



*1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.
2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence
to save me. 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and
guide me. 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.
5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. (Psalms
31:1-5)*

The prayer of the shepherd Psalmist of Israel is the prayer of all who repent of their sins and cast all their burdens upon that magnanimous altar of Mercy made available in the shed blood of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This ancient Lenten hymn, *O Kind Creator, Bow Thine Ear*, calls our consciences to the Pillar and Post of our Salvation in Christ. There is nothing of prideful nature to be found in its beautiful lyrics. The lyrics were composed, by attribution, to Gregory I in the sixth century. The musical score, *Jesu Carona, Canons*, used today is composed by one of the greatest composers ever to see the light of day, George Fredrick Handel. (1685-1759)

O Kind Creator, Bow Thine Ear

*O Kind Creator, bow thine ear
to mark the cry, to know the tear
before thy throne of mercy spent
in this thy holy fast of Lent.*

*Our hearts are open, Lord, to thee:
thou knowest our infirmity;
pour out on all who seek thy face
abundance of thy pardoning grace.*

*Our sins are many, this we know;
spare us, good Lord, thy mercy show;
and for the honor of thy name
our fainting souls to life reclaim.*

*Give us the self-control that springs
from discipline of outward things,
that fasting inward secretly
the soul may purely dwell with thee.*

*We pray thee, Holy Trinity,
one God, unchanging Unity,
that we from this our abstinence
may reap the fruits of penitence.*

“O Kind Creator, bow thine ear to mark the cry, to know the tear before thy throne of mercy spent in this thy holy fast of Lent.” To whom is our prayer of Lenten Fast addressed? Is it not to the Kind Creator of our lives and souls, Jesus Christ? (John 1:1-3) Knowing the Majesty, to whom our petitions are made, to be the Lord of Lord, and King of Kings, perhaps our reverence and humility will be at its zenith. It is beyond sound logic that such an high Sovereign would deign to bend an ear to hear the prayers of such unworthies as we are, but He does. He is an amazing Savior who bled and died for us while we were yet enemies. He knows both the sound and source of our crying. The tears we shed should be surrendered to One who is able to bear them without hard judgment. Is it not the Lord who will take our tears and store them up in Heaven? *“Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?”* (Psalms 56:8) Perhaps these tears are those that washed the feet of Jesus at Simon’s House. We fast not unto ourselves, but for Him before whose Throne we seek for Mercy.

“Our hearts are open, Lord, to thee: thou knowest our infirmity; pour out on all who seek thy face abundance of thy pardoning grace.” Our hearts are always open to Christ. He knows every mystery and thought of it; however, our hearts in prayer are open to Him in faith and Communion. We pray such thoughts at the commencement of every Holy Communion in the Collect for Purity: *“ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.”* He knows that we are weak as water, yet, in Him, we are made strong. All who diligently seek His face shall find Him, and with the finding, find pardoning grace and mercy. It is fitting that every fast be broken with Communion to the Lord.

“Our sins are many, this we know; spare us, good Lord, thy mercy show; and for the honor of thy name our fainting souls to life reclaim.” Are your sins as many? Yes, for even if you have only one on your charge sheet, that is one too many to enter into the gates of Heaven. Of course, we all were burdened down with more sin than we could even remember. *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: **though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.** 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.* (Isaiah 1:18-20) Since there is no sacrifice we can make to atone for a single sin, or any good work we can claim that will justify, there is only one sacrifice that will suffice – the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has considered it honor to redeem us. What a great discredit and dishonor we do His Holy Name when we reject that mighty salvation and kindly offering!

“Give us the self-control that springs from discipline of outward things, that fasting inward secretly the soul may purely dwell with thee.” That self-control that springs forth from things outwardly is gained during holy and reverent worship, and living a

life of love that reflects the inward quality of that love. Our fasting is, indeed, to be an inward fasting so that no man knows but our own hearts. The hidden fast that we practice will not be heralded by an uncomely smear of ashes on our forehead to boast to others of our piety, but an ash-heap of such smeared upon the door posts and lintels of our hearts. *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* (Matt 6:16-18) To be absent (in outward appearances) is to be present with the Lord (in His Throne Room of your heart).

“We pray thee, Holy Trinity, one God, unchanging Unity, that we from this our abstinence may reap the fruits of penitence.” How is it possible to pray to the Trinity as an unchanging Unity? The Holy Trinity is comprised by Three Persons in One. How can they be One? Because they agree in every point. If we are truly in Christ, we, too, are One with Christ and, therefore, One with the Father and Holy Ghost. *“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”* (John 17:11-12) *“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (John 17:22-23)

Abstinence from sin is penitence toward God. Have we fasted from our sins? If we were able to do that, what of the opposite side of the coin – good works? Have we labored to satisfy the desperate need of the man by the wayside on the Jericho road? Has our former hearts of greed and selfish want been changed to hearts of love and compassion? If not, it matters not what works of contrition or penitence we perform, for without love, all of our good works are of no worth. (1 Cor 13)