

## Readings for Thursday, March 26, 2026

### Harriet Monseil – *Monastic, 1883*

#### Psalm 133

- 1 Oh, how good and pleasant it is, \*  
when brethren live together in unity!
- 2 It is like fine oil upon the head \*  
that runs down upon the beard,
- 3 Upon the beard of Aaron, \*  
and runs down upon the collar of his robe.
- 4 It is like the dew of Hermon \*  
that falls upon the hills of Zion.
- 5 For there the LORD has ordained the blessing: \*  
life for evermore.

## **Isaiah 66:1-4**

Thus says the Lord:  
Heaven is my throne  
and the earth is my footstool;  
what is the house that you would build for me,  
and what is my resting-place?  
All these things my hand has made,  
and so all these things are mine,  
says the Lord.  
But this is the one to whom I will look,  
to the humble and contrite in spirit,  
who trembles at my word.

Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being;  
whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck;  
whoever presents a grain-offering, like one who offers swine's blood;  
whoever makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.  
These have chosen their own ways,  
and in their abominations they take delight;  
I also will choose to mock them,  
and bring upon them what they fear;  
because, when I called, no one answered,  
when I spoke, they did not listen;  
but they did what was evil in my sight,  
and chose what did not please me.

## **John 3:25-30**

Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew. They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him.' John answered, 'No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, "I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him." He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.'

### **Collect:**

Gracious God, who led your servant Harriet Monsell through grief to a new vocation; grant that we, inspired by her example, may grow in the life of prayer and the work of service so that in sorrow or joy, your presence may increase among us and our lives reveal the mind of Jesus Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

# Harriet Monsell

*Monastic, 1883*

The revival of monastic life in the Anglican tradition, both in England and in the United States, is a great story of vision and commitment shown in the lives of men and women responding to God's call despite opposition and misunderstanding. One of the earliest orders, the Community of Saint John Baptist, grew out of a mission in Clewer, one of the neighborhoods of Windsor, which offered safe shelter and rehabilitation to women caught by poverty in a life of destitution and human trafficking. This work caught the imagination of Harriet Monsell, whose husband, a priest of the Church of England, had recently died. Her brother-in-law, also a priest, had settled in the area, and so the connection was made that drew her into the work that would form the basis for a new sisterhood. On Ascension Day, 1851, Harriet made her first commitment to the religious life, and within a year, two others joined her. On St. Andrew's Day, 1852, she made her profession and was installed as superior by Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford.

At this time, there were no permanent vows taken; the Bishop shared a common aversion to what was understood as a restrictive and debilitating structure. The Community had a twofold focus in both the contemplative and active life. Devotion and a full appropriation of the Daily Office was a key part of the community's worship. They also made one of the first efforts to produce an English-language version of the Breviary.

Deeply rooted in earnest prayer, Mother Harriet spoke clearly of the crucial call to active service: "I suppose the Sisters must always be ready to leave God for God . . . to leave God in devotion to seek God in those for whom [Christ] shed His Blood . . . to be ready to use broken prayer for themselves and for them."

Mother Harriet served as superior of the order until her health made retirement a necessity in 1875. She continued to take an active interest in the work of her sisters and in the affairs of the larger world, however, and all of this was the focus of her prayer and intercession. One of the prayers she wrote for her community begins: "Grant unto us, O great and glorious God, that we may be faithful souls, fervent in prayer, still in God, zealous for souls, ardent seekers after holiness, full of love and tenderness . . . ever being drawn into the Divine Unity, into the fellowship of the Blessed Trinity, that we may reveal the mind of Christ . . ."

Mother Harriet died on Easter Day, March 26, 1883. The community continues its ministry of prayer and service today in both the Episcopal Church and in the Church of England.