



The Martyrs of Memphis
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ST. MARY'S SERVICE OF HOLY EUCHARIST

Including a reflection on the life and witness of

**THE MARTYRS OF MEMPHIS: CONSTANCE, THECLA, RUTH, & FRANCES,
CHARLES PARSONS, AND LOUIS SCHUYLER,
1878**

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

<https://godsvievw.zoom.us/j/81608666258>

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Celebrant: God be with you

People: ***And also with you.***

Celebrant: Let us pray.

We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of the Martyrs of Memphis, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death; Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PSALM 17:6-10

Psalter

The St. Helena

I call upon you, O God, for you will answer me;
incline your ear to me and hear my words.

Show me your marvelous loving-kindness,

O Savior of those who take refuge at your right hand from those who rise up against them.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me under the shadow of your wings,

From the wicked who assault me,
from my deadly enemies who surround me.

They have closed their heart to pity,
and their mouth speaks proud things.

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John 12:24-28

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'

The Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God.

REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS OF MEMPHIS

In August 1878, yellow fever invaded the city of Memphis, Tennessee, for the third time in ten years. By the month's end, the disease had become epidemic and a quarantine was ordered. While more than 25,000 citizens had fled in terror, nearly 20,000 more remained to face the pestilence. As cases multiplied, the death toll averaged 200 people per day. When the worst was over, ninety percent of the people who remained had contracted the fever and more than 5,000 people had died.

In that time of panic and flight, many brave men and women, both lay and ordained, remained at their posts of duty or came as volunteers to assist in spite of the terrible risk. Notable among these heroes were four Episcopal sisters from the Community of Saint Mary, and two of their clergy colleagues, all of whom died while tending to the sick. They have ever since been known as "The Martyrs of Memphis," as have those of other communions who ministered in Christ's name during this time of desolation.

The Sisters had come to Memphis in 1873, at Bishop Quintard's request, to found a school for girls adjacent to St. Mary's Cathedral. When the 1878 epidemic began, George C. Harris, the

cathedral dean, and Sister Constance immediately organized relief work among the stricken. Helping were six of Constance's fellow Sisters of St. Mary, plus Sister Clare from St. Margaret's House, Boston, Massachusetts; the Reverend Charles C. Parsons, Rector of Grace and St. Lazarus Church, Memphis; and the Reverend Louis S. Schuyler, assistant at Holy Innocents, Hoboken, New Jersey. The cathedral group also included three physicians, two of whom were ordained Episcopal priests, the Sisters' two matrons, and several volunteer nurses from New York.

The cathedral buildings were located in the most infected region of Memphis. Here, amid sweltering heat and scenes of indescribable horror, these men and women of God gave relief to the sick, comfort to the dying, and homes to the many orphaned children. Only two of the workers escaped the fever. Among those who died were Sisters Constance, Thecla, Ruth, and Frances from the Community of Saint Mary, the Reverend Charles Parsons, and the Reverend Louis Schuyler. All six are buried at Elmwood Cemetery. The monument marking the joint grave of Fathers Parsons and Schuyler bears the inscription: "Greater Love Hath No Man." The high altar in St. Mary's Cathedral, Memphis, is a memorial to the four Sisters.

PRAYERS

Prayers may be offered, silently or aloud.

HOLY EUCHARIST

Form A (*Enriching Our Worship*, p. 65)

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all your saints, who have been the chosen vessels of your grace, and the lights of the world in their generations.

And so we join the saints and angels in proclaiming your glory, as we say,

Celebrant and People

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.***

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

And so, Loving God, we who have been redeemed by Christ, and made a new people by water and the Spirit, now bring before you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night before he died for us, our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

The Celebrant then continues

We now celebrate, O God, the memorial of Christ our Savior. By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of Christ's death, and proclaim the resurrection, until Christ comes in glory. Gather us by this Holy Communion into one body in the Risen One, and make us a living sacrifice of praise. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

And now, in the words Christ taught us, we are bold to pray, saying,

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Eternal and Life-Giving God, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

THE PEACE