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.

And here we see the length, the breadth, the height

Where love and hatred meet and love stays true

Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light

We see what love can bear and be and do,

And here our saviour calls us to his side

His love is free, his arms are open wide.

Bell

**XII Jesus dies on the cross**

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black

We watch him as he labours to draw breath

He takes our breath away to give it back,

Return it to it’s birth through his slow death.

We hear him struggle breathing through the pain

Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,

Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain

And drew us into consciousness from sleep.

His spirit and his life he breathes in all

Mantles his world in his one atmosphere

And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall

Of our pollutions, draw our injured air

To cleanse it and renew. His final breath

Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.

Bell

Silence

Let us pray,

Tender One,  
You hold all the world’s grief close.  
With every word that cuts,  
every policy that demeans,  
every act of violence or corruption,  
You draw near to the ones who ache.  
You comfort the broken hearted  
and shore up beside the afflicted.

We know it’s not enough only to weep,  
but your compassion reminds us  
we cannot mend the world  
without bearing witness to its sorrow.

Keep us from despair that overcomes,  
but never let us become strangers to the world’s ache –  
turning away from the pain of our neighbor,  
or growing accustomed to violence that shouldn’t be.

Whatever evil may befall us,  
whatever destruction we may witness,  
may we never grow cold to Love  
or be convinced of the inevitability of cruelty.

Jesus, ever-present to the pain around him,  
did not escape into the safety of indifference –  
even in the shadow of the cross.  
His care for the suffering  
and his confidence in your liberating ways,  
made him kind,  
softened him to even the hardest hearts,  
and kindled in him Your love for humanity.

Love that appears foolish.  
Love that resists evil.  
Love that makes way for the Kindom.

Make it so among us, O God,  
and lead us in the ways of compassion.

Bell x3