

The Prayers of the Monks Withhold God's Judgment From the World

Meditation on Psalm 79 – A Song of Exile

By **Thomas Alan Orr**

Flux of voices in a cascade of praise
Chanting Psalter at two a.m.
The brio of faith persisting in the dark,
Where children starve and armies battle endlessly
For reasons that will fade from human memory,
And yet these voices cry out for patience.

How long will thy jealousy burn like fire?

Cold wind lurks at the corners of the chapel
Like a thief after coins meant for works of mercy,
And angels in beggars' rags roam
The famished orchard of this world, searching
For hidden sweetness, the solace of love
In a loveless time, forgiveness like a treasure lost.

May thy mercy come quickly to meet us

The monastery dog lifts his leg in new snow,
And hooded brothers trek toward breakfast.
They do not speak of the futility
Of human suffering, how it sticks
Like an iron post in frozen ground,
Indifferent, it seems, to the kicks of prayer.

Thomas Alan Orr has been an advocate and service provider for low-income workers for the past 30 years. His first book of poems, *Hammers in the Fog*, was published by Restoration Press. His poetry has been featured in *Good Poems*, edited by Garrison Keillor, and also appears in *Growing Season: A Collection of Poems by Midwestern Poets* (Minnesota Humanities Commission), *In Whatever Houses We May Visit: An Anthology of Poems That Have Inspired Physicians* (eds. LaCombe & Hartman), and *In Praise of Fertile Land* (PCC Farmland Trust). He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2008. Orr reads his poems in the film *Somewhere in Indiana*, produced by independent filmmaker, Don Boner.



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May the groans of the prisoners come before thee

O do not despair, Lord, of what you have made.
Let Hosea Christ reclaim his bride
From the wretched stink of all that has spoiled.
Remember, please, these acts of contemplation,
The self-immolation, the tuning of pure desire
To the perfect pitch of thy glory and love. Amen.