

CONFESSING CHRIST - DAILY LECTIONARY AND PRAYERS

Advent/Christmas/Epiphany Seasons, 2012-2013

Frederick R. Trost and Colleen Darling, Editors

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"Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth,
and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long."

(Psalm 25:4-5)

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First Sunday in Advent, 12/02	Jeremiah 33:14-16 +1980 Maura Clarke +1980 Jean Donovan +1980 Ita Ford +1980 Dorothy Kazel	Robert E. Kasper Elgin, IL
Monday, 12/03	Luke 21:25-36	Christoph Keienburg Paderborn, Germany
Tuesday, 12/04	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 +306 St. Barbara	William Kesting Cleveland, WI
Wednesday, 12/05	Isaiah 2:1-5 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott +1791 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Ray F. Kibler Claremont, CA
Thursday, 12/06	2 Peter 3:1-10 +343 St. Nicholas	Russell Kimmerly Harrison, OH
Friday, 12/07	2 Peter 3:11-18 1965, Gaudium et Spes	Stodden G. N. King Orange, CT

Saturday, 12/08	Matthew 25:31-6 +1691, Richard Baxter +1977, Sr. Alice Domon (Disappeared, Argentina, Mothers of May Square)	Paul Kittlaus Claremont, CA
Second Sunday in Advent, 12/09	Luke 3:1-6	Armin F. Klemme Union, MO
Monday, 12/10	Luke 3:7-14 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights +1968, Karl Barth +1977, Sr. Leonie Duquet (Disappeared Argentina, Mothers of May Square)	Russell Knoth Germantown, WI
Tuesday, 12/11	Luke 3:15-17	Robert Koenig Wernersville, PA
Wednesday, 12/12	Luke 3:18-22	Paul Koepke Goshen, IN
Thursday, 12/13	Philippians 1:3-14	Gerhard & Ruth Koslowsky Bruehl, Germany
Friday, 12/14	Revelation 1:1-8	David Kratz Seattle, WA
Saturday, 12/15	Joel 2:12-13 1791, Bill of Rights	Howard & Martha Kriebel Collegeville, PA
Third Sunday in Advent, 12/16	Isaiah 12:2-6	Karl & Kathryn Kuhn Kiel, WI
Monday, 12/17	Philippians 4:4-7	Juergen Kunellis Moers, Germany
Tuesday, 12/18	Philippians 4:8-9 1865, Abolition of Slavery (U.S.) *1946, Steve Biko	Fred Kurkowski Clemmons, NC

Wednesday, 12/19	Zephaniah 3:14-20 +220, Clement of Alexandria	Thomas B. Lane Bradenton, FL
Thursday, 12/20	3 John vss. 2-4	Allen Lang Oxford, NY
Friday, 12/21	Isaiah 40:1-5	Andy Lang Cleveland, OH
Saturday, 12/22	Isaiah 40:6-11	David Lauer Elkhart Lake, WI
Fourth Sunday in Advent, 12/23	Luke 1:39-45	Elizabeth D. Lauren Chicago, IL
Christmas Eve, Monday, 12/24	Isaiah 9:2-7	Carl W. Lavin New Braunfels, TX

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.”

(Luke 1:68)

Christmas Day, Tuesday, 12/25	Luke 2:1-14	John Lengel Richland, PA
Wednesday, 12/26	Luke 2:14-20 Day of St. Stephen, Martyr	Wanda Lester Salisbury, PA
Thursday, 12/27	Psalm 147:7-11 Day of St. John the Evangelist	John C. Lombard Concord, MA
Friday, 12/28	Psalm 148:1-6 Day of Holy Innocents, Martyrs	Anna Lutz Lancaster, PA
Saturday, 12/29	Psalm 150	Brad S. Lutz Fort Lauderdale, FL
First Sunday after Christmas, 12/30	Hebrews 1:10-12 +1968, Hans Asmussen	Charles Mackley Clear Spring, MD

New Year's Eve, Monday, 12/31	Psalm 121 1915, Fellowship of Reconciliation	Robert J. MacLeod Millbury, MA
New Year's Day, Tuesday, 1/01/13	Psalm 8 *1484, Huldreich Zwingli 1863, Emancipation Proclamation Day of Prayer for Peace	Alan Macy Great Barrington, MA
Wednesday, 1/02	James 4:13-15	James Martin & Jennifer Dawson Fond du Lac, WI
Thursday, 1/03	Psalm 46:1-3	George C. Martz New Bloomfield, PA
Friday, 1/04	Psalm 48:9-14	James N. McCutcheon Brewster, MA
Saturday, 1/05	Psalm 117	

“Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

(Psalm 114:7-8)

Festival of the Epiphany, Sunday 1/06	Matthew 2:1-11	Sr. Maureen McDonnell Madison, WI
Monday, 1/07	Matthew 2:13-15	Duane McDonough Cedarville, IL
Tuesday, 1/08	Isaiah 42:5-9 *1894, Maximilian Kolbe +1996 Sadao Watanabe	Robert Meyer Fontana, WI
Wednesday, 1/09	John 3:16-21	David Michael Madison, WI
Thursday, 1/10	Colossians 1:15-20	Carl Miehke Arlington Heights, IL

Friday, 1/11	Galatians 5:13-15 *1907 Abraham Joshua Heschel	Joseph E. Mills, III Westchester, IL
Saturday, 1/12	John 15:7-11 1957, Southern Christian Leadership Conference	Larry Mitchell Chico, CA
First Sunday after Epiphany 1/13	Isaiah 60:1-6 +1691, George Fox *1931, Maura Clarke	John C. Modschiedler Chicago, IL
Monday, 1/14	Luke 3:15-21 +368 Hilary of Poitiers *1875 Albert Schweitzer	Henry A. Mol Whitewater, WI
Tuesday, 1/15	Psalms 29:1-4 *1929, Martin Luther King, Jr.	Donald Morgan Rocky Hill, CT
Wednesday, 1/16	Psalms 29:5-11 1992, El Salvador Peace Accords	Ray Morris, Jr. Gowanda, NY
Thursday, 1/17	Ephesians 1:3-14	David Moyer De Forest, WI
Friday, 1/18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25)	Matthew 7:7-8	Calvin Mutti Brewster, MA
Saturday, 1/19	Matthew 6:7-13 1563, Heidelberg Catechism	Edwin M. Neff Newland, NC
Second Sunday after Epiphany 1/20	John 2:1-11 1529, Luther's "Small Catechism" 1993, Guatemalan refugees return from Southern Mexico *1925, Ernesto Cardenal	David C. Norling White River Jct., VT
Monday, 1/21	Isaiah 62:1-5	Robert O'Donnell New Market, NH

Tuesday, 1/22	1 Corinthians 12:1-11	Ruth Olson Mequon, WI
Wednesday, 1/23	1 Corinthians 12:12-26	Jan Overton Norton, MA
Thursday, 1/24	1 Corinthians 12:27-31	Doris Paine Wernersville, PA
Friday, 1/25	Psalm 66:1-2 +1586, Lucas Cranach the Younger	Nancy Panzer Kewaskum, WI
Saturday, 1/26	Psalm 148:9-14 *155, Polycarp 1945, Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau	John Payne Lancaster, PA
Third Sunday after Epiphany 1/27 (Septuagesima)	Luke 4:1-13 1967, Outer Space Weapon Treaty	Thomas Perl Las Vegas, NV
Monday, 1/28	Luke 4:14-20 +1972, Mahalia Jackson	Mark Pirazzini Eau Claire, WI
Tuesday, 1/29	Luke 4:21-30	Dietmar Plajer Selinsgrove, PA
Wednesday, 1/30	Luke 4:31-37 +1948, Mahatma Gandhi +1987, Gerhard W. Grauer	Carmen & May Porco Madison, WI
Thursday, 1/31	Luke 4:38-41 *1915, Thomas Merton +1955, John R. Mott	Emily B. Preston Jaffrey, NH
Friday, 2/01	Luke 4:42-44 +110, Ignatius of Antioch	Richard H. Price Langhorne, PA
Saturday, 2/02	Psalm 61:1-5 *1909, Simone Weil	William & Clara Rader Dauphin, PA

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany 2/03 (Sexagesima)	Psalm 71:1-6 *1913, Rosa Parks	Philip Ramstad Eden Prairie, MN
Monday, 2/04	Psalm 18:1-6 *1906, Dietrich Bonhoeffer	Thomas Ressler St. Louis, MO
Tuesday, 2/05	Psalm 18:25-30	Mark A. Rideout Somersworth, NH
Wednesday, 2/06	Mark 1:16-20	Franz Rigert Cedarburg, WI
Thursday, 2/07	Mark 1:21-28 *1909, Dom Helder Câmara	Edzard Rohland Bonn, Germany
Friday, 2/08	Mark 1:29-34 *1878, Martin Buber	Homer Royer East Greenville, PA
Saturday, 2/09	Mark 1:35-45	St. Matthews UCC Hamburg, NY
Last Sunday after Epiphany 2/10 (Estomihi)	Psalm 14:1-6	Paul Sangree Foxboro, MA
Monday, 2/11	Psalm 108:1-4 1531, Reformation in England 1889, Freedom of Religion in Japan 1990, Nelson Mandela freed	Rudy Schade La Grange, IL
Tuesday, 2/12	Isaiah 43:1-2 *1809, Abraham Lincoln *1817, Frederick Douglass 1909, NAACP founded	Gerhard W. Schmidt West Lafayette, IN

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PRAYERS AND RESOURCES FOR THE
ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/EPIPHANY SEASONS, 2012-2013

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Confession of Sin:

O God, who has caused a rose to blossom in the desert
and has established a star in the deep of night to awaken hope
among all who are tempted to lose heart, forgive our foolish ways:

Grant us grace to hear the song the angels sing, that we might bow down in the
presence of Jesus, despite the contradictions and betrayals that wound our
discipleship.

We confess again today the stirrings of self-will within our
hearts; the cowardly avoidance of necessary duty, the rebellious shrinking
from the suffering of others, the discontentment with our lot.

Most gracious God, set us free from un-creaturely pride, from un-disciplined
thought, from un-willingness to learn and un-readiness to serve.

Lift us up, together with all who long for communion with Emmanuel, that we
might take our place among the humble shepherds,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Frederick Trost, based on a prayer by John Baillie)

Moments of Silence

Assurance of Pardon: Jesus looked up and said to the sinner:

“Where are your accusers?”

“Has no one condemned you?”

“Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”

(Book of Worship, UCC (82), John 8:10-11, adapted)

Moments of Silence

Readings from a psalm (1 Advent – Psalm 35:27-28)

(2 Advent – Psalm 24:7-10)

(3 Advent – Psalm 85:2-8)

(4 Advent – Psalm 102:18-22)

(Christmastide – Psalm 96)

(New Year's Eve – Psalm 103:1-5)

(New Year's Day – Psalm 8)

(Epiphany – Psalm 72:1-4)

Moments of Silence

Affirmation of Faith: (Based on the Barmen Declaration of 1934)

We believe that Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death. He is also God's mighty claim on our whole life; in him we encounter a joyous liberation from the godless claims of this world to free and thankful service to his creatures. We believe that the Christian Church is the community of brothers and sisters in whom Jesus Christ presently works in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Spirit. With its faith as well as its obedience, with its message as well as its ordinances, it has to witness in the midst of the world that it is his alone, that it wishes to live only by his comfort and his counsel in expectation of his appearance. The Word of God endures forever.

(or the UCC Statement of Faith may be used)

Prayer of the Faithful:

(Advent) Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer)

(Christmas) O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

(The Book of Common Prayer)

(Epiphany) O God, who by the leading of a star did manifest Your only-begotten Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know You now by faith, to Your presence, where we may behold Your glory face to face; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one, God, now and forever.

(The Book of Common Prayer)

A Prayer for the New Year:

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in the darkness for the godly; grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what You would have us do, that the Spirit of Wisdom may save us from all false choices and that in Your light we may see light, and in Your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(attributed to a collection of William Bright)

[William Bright, 1824-1901, was a Church historian and a patristic scholar who taught at Oxford University. He was well-known for his prayers, sermons and other devotional works. In 1857, his "Ancient Collects and Other Prayers Selected from Various Rituals" was published. A few years later, with P. G. Medd, he edited a Latin translation of the English prayer book. His writings also included "A History of the Church from the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313 to the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451." See "The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge," Volume III]

Free Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing: May the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, keep guard over our hearts and our thoughts in Jesus Christ, now and forever.

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The Coming of Christ:

Now as to why (Christ) came. We may be sure that some great matter was at stake to make such majesty deign thus to come from so far off to such a worthless place – a great cause, certainly because mercy is great, because pity is much, and love is overflowing. But we shall not need to cudgel our brains to find out what it was, for his own words and works proclaim it openly. He hastened from the mountains to seek the hundredth sheep that was astray (see Luke 3:1-6). I want to know however why he was pleased to come to us, rather than that we should go to him. Ours was the need, and it is not the custom for the rich to go to the poor. It would have been more suitable for us to go to him, but a twofold obstacle made this impossible. Our eyes were darkened; and he dwells in light to which no human being may approach. We, lying paralyzed upon our bed, had not the power to reach the heights of God. So the most kind Savior and physician of souls came down from his lofty place, and tempered his rightness to the weakness of our eyes. In that most pure and glorious body that he took, he covered his own light as in a lamp...

(Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153 C.E.)

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“Behold, the Lamb of God”:

“When John heard in the prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’” (See Matthew 11:2-11). As though John would say to his disciples: “There, you hear of his works, such as I never accomplished, nor anyone else before him. Now go to him and ask him whether or not he is the One that is come. Put away the gross worldly deception that he would ride on steeds in armor. He is increasing, but I must now decrease; my work must cease, but his must continue; you must leave me and cling to him.” How necessary it was for John to point his disciples away from himself to Christ is very clear. For what benefit would it have been to them if they had depended a thousand times on John’s piety and had not embraced Christ? Without Christ, there is no help or remedy, no matter how pious we may be...

(Martin Luther, 1483-1546)

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God Among Us:

... Imagine the Sunday over, the time of rest and refreshment at an end, and that you are gathered together for some purpose of worldly business; at market, for instance, or in a shop, or working together in any manner. Here again the saying will be true, “Among you stands one whom you do not know...” (See John 1:19-28). He who once spoke from heaven in thunder, “You shall not steal”; He who cannot bear any manner of cheating, fraud, injustice, or wrong; He is with the tradesman behind the counter, with the dealer in the fair or market, with the thresher in the barn, with the servant in the storehouse or garden. He knows all the liberties we ever take, either in helping ourselves secretly or in bargaining unfairly to our own advantage. He knows all the falsehood (we) tell in such matters, all the grudging and envious thoughts, the bitter and angry words to which we are tempted. He knows when the hired laborer neglects his/her due portion of work, as well as He knows when the employer underpays him, or grudges him/her just wages in proper time. In all such temptations (and most of us at times are exposed to one or another of them), the great safeguard is to be aware of His eye fixed upon us. If we knew that some saint, some very holy person was watching us, should we not think a good deal of it?... How much more, when He stands among us... who is the Lord of all the saints! (John Keble)

(John Keble, 1792-1866, taught poetry at Oxford. He was a curate in the Church of England who composed, anonymously, in 1827 a collection of sacred lyrics that resulted in 140 editions. Among his hymns are “O God of mercy, God of might” and “Sun of my soul, thou Savior dear.” Keble College at Oxford was built in his honor.)

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Christ is Born for Us:

Faith is first, and it is right that we recognize it as the most important in every word of God. It is of no value only to believe that this history is true as it is written; for all sinners... believe that. The Scripture, God’s Word, does not teach concerning faith, that it is a natural work, without grace. The right and gracious faith which God demands is that you firmly believe that Christ is born for you, and that this birth took place for your welfare. The Gospel teaches that

Christ was born, and that he did and suffered everything on our behalf, as is here declared by the angel (See Luke 2:1-14). "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." In these words you clearly see that he is born for us. He does not simply say, Christ is born, but to you he is born; neither does he say, I bring glad tidings, but to you I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in Christ but it shall be to all the people... This is our foundation and inheritance, upon which good works must be built.

(Martin Luther, 1483-1546)

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A Speechless Child:

That day is called the birthday of the Lord on which the Wisdom of God manifested Himself as a speechless Child and the Word of God wordlessly uttered the sound of a human voice. His divinity, although hidden, was revealed by heavenly witness to the Magi and was announced to the shepherds by angelic voices. With yearly ceremony, therefore, we celebrate this day which saw the fulfillment of the prophecy. "Truth is sprung out of the earth: and justice has looked down from heaven." Truth, eternally existing in the bosom of the Father, has sprung from the earth so that He might be placed in a manger. For whose benefit did such unparalleled greatness come in such lowliness? Certainly for no personal advantage, but definitely for our great good, if only we believe. Arouse yourself, Oh man, Oh woman; for you God has become human. "Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." For you, I repeat, God has become human. If He had not thus been born in time, you would have been dead for all eternity. Never would you have been freed from sinful flesh if He had not taken upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh.... You would not have been restored to life had He not submitted to your death; you would have fallen had He not succored you... Let us joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the festal day on which the great and timeless One came from the great and timeless day to this brief span of our day... Let them that take pride, take pride in the Lord...

(St. Augustine, 354-430)

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The Magi:

Today, on Epiphany, at a new star's leading, the Magi worshiped him whom the Virgin had newly born. They called him God, not with their lips but by their deeds. Whatever are you doing, you Magi? You worship a baby at the breast, in a poor shed, in common swaddling clothes! Is he then God? God is in His holy temple, surely. The Lord's seat is in heaven. Yet you are looking for him in a wretched stable and on his mother's lap! What do you mean by offering him gold? Is he a king? If so, where is his palace? Where is his throne? And where the many members of the royal court? Is the stable a palace? Is the manger a throne? Do Joseph and Mary constitute the court? How have wise men become such fools as to adore a child whose age and whose relations' poverty alike deserve contempt?

They have become fools, that they may be wise. The Spirit has taught them in advance what later the Apostle preached, "Let them who would be wise become as fools, that they may be wise..." Might we not well have been afraid, my brothers and sisters, lest seeing such unworthy sights should be a stumbling block to those wise men and make them think that they had been deceived? From the royal city, where they reckoned the king should be sought, they are directed to Bethlehem, an insignificant village. They enter a stable and find a tiny infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the stable does not seem mean to them. They find no cause of stumbling in the swaddling bands, nor does the suckling's speechlessness offend them. They fall on their faces. They revere him as King, They worship him as God. Of a truth, he, who led them to this place, has instructed them too. He, who urged them on by means of the star, has taught them in their inmost heart. Wherefore, this manifestation of the Lord has glorified this day, and the sages' faithful act of worship has rendered it a day to be observed with reverence and love.

(Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153)

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The Ox and the Ass:

Scenes of the Nativity almost invariably show an ox and ass by the crib. There is no mention of these animals in the New Testament story so why did they appear? They made their entry via a verse in the book of Isaiah (1:3).

"The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib;
but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

This verse was referred to by commentators from the second century onwards and it seems clearly to be in the mind of Luke even though he does not specifically refer to it. Three times he refers to the crib and in doing this he obviously has some special purpose. This purpose is to bring out the fact that the message of this verse in Isaiah has been revealed; for Israel, through the shepherds, has begun to know, has begun to understand. The shepherds are a sign that some, at least, of God's own people are coming to faith in Jesus. The animals appear in Christian art from at least the fourth century onwards... The crib scene began to be especially popular after Francis of Assisi had a crib at the midnight mass in 1223 and his love of poverty has influenced interpretation of it ever since—Christ born poor amongst the poor... Later the presence of these two animals (the ox and the ass) were taken to be a sign of God's care for the Christ child. In Ludolf of Saxony's "Vita Christi" the writer claimed to have seen the Nativity and described how "the ox and the ass, kneeling down, put their mouths to the crib, breathing through their noses on to the Child, because they knew that at that cold time he needed to be heated up in that manner..." Subsequent reflection sometimes drew a distinction between the ox, patient and sacrificial, and the ass, less willing to kneel and sometimes a symbol of lewdness. But for us, they are a sign that the whole of creation shares in the joy of Christ's Nativity...

(Richard Harries in "The Nativity of Christ: Devotional Reflections on the Christmas Story in Art,"
Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996)

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The Wonder of It All:

“One day Abba Arsenius was asking an old Egyptian man for advice. There was someone who saw this and said to him: ‘Abba Arsenius, why is a person like you, who has such a great knowledge of Greek and Latin, asking a peasant like this about your thoughts?’ And Abba Arsenius replied, ‘Indeed, I have learned the knowledge of Latin and Greek, yet I have not learned even the alphabet of this peasant.’”

“One day some disciples came to see Abba Anthony. In the midst of them was Abba Joseph. Wanting to test them, the old man suggested a text from the scriptures and, beginning with the youngest, he asked them what it meant. Each one gave his opinion as he was able. But to each one of them the old man said, ‘You have not understood it.’ Last of all he said to Abba Joseph, ‘How would you explain this saying?’ and Abba Joseph replied, ‘I do not know.’ Then Abba Anthony said, ‘Indeed, Abba Joseph has found the way, for he has said: ‘I do not know.’”

“Abba Mios was asked by a soldier whether God would forgive a sinner. After instructing him at some length, the old man asked him: ‘Tell me, my dear, if your cloak were torn, would you throw it away?’ ‘On, no,’ the soldier said. ‘I would mend it and wear it again.’ And the old man said to him: ‘Well, if you care that much for your cloak, do you think God does not care as much for a creature?’”

(Joan Chittister in “Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light,” Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2000)

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You are invited to refer to the Confessing Christ website at the following address: <http://confessingchrist.net>

Confessing Christ materials are being prepared at the Mission House Center, Lakeland College. Those no longer wishing to receive materials or those with address changes should contact Colleen Darling, Lakeland College, P.O. Box 359, Sheboygan, WI 53082-0359, by e-mail darlingca@lakeland.edu or by calling 920-565-1538.

“For no one can lay foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ.”
(1 Cor. 3:11, NRSV)