

Dear Saints,

Lent is already upon us! During Lent I enjoy reading, praying, and meditating on Johann Gerhard's *Meditations on Divine Mercy* put out by CPH. Below is one for us to read, pray, and meditate upon as a church. I pray that you find it rewarding.

**Prayer For the Preservation of The Word and the Increase of the Church**

O omnipotent, eternal, and merciful god, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, You gather the church from the human race and preserve in it the most holy deposit of heavenly teaching. I humbly praise You and submissively ask that You preserve undefiled the saving doctrine of Your Word among us and daily extend more widely the bounds of the church. Out of Your boundless mercy, set alight for us in this dark world the light of Your Word. Do not allow it to be extinguished or obscured by the fog of human tradition. Give to us Your Word as salutary food for the soul. We ask that You would prevent Satan's deceit and people's corruption from turning Your Word into a poison for us. Put to death in us the corrupt lusts of the flesh that thirst after earthly things. Instead, may we taste the delights of that hidden manna (Revelation 2:17), the spiritual things of Your Word. But no one will experience its sweetness if it is not tasted. No one tastes it whose mouth is still full of the world's delights.

Your Word is a word of Spirit and of life (John 6:63), a word of light and grace. Take away fleshly desires and the corrupt feelings of our hearts so Your Word may enlighten us within and lead us to the light of eternal life. From the light of the Word arises in our hearts the light of saving faith. In Your light, we see light (Psalm 36:9). In the light of the Word, we see the light of Your Son. Just as that heavenly manna once fell in the wilderness in a saving dew (Exodus 16:31), so also by the hearing of the Word our hearts are filled with the fervor of the Spirit. This fervor inflames our cold, lukewarm flesh while moderating the heat of depraved lusts. May this holy seed of the Word take root in our hearts and, excited by the dew of the Holy Spirit, bring forth salutary fruit to produce an abundant crop.

O Lord, guard the vine that is Your church (Psalm 80:14) in which that seed is sown. Guard the fruit until it is harvested in eternal life. Surround the vine with the hedge of an angelic guard so wild boars and foxes cannot root it up by violent persecutions or deceitful seductions (Song of Songs 2:15). Erect in this garden, Your church, the high watchtower of Your paternal providence so You may keep it safe from all devastation (Isaiah 5:2). If it seems good to You to squeeze this vine's clusters of grapes in the winepress of the cross for a time and to subject them to affliction, may they first become ripe by the fervor of Your grace so they may produce the sweetest fruit of faith and patience. Whatever is placed on the young root is changed in the clusters of grapes into the sweetest juice of the vine. Cause our souls to change the ridicule, persecution, praise, and whatever else befalls us in this world into the wine of faith, hope, and love and into the fruit of patience and humility. Out of this church militant, carry us forward at last to the church triumphant. May this portable tabernacle be changed at last into the most beautiful and everlasting temple of the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

In Christ,  
Pastor Maggard