

CRUCIFIX *The Seven Days of Holy Week, Rome, 2018*

PRAESCRIPTIO PALM SUNDAY Alpha: morning, St. Peter's

*(Be with me now, Georgina Masson, now and forever more!)

The massive, stout groundedness, of the assertive solidity, of St. Peter's basilica, and its organized, super-monolithic structure, the mighty organ of its being, and the accretion of all the centuries of Christianity, art and architecture, architects and artists, rendered him puny, he, 'the eternal pilgrim', as even he, was set in context, with the City State of the Vatican, all of history, and all of time.

But then, he took up, the *commedia* within his hands, and he felt, for the slim usb flash drive in his zip-up, left-pocket, of his jacket, and imagined, the weight of the *colloquy's* papers, in his fingers, printed out, fresh and finished, on white paper.

Dante Alighieri, slipped away forever, from the shoulders of Dr. Andreas Christianus, and his being metamorphosed before St. Peter's, Holy Mother Church, and Beatrice and April.

'Wood Imagery and the Cross of Christ in the Western Canon'.

'Now was the acceptable time; now, is the acceptable time.

Nunc est tempus acceptabile'.

In his *colloquy*, the prior-administrator of Florence, in that Divine Utopian Protectorate, would be in city council chambers now, discussing, the business of the city, taxes, trade and industry, imports and exports, and excise duty, without lackeys and kiss-ups, no corrupt, well-fattened abbot, surrounded by fawning underlings, just, just government.

Queen April, the Queen of Florence, would be numbered among the principle Marian handmaidens, with Lucy and Rachel and Beatrice and Catherine, discussing and planning the devotions of the city, the litany of the saints and its martyrs, the dress of the day discussed, and the themes and order of services. The ancient worship of the city, and the Canons of the duomo, would be printing and organizing the services, and the prayer cards and prayer leaflets, would be eagerly snapped up by the Roman Catholic faithful.

Spiritual and temporal rule, had come to Florence.

The Library had married the Librarian.

The Book had wed Book-service.

(That, was *The Christ Colloquy*, though, and now, he had to turn, to more academic matters).

*Dr. Andreas Christianus, looked up briskly, (avidly), to the transforming, cloudless, blue Aprilian sky, her piercing blue, Marian shawl, enwrapping, the mighty, fundamental, sweeping curves of the intermeshed buildings, her foundations, sunk deep beneath, the inter-mixing, run of the streets, the Via dei Cavalieri del S. Sepolcro, her columns, a regularly placed presence, of reassurance, like a faithful guard of honour, the Swiss Guards surrounding the figure of the Pope, as Roman centurions, about their General, around the central focus of the open doors, to the basilica itself, admitting the streaming stream of the faithful laity, the faithful laity, faithfully streaming, streaming, streaming, streaming.

He stepped.

Bernini's architectural masterpiece, swam over him, as it had done Dante, that year of 1301, as it had done, the procession of Popes and great artists, who had staffed, her buildings, begun under the Chigi Pope, Alexander VII.

He advanced.

Hugely extended, in the sixteen-hundreds, by Carlo Maderno, the architectural masterpiece, designed by Donato Bramante and Michelangelo, thrust her opalescent magnificence upon him. He thought of the olive and grape gardens of dry Sicily, boughs breaking under fruit and victuals, and the oval colonnaded piazza designed by Gianlorenzo Bernini, Baroque architect and scholar.

He strode.

'Coup de theatre: bronze canopy, baldochino, over high altar and tomb.

Two, smaller, funnel-shaped piazza either-side: the procession, street-road, from the Tiber, for the faithful of Rome, and, for the faithful of the pilgrims to Rome, to, the centre of Rome.

Then, the Pope, like the great Spiritual Father of the World, extending his hands over the faithful, the shepherds crook waving out, as Moses had parted the Red Sea, and lead the Houses and Tribes of Israel, to the Promised Land.

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The Bishop of Rome, blessing and receiving homage, as it should be, a nourishing pastor feeding his flock?

'Pastores dabo vobis'.

Apostle to the Gentiles came here, with the Petrine Rock:

'Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram, aedificabo, ecclesiam meam'.

'Tu est Andreas, et super hanc petram, Evangelium Meum, aedificabo'.

Then, with Lot, he looked back.

The the two water fountains, like the three fountains of the Italian language, were behind him now, those of Carlo Maderno and Carlo Fontana, with the tall, still, file of the obelisk, like the spear of *miles Christi*, through the heart of Milton's Satan, no 'ammiral wand', but a spear of light ash, with a needle-sharp point, echo of a monument of Egypt. Pilgrims buzzed round him, like ambitious monks satelliting around an abbot primate.

The amorphous mass of the peoples condensed and super-condensed, then evaporated and grew disparate about him, as he fought free, to a side-route, apart, from the main throng, to walk, intent on unassuming prayers of petition and penitence. Rigid discipline, utter and total, would be the ramrod-staffing, of his super-straight back, from now on, and for the rest of his time-tolling days, seeded on the blanket of the earth's bosom. He shot out the shodiness of his heart, like Moses sending out the staff to become a rod before Pharaoh.

He shot a glance back, to the two round slabs of stone, set into the paving: faith and reason, substantiating his journey, and the single and quadruple file of columns, became a confusing blur, of one-and-four and four-and-one.

-So, he sent the candle light of *Vocatio's* abiding presence, out over him, and sent a gaze up to the heart of St. Peter's, the roof, where *miles christi*, had sent the spear of light, through the heart of Milton's demonic Satan. As the mocking of the Cam two, had speared him, he had been speared through too, by the conciliazione concord sonnet:

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**Stand I, Lord, solid unbridged, at a very nadir of disappointment,
Atop a lolling looming vacuousness, unrainbow'd, my coatless Joseph
Colours, impeached subourned from thrill radiant save, Benedict's
Mystical of black: Hood and scapular, embalming my treasured
Up forever, was my precious life-blooded, Communion holied:
Spirit, would a comforting Noah had yet gathered me into bridging
Ark, crooked beckoning his waving finger; like a very saving
Chronicle of that blistering Petrine epistle: saved by water? No,
Rock, I would rather have for my bleat preaching of a lambless voice:
City Eternal, the unwithering embrace of your docile Conciliazione,
Marble priming circle, about the burning holy messages tithed above
Great St. Peter's, implants soft Milton within Art's almighty image;
I am a little over-weak within myself, stymied dummied by their Deceit and Lie:
Bridge Sistine, forge a forgiving comfort of a Michelangelo, gentle Adam touch.**

*Finally, he was under, the magnificent, head-above above-head, bisecting, stone canopy, of the building itself, within the great doors of admit, under the magically high and illuminating great portentous windows, cut into the high soaring stonework above his head, with their curved heads, rounded and curving, the lines and squares of windows, allowing light. The central window, was the window of address, to the faithful: *'Urbe et Orbe;* to the city and the world'.

The cool, cold, exterior, of the huge basilica, sent chills, down his back, as bracing gusts, slipped their parametering, perimetering winds, along the cold, cool, ante-room of the basilica's entry portico. Enfrigidifying, cold, cooling winds, enwrapped him, as Andreas slipped into the basilica, and sought sanctuary and hibernation, before the box of delights of the Holy Week, Easter Triduum and Easter Day Services, that lay before him.

Pausing, Dr. Andreas Christianus, of King's College, London, smiled broadly.

And, April winds, blew their bleed of wind and wind, across the way.