

Let all mortal flesh keep silence

from the LITURGY OF ST. JAMES (4th century)

translated by JOHN MASON NEALE (1818–1866)

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and stand with fear and trembling, and ponder nothing earthly in itself; for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ our God, cometh forward to be sacrificed and to be given for food to the faithful; and He is preceded by the choirs of the Angels, with every Domination and Power, the many-eyed Cherubim, and the six-winged Seraphim, that cover their faces, and vociferate the hymn, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

metrical translation (Gerard Moultrie):

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with Blessing in His Hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in Human Vesture—
in the Body and the Blood—
He will give to all the Faithful
His Own Self for Heavenly Food.

Rank on rank the Host of Heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
That the Powers of Hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At His Feet the six-winged Seraph:
Cherubim with sleepless eye
Veil their faces to the Presence,
as with ceaseless Voice they cry—
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Lord most High!

Greek text and Neale's translation: J.M. Neale. The Liturgies of S. Mark, S. James, S. Clement, S. Chrysostom, & the Church of Malabar. 2nd ed. (London: J.T. Hayes, 1868), p. 48, via Hymnology Archive.

Original Greek:

Σιγησάτω πᾶσα σὰρξ βροτεία, καὶ στήτω μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου, καὶ μηδὲν γήϊνον ἐν ἑαυτῇ λογιζέσθω· ὁ γὰρ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων, καὶ Κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων, Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν προέρχεται σφαγιασθῆναι καὶ δοθῆναι εἰς βρῶσιν τοῖς πιστοῖς· προηγούντοι δὲ τοῦτου οἱ χοροὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων μετὰ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας, τὰ πολυόμματα χερουβὶμ, καὶ τὰ ἐξαπτέρυγα σεραφὶμ τὰς ὄψεις καλύπτοντα, καὶ βοῶντα τὸν ὕμνον ἀλληλούϊα, ἀλληλούϊα, ἀλληλούϊα.

keep silence: Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord. *Zechariah 2:13*

fear and trembling: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. *Philippians 2:12*

nothing earthly-minded: Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. *Colossians 3:2*

Blessing in His Hand: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? *1 Corinthians 10:16, cf. Ephesians 1:3*

homage: So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. *Philippians 2:10*

King of kings: He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. *Revelation 19:16*

in the Body and the Blood: The Word became flesh. *John 1:14*; “This is my body... this is my blood.” *Mark 14:22-24*

Heavenly Food: I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. *John 6:51*

the Host of Heaven: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. *Matthew 25:31*

endless day: There will be no night there. *Revelation 21:25*

Powers of Hell may vanish as the darkness clears away: The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. ... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. *1 John 2:8, 3:8*; He disarmed the rulers and authorities. *Colossians 2:15*

six-winged Seraph: Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face. *Isaiah 6:2*

Cherubim with sleepless eye: There were four wheels beside the cherubim, ...and their whole body... and the wheels were full of eyes all around. *Ezekiel 10:9,12*

Alleluia: The four living creatures... worshiped God... saying, ...“Hallelujah!” *Revelation 19:4*

Moultrie's text: Orby Shipley. *Lyra Eucharistica. 2nd edition. 1864. Page 133.*
Notes: AFM