

## Easter Season Poetry Companion: Poems for Prayer and Pondering

*Alleluia*

*“He is not here,  
for He has risen,  
just as he said.”*

*-Matthew 28:6*

*Alleluia*



### How to pray with poetry

Using poetry as a companion for prayer can be a rich and engaging endeavor. Poetry as an art form uses the cadences of the spoken word, the nuances of language, the signals of punctuation and the employment of metaphors to invite the listener into participation in the unfolding of layers of meaning. Words can provide a bridge to experiences that are beyond words.

We have prepared an Easter Poetry Companion which offers an additional resource for your journey to Pentecost. This companion provides poems that can enrich and deepen the meaning of this liturgical season.

The prayers and liturgical readings of the Easter season are rich in meaning, symbolism, and prophetic themes. Poetry provides a beautiful way to explore and express these themes and probe more deeply the mystery of the resurrection.

Below are some simple suggestions for engaging poetry as a means of leading you into prayer:

1. Seek a quiet space where you can minimize interruptions and take a few moments to enter into the silence. Let yourself sink deeply into the quiet. Invite God in.
2. Read just the title of the poem and ponder what this encounter might be about.
3. Read the poem aloud. Pay attention to the words, the sounds, the punctuation and what you are hearing in the poem.
4. Now read the poem silently and slowly letting the poem reveal new truths. As you listen again notice which words or phrases catch your attention. Underline them.
5. Journal your thoughts or impressions:
  - What new ways of seeing or hearing are opening for you in this poem?
  - What truth do you hear in the poem that intersects with the unfolding of your life?
  - What parts of the poem call you to be present or to see in an entirely different way?
  - How does this poem reflect or resonate with your own experience? What insights does it spark?
6. Reread the poem once more out loud. Let the poem filter through you.
7. Compose your own short prayer as a response.







## A Better Resurrection

by Christina Rossetti

I have no wit, no words, no tears;  
 My heart within me like a stone  
 Is numb'd too much for hopes or fears;  
 Look right, look left, I dwell alone;  
 I lift mine eyes, but dimm'd with grief  
 No everlasting hills I see;  
 My life is in the falling leaf:  
 O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,  
 My harvest dwindled to a husk:  
 Truly my life is void and brief  
 And tedious in the barren dusk;  
 My life is like a frozen thing,  
 No bud nor greenness can I see:  
 Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;  
 O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,  
 A broken bowl that cannot hold  
 One drop of water for my soul  
 Or cordial in the searching cold;  
 Cast in the fire the perish'd thing;  
 Melt and remould it, till it be  
 A royal cup for Him, my King:  
 O Jesus, drink of me.

"A Better Resurrection" is reprinted from *Goblin Market and other Poems*. Christina Rossetti. Cambridge: Macmillan, 1862.



## What is Hope?

by Rubem Alves - Brazilian Theologian

What is hope?  
 It is a presentiment that imagination is more real  
 and reality less real than it looks.  
 It is a hunch  
 that the overwhelming brutality of facts  
 that oppress and repress is not the last word.  
 It is a suspicion  
 that reality is more complex  
 than realism wants us to believe  
 and that the frontiers of the possible  
 are not determined by the limits of the actual  
 and that in a miraculous and unexpected way  
 life is preparing the creative events  
 which will open the way to freedom and resurrection....  
 The two, suffering and hope, live from each other.  
 Suffering without hope  
 produces resentment and despair,  
 hope without suffering  
 creates illusions, naiveté, and drunkenness....  
 Let us plant dates  
 even though those who plant them will never eat them.  
 We must live by the love of what we will never see.  
 This is the secret discipline.  
 It is a refusal to let the creative act  
 be dissolved in immediate sense experience  
 and a stubborn commitment to the future of our grandchildren.  
 Such disciplined love  
 is what has given prophets, revolutionaries and saints  
 the courage to die for the future they envisaged.  
 They make their own bodies  
 the seed of their highest hope.

Source: *Hijos de Maoana* (Tomorrow's Children), Rubem Alves, Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Sigueme, 1976.

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## Beginners

by Denise Levertov

*Dedicated to the memory of Karen  
Silkwood and Eliot Gralla*

*"From too much love of living,  
Hope and desire set free,  
Even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere to the sea—"*

But we have only begun  
To love the earth.

We have only begun  
To imagine the fullness of life.

How could we tire of hope?  
—so much is in bud.

How can desire fail?  
—we have only begun

to imagine justice and mercy,  
only begun to envision

how it might be  
to live as siblings with beast and flower,  
not as oppressors.

Surely our river  
cannot already be hastening  
into the sea of nonbeing?

Surely it cannot  
drag, in the silt,  
all that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet—  
there is too much broken  
that must be mended,

too much hurt we have done to each other  
that cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know  
the power that is in us if we would join  
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must  
complete its gesture,

so much is in bud.

*Source:* Selected Poems Denise Levertov, by  
Denise Levertov, New York: New Directions,  
2003. p. 137

*"How depict the invisible? How  
picture the inconceivable? How  
give expression to the limitless, the  
immeasurable, the invisible?"*

*-St. John of Damascus*

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## Late Ripeness

by Czeslaw Milosz

Not soon, as late as the approach of my ninetieth year,  
I felt a door opening in me and I entered  
the clarity of early morning.

One after another my former lives were departing,  
like ships, together with their sorrow.

And the countries, cities, gardens, the bays of seas  
assigned to my brush came closer,  
ready now to be described better than they were before.

I was not separated from people,  
grief and pity joined us.  
We forget - I kept saying - that we are all children of the King.

For where we come from there is no division  
into Yes and No, into is, was, and will be.

We were miserable, we used no more than a hundredth part  
of the gift we received for our long journey.

Moments from yesterday and from centuries ago -  
a sword blow, the painting of eyelashes before a mirror  
of polished metal, a lethal musket shot, a caravel  
staving its hull against a reef - they dwell in us,  
waiting for a fulfillment.

I knew, always, that I would be a worker in the vineyard,  
as are all men and women living at the same time,  
whether they are aware of it or not.

Source: New and Collected Poems 1931-2001 by Czelaw Milosz.  
New York: Ecco, 2003.



### Journaling:

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*On the evening of that first day of the week,  
when the doors were locked, where the disciples  
were, for fear of the Jews,  
Jesus came and stood in their midst  
and said to them, "Peace be with you."  
- In 20:19*









## “Still Movement”

(Motets I-V for Pentecost Sunday)  
By Murray Bodo

You have gone the way you came  
burning in and out of the dark.

My eye searches for a horizon  
to free my mind from prison.

The day, gray with backward growing,  
the sun rising at sunset.

And you return the way you left,  
a crack of light happening:

Out of the dry, barren heart  
the shoot of something green.

Source: *The Earth Moves at Midnight and Other Poems*, by  
Murray Bodo, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003. p. 56.

## God’s Love

by Scott Cairns

O Holy Spirit, Who breathes  
where You will, breathe into me  
and draw me to Yourself.

Invest the nature You have shaped,  
with gifts so flowing with honey that,  
from intense joy in Your sweetness

this clay might turn from lesser things,  
that it may accept (as You give them)  
spiritual gifts, and through pleasing

jubilation, it may melt, entirely,  
in holy love, reaching finally out  
to touch the Uncreated Light.

Source: *Love’s Immensity: Mystics on the Endless Life*, by Scott  
Cairns. Brewster, MA:Paraclete Press, 2007. p. 105



Ann Chapin, “The Descent of the Holy Spirit”