

In the Morning Wednesday, September 9, 2020

THE MARTYRS OF MEMPHIS: CONSTANCE, THECLA, RUTH, FRANCES, CHARLES PARSONS,  
AND LOUIS SCHUYLER, 1878

Welcome

Opening prayer

Constance, Nun, and her Companions, 1878

We give you thanks and praise, O God of compassion, for the heroic witness of Constance and her companions, who, in a time of plague and pestilence, were steadfast in their care for the sick and dying, and loved not their own lives, even unto death: Inspire in us a like love and commitment to those in need, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Dwelling in the Word

John 12:24-28 (NRSV)

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

As you hear the passage being read, what word or phrase is God calling you to notice?

As you hear the passage read a second time, what might God be calling you to try on at this time?

Following your silent meditation after the second reading, please type your word or phrase into the Chat if you would like to share it. The officiant will invite all of us into a quiet time for a few minutes to prayerfully read and reflect on the words offered in the Chat.

The officiant will end this time of silent prayer with The Lord's Prayer.

(Host will mute all phones so you will not be hearing one another due to various time lags. You will hear the host of the call)

Zoom call

At end of zoom call

### The Closing Prayer

Remember Christian Soul

That today and every day you have  
God to glorify.

Jesus to imitate.

Salvation to work out with fear and trembling.

A body to use rightly.

Sins to repent.

Virtues to acquire.

Hell to avoid.

Heaven to gain.

Eternity to hold in mind.

Time to profit by.

Neighbors to serve.

The world to enjoy.

Creation to use rightly.

Slights to endure patiently.

Kindnesses to offer willingly.

Justice to strive for.

Temptations to overcome.

Death perhaps to suffer.

In all things, God's love to sustain you.

-From St. Augustine's Prayer Book

### Blessing

SEPTEMBER 9: THE MARTYRS OF MEMPHIS: CONSTANCE, THECLA, RUTH, FRANCES,  
CHARLES PARSONS, AND LOUIS SCHUYLER, 1878

From Lesser Feasts and Fasts

In August 1878, yellow fever invaded the city of Memphis, Tennessee for the third time in ten years. By the month's end, the disease had become epidemic and a quarantine was ordered. While more than 25,000 citizens had fled in terror, nearly 20,000 more remained to face the pestilence. As cases multiplied, death toll averaged 200 people per day. When the worst was over, ninety percent of the people who remained had contracted the fever and more than 5,000 people had died.

In that time of panic and flight, many brave men and women, both lay and ordained, remained at their posts of duty or came as volunteers to assist in spite of the terrible risk. Notable among these heroes were four Episcopal sisters from the Community of Saint Mary, and two of their clergy colleagues, all of whom died while tending to the sick. They

have ever since been known as “The Martyrs of Memphis,” as have those of other communions who ministered in Christ’s name during this time of desolation.

The Sisters had come to Memphis in 1873, at Bishop Quintard’s request, to found a school for girls adjacent to St. Mary’s Cathedral. When the 1878 epidemic began, George C. Harris, the cathedral dean, and Sister Constance immediately organized relief work among the stricken. Helping were six of Constance’s fellow Sisters of St. Mary; Sister Clare from St. Margaret’s House, Boston, Massachusetts; the Reverend Charles C. Parsons, Rector of Grace and St. Lazarus Church, Memphis; and the Reverend Louis S. Schuyler, assistant at Holy Innocents, Hoboken, New Jersey. The cathedral group also included three physicians, two of whom were ordained Episcopal priests, the Sisters’ two matrons, and several volunteer nurses from New York.

The cathedral buildings were located in the most infected region of Memphis. Here, amid sweltering heat and scenes of indescribable horror, these men and women of God gave relief to the sick, comfort to the dying, and homes to the many orphaned children. Only two of the workers escaped the fever. Among those who died were Constance, Thecla, Ruth, and Frances, the Reverend Charles Parsons, and the Reverend Louis Schuyler. All six are buried at Elmwood Cemetery. The monument marking the joint grave of Fathers Parsons and Schuyler bears the inscription: “Greater Love Hath No Man.” The high altar in St. Mary’s Cathedral, Memphis, is a memorial to the four Sisters.