

The Collect of the Day: Lord Jesus Christ, who willingly walked the way of the cross: Strengthen your church through the witness of your servants Agnes Tsao Kou Ying, Agatha Lin Zhao, and Lucy Yi Zhenmei to hold fast to the path of discipleship even unto death; for with the Father and Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 25 *Read responsively by the half-verse, breaking at the asterisk.*

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- 1 To you, O Lord, * **I lift up my soul;**
- 2 my God, I put my trust in you; * **let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**
- 3 Let none who look to you be put to shame; * **let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**
- 4 Show me your ways, O Lord, * **and teach me your paths.**
- 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.
- 6 Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, * **for they are from everlasting.**
- 7 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.
- 8 Gracious and upright are you, O Lord; * **therefore you teach sinners in your way.**
- 9 You guide the humble in doing right * **and teach your way to the lowly.**
- 10 O Lord, all your paths are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.
- 11 For your name's sake, O Lord, * **forgive my sin, for it is great.**
- 12 Who are they who fear you, O Lord? * **You will teach them the way that they should choose.**
- 13 They shall dwell in prosperity, * **and their offspring shall inherit the land.**
- 14 You are a friend to those who fear you * **and will show them your covenant.**
- 15 My eyes are ever looking to you, O Lord, * **for you shall pluck my feet out of the net.**
- 16 Turn to me and have pity on me, * **for I am left alone and in misery.**
- 17 The sorrows of my heart have increased; * **bring me out of my troubles.**
- 18 Look upon my adversity and misery * **and forgive me all my sin.**
- 19 Look upon my enemies, for they are many, * **and they bear a violent hatred against me.**
- 20 Protect my life and deliver me; * **let me not be put to shame, for I have trusted in you.**
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, * **for my hope has been in you.**
- 22 Deliver Israel, O God, * **out of all their troubles.**

First Reading: A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (6:16-18)

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew (25:1-13)

Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other

bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Agnes Tsao Kou Ying, 1856, Agatha Lin Zhao 1858, Lucy Yi Zhenmei, 1862, Catechists and Martyrs:

Tsao Kou Ying, Agatha Lin Zhao, and Lucy Yi Zhenmei were three lay catechists who were martyred in China in the mid-nineteenth century for refusing to renounce the Christian faith. Although Christians were persecuted at this time in large part because of the association between the Christian religion and imperial colonialism, all three of these women were raised within Chinese Christian families, and saw no conflict between their identity as Christians and their identity as Chinese women. All three were canonized by the Roman Catholic Church on October 1, 2000.

Agnes Tsao Kou Ying was born in the small village of Wujiashai in Guizhou Province in 1821. She was orphaned at a young age, and had to work to support herself. She married at age 18, but was treated poorly by her in-laws because they disapproved of her Christian faith. After only two years of marriage, her husband died, and she took shelter with an elderly Christian widow who taught her more about the faith. In 1852, the missionary priest Fr. Auguste Chapdelaine heard of her education in the scriptures and in Christian doctrine, and he invited her to accompany him to the province of Guangxi in order to catechize women and children there. After four years of this work, however, they were both arrested and tortured to death. Agnes Tsao Kou Ying died on January 22, 1856.

Agatha Lin Zhao was born in 1817, the only child of Christian parents. She had many suitors, and her parents had arranged an advantageous marriage for her. However, when she was 18 she asked to be released from the betrothal, and to dedicate herself to work in the church as a single laywoman instead. This was a considerable sacrifice for her parents since it would end their family line, but they agreed to her wish. She earned a university degree, and then returned to her home to run a school for girls. She was arrested in 1857, although she defended herself by protesting that she had been preparing the girls to be good wives since she was teaching them traditional Chinese culture and manners. When she refused to renounce her Christian faith, however, she was executed on January 28, 1858.

Lucy Yi Zhenmei was born to a Catholic family in Sichuan on December 9, 1815. Keenly interested in theological and historical studies, she began university studies but her health and family circumstances did not permit her to continue. Instead, after the death of her father, she lived at home with her mother and brother and worked to support her family. She assisted in the parish by teaching at the local school and by catechizing women and children. Although the church offered to pay her for her work, she insisted upon working for free in order to give something back to the church. In 1862 she accompanied Fr. Wen Nair to open a new Christian mission, but this effort was received poorly by the local authorities. They and three other Christian leaders were arrested and sentenced to death without a formal trial. Lucy Yi Zhenmei was executed by beheading on February 19, 1862.