

# **ORATIONES MORTUORUM**

**(PRAYERS OF THE DEAD)**

**A LENTEN SERIES, 2023**



**JEFF HOOD**



**Orationes Mortuorum**

**(Prayers of the Dead)**

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**Sponsored by:**

**Saint Miriam Parish and Friary**

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**The season of Lent is about grief. It is a time to consider what it must have been like for Christ to have realized that he was about to be given over to his oppressors to be executed. Aware of what was coming, Christ grieves. In this season, God calls us to grieve. We are not eternal. We will die. The question thus becomes what are we willing to give so that others might live? In the pages that follow, I engage the words of others who were about to be executed to see what they might offer us in terms of lessons in grief...and, for that matter, lessons in life. Each reflection is from one of the last 40 people to be executed in the United States. Every reflection offers brief information about the execution, a picture of the executed, the final words of the condemned person, words of Christ's from the Garden of Gethsemane, a response to all previous words and a final prayer. There are italicized words to help guide you on what to do on each page. In these reflections, it is my hope that God might find us in the last words of others so that we might find and advocate for life in the here and now. Salvation comes from giving ourselves so that others might live. May the lessons contained herein manifest in us so that we might manifest life in the lives of those we have condemned.**

**The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood  
February 22, 2023**



**Though the circumstances are varied and a few were undoubtedly innocent, the following 40 people were convicted of the murders of over 60 people.**





**1. 07/17/2020**

**Federal**

**Dustin Lee Honken, 52**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.”**

*Pray*

**“Then Jesus came with them to a place called  
Gethsemane...”**

*Reflect*

**God, I keep reflecting.  
God, I am in deep sorrow.  
God, I am in the valley of the shadow of death.  
God, sustain me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**2. 08/26/2020**

**Federal**

**Lezmond Charles Mitchell, 38**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**“No, I’m good.”**

*Pray*

**“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”**

*Reflect*

**God, draw us to sit.  
God, draw us to wait.  
God, draw us to know.  
God, draw us to pray.**

*Pray*

**God, don’t execute me.**

**3. 08/28/2020**

**Federal**

**Keith Dwayne Nelson, 45**

***Concentrate.***



***Meditate***

**No Response.**

*Pray*

**“He took his closest friends with him...”**

*Reflect*

**God, you are friend.  
God, you love us.  
God, you never leave us.  
God, you never forsake us.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**4. 09/22/2020**

**Federal**

**William Emmett Lecroy, Jr., 50**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**"Sister Battista is about to receive in the postal service my last statement."**

*Pray*

**"Jesus became paralyzed with sorrow."**

*Reflect*

**God, cry with us.  
God, feel our pain.  
God, know our suffering.  
God, don't hide our hope.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**



**5. 09/24/2020**

**Federal**

**Christopher Andre Vialva, 40**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I’m ready, Father.”**

*Pray*

**“Jesus was deeply troubled.”**

*Reflect*

**God, is silent.  
God, doesn’t care.  
God, I am grieved.  
God, I am in tears.**

*Pray*

**God, don’t execute me.**

**6. 11/19/2020**

**Federal**

**Orlando Cordia Hall, 49**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“*Our* justice system has never been fair when it comes to the poor and people of color. On this fact alone, there shouldn’t be a death penalty...”**

***Pray***

**“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”**

***Reflect***

**God, this is too much.  
God, I am overwhelmed.  
God, the sorrow is drowning me.  
God, I am dead.**

***Pray***

**God, don’t execute me.**

**7. 12/10/2020**

**Federal**

**Brandon Bernard, 40**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I wish I could take it all back, but I can’t.”**

*Pray*

**“Stay here and keep watch with me.”**

*Reflect*

**God, don't leave me.  
God, just stay right here.  
God, just keep watch with me.  
God, don't go.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**8. 12/11/2020**

**Federal**

**Alfred Bourgeois, 56**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"I ask God to forgive all those who plotted and schemed against me, and planted false evidence."**

*Pray*

**"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground..."**

*Reflect*

**God, I can't go any further.  
God, I have fallen.  
God, I can't get up.  
God, help me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**



**9. 01/13/2021**

**Federal**

**Lisa Marie Montgomery, 52**

***Concentrate***



***Mediate***

**“No.”**

***Pray***

**“Jesus prayed.”**

***Reflect***

**God, I pray.  
God, I know you hear me.  
God, please listen.  
God, I need you right now.**

***Pray***

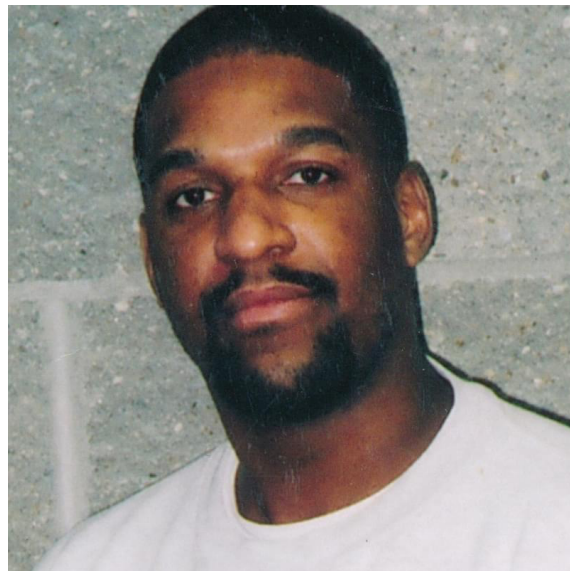
**God, don't execute me.**

**10. 01/14/2021**

**Federal**

**Corey Johnson, 52**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I am not the same man that I was...The pizza and strawberry shakes were wonderful, but I didn’t get**

**the jelly-filled doughnuts that I ordered. What's with that?"**

*Pray*

**"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me."**

*Reflect*

**God, I don't know what to do.  
God, I don't know where to go.  
God, I don't know how I got here.  
God, please save me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**11. 1/16/2021**

**Federal**

**Dustin John Higgs, 48**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**“I’d like to say I am an innocent man...I did not  
order the murders”**

*Pray*

**“Not as I will, but as you will.”**

*Reflect*

**God, I trust you.**

**God, I don't know what is next.**

**God, I don't know how this will work out.**

**God, I just want to do your will.**

*Pray*

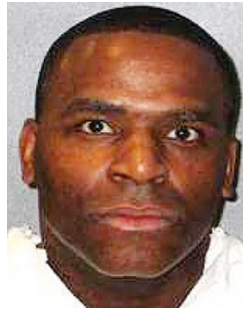
**God, don't execute me.**

**12. 05/19/2021**

**Texas**

**Quintin P. Jones, 41**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I hope I left everyone a plate of food, full of happy memories...”**

***Pray***

**“Then he returned and found them sleeping.”**

***Reflect***

**God, the hour is difficult.  
God, help me not to sleep.  
God, help me to know.  
God, help me to be.**

***Pray***

**God, don't execute me.**



**13. 06/30/2021**

**Texas**

**John Hummel, 45**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**“I love each and every one of you.”**

*Pray*

**“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”**

***Reflect***

**God, I am watching.  
God, I can see.  
God, evil is close.  
God, keep me from temptation.**

***Pray***

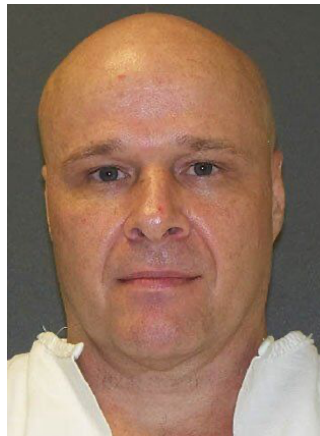
**God, don't execute me.**

**14. 09/28/2021**

**Texas**

**Rick Allan Rhoades, 57**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**No Statement.**

*Pray*

**“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

*Reflect*

**God, hold my spirit.  
God, keep me strong.  
God, death is near.  
God, I am weak.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**15. 10/05/2021**

**Alabama**

**Willie B. Smith III, 51**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**Silent prayer.**

*Pray*

**“...if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away  
unless I drink it...”**

*Reflect*

**God, take this cup.  
God, I'm not thirsty.  
God, don't force me.  
God, show me another way.**

*Pray*

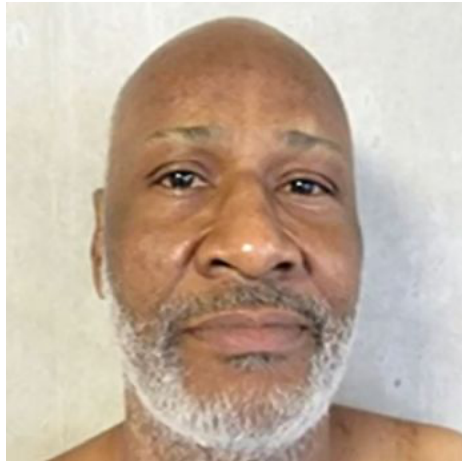
**God, don't execute me.**

**16. 10/28/2021**

**Oklahoma**

**John Marion Grant, 60**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Let’s go, Let’s go, Let’s go!”**

*Pray*

**“...may your will be done.”**

*Reflect*

**God, I don't know.  
God, I might know.  
God, I know.  
God, help me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

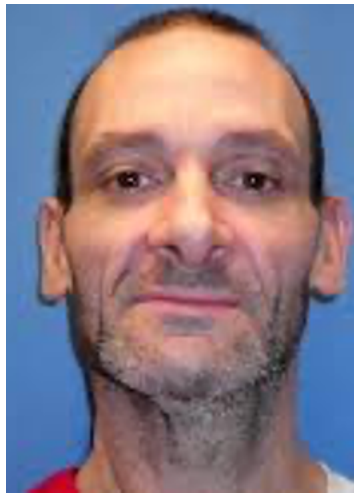


**17. 11/17/2021**

**Mississippi**

**David Neal Cox, Sr., 50**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**“And don’t ever read anything but the King James Bible...”**

*Pray*

**“So he left them and went away once more...”**

***Reflect***

**God, don't leave.  
God, please stay.  
God, death is so close.  
God, I am yours.**

***Pray***

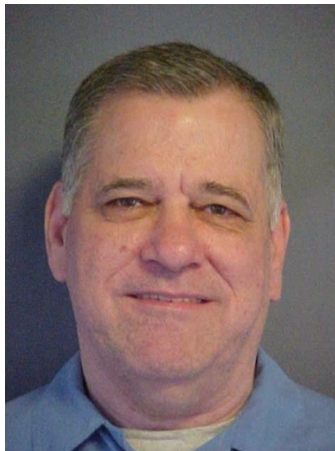
**God, don't execute me.**

**18. 12/09/2021**

**Oklahoma**

**Bigler Jobe Stouffer, Jr., 79**

*Concentrate*



*Meditate*

**"My request is that my father forgive them."**

*Pray*

**“My Father...”**

*Reflect*

**God, I am calling.  
God, can your hear me.  
God, answer me.  
God, hear my cries.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**19. 01/27/2022**

**Oklahoma**

**Donald Anthony Grant, 46**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"Yo, God I got this..."**

***Pray***

**“... if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away  
unless I drink it...”**

***Reflect***

**God, don't stop.  
God, please be near.  
God, help me..  
God, I am here to do your will.**

***Pray***

**God, don't execute me.**

**20. 01/27/2022**

**Alabama**

**Matthew Reeves, 44**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"Don't allow the state to use me or u as escape goat..."**

*Pray*

**“...may your will be done.”**

*Reflect*

**God, I don't know you.  
God, I just want to know you.  
God, you are strange.  
God, you are the way.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

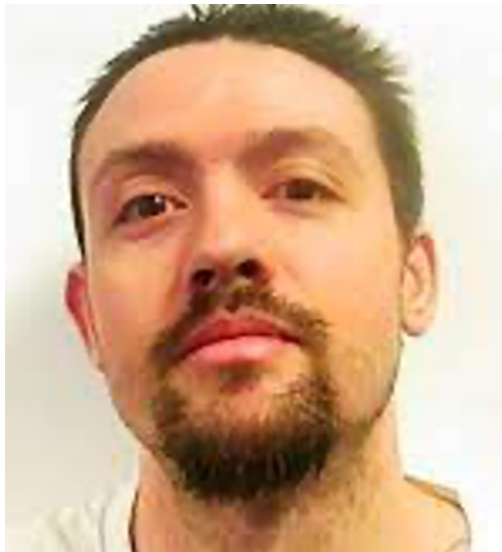


**21. 02/17/2022**

**Oklahoma**

**Gilbert Ray Postelle, 35**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“No.”**

*Pray*

**“Then he returned to the disciples...”**

*Reflect*

**God, where is everyone.  
God, you said I wouldn't be alone.  
God, I am afraid.  
God, there is no one but me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**22. 04/21/2022**

**Texas**

**Carl Wayne Buntion, 78**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"I am ready to go to Heaven, warden."**

*Pray*

**“Are you still sleeping?”**

*Reflect*

**God, is asleep.  
God, needs to wake up.  
God, I am counting on you.  
God, this doesn't feel right.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**23. 05/03/2022**

**Missouri**

**Carman L. Deck, 56**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Please give love, show love, BE LOVE!”**

*Pray*

**“Look, the hour has come...”**

*Reflect*

**God, I am dying.**

**God, I can feel the last breathes.**

**God, you weren't supposed to leave.**

**God, the hour of my death is here.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**24. 05/11/2022**

**Clarence Dixon, 66**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Now, let’s do this shit.”**

***Pray***

**“...the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of  
sinners.”**

***Reflect***

**God, my feet are heavy.  
God, my mind is full.  
God, my soul longs to escape.  
God, save me.**

***Pray***

**God, don’t execute me.**



**25. 06/08/2022**

**Arizona**

**Frank Jarvis Atwood, 65**

**Concentrate**



**Meditate**

**"I pray the Lord will have mercy on all of us and that  
the Lord will have mercy on me."**

**Pray**

**"Arise!"**

***Reflect***

**God, I didn't sign up for this.  
God, I am walking alone.  
God, there are so many people.  
God, no one will listen.**

***Pray***

**God, don't execute me.**

**26. 07/28/2022**

**Alabama**

**Joe Nathan James Jr., 50**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**Silence.**

*Pray*

**“Let’s go!”**

*Reflect*

**God, I hear you.  
God, I don’t want to move.  
God, I’m trying.  
God, I’m standing now.**

*Pray*

**God, don’t execute me.**

**27. 08/17/2022**

**Texas**

**Kosoul Chanthakoummane, 41**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I hope my death will bring them peace...”**

*Pray*

**“Here comes my betrayer!”**

*Reflect*

**God, I trusted you.  
God, evil surrounds me.  
God, you brought this to me.  
God, I am trapped.**

*Pray*

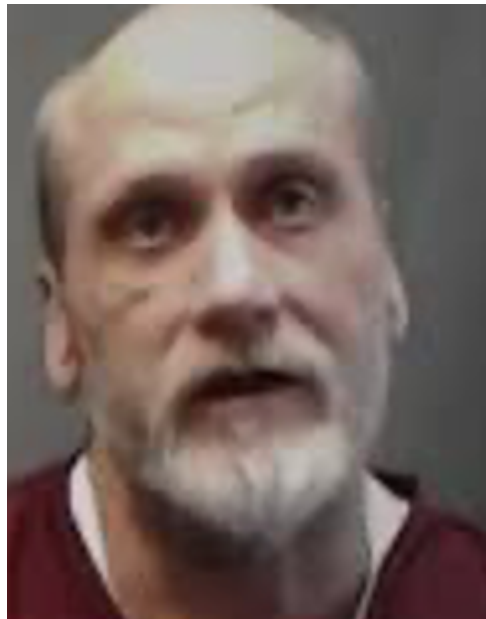
**God, don't execute me.**

**28. 08/25/2022**

**Oklahoma**

**James Allen Coddington, 50**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Governor Stitt, I don’t blame you and I forgive you...”**

*Pray*

**“While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve,  
arrived.”**

*Reflect*

**God, that was my friend.**

**God, I loved him.**

**God, I feel abandoned.**

**God, I am betrayed.**

*Pray*

**God, don’t execute me.**



**29. 10/05/2022**

**Texas**

**John Henry Ramirez, 38**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Just know that I fought a good fight, and I am ready  
to go.”**

*Pray*

**“With him was a large armed crowd...”**

*Reflect*

**God, there are guns everywhere.**

**God, there is no escape.**

**God, I am doomed.**

**God, I asked for another way.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**30. 10/20/2022**

**Oklahoma**

**Benjamin R. Cole, 57**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"I forgive everyone that I have done wrong..."**

*Pray*

**“Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them...”**

*Reflect*

**God, you made the signal.**

**God, you sealed my fate.**

**God, you have left me.**

**God, you kissed me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**31. 11/09/2022**

**Texas**

**Tracy Lane Beatty, 61**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“See you on the other side...”**

*Pray*

**“Judas went straight to Jesus...”**

*Reflect*

**God, I know them.  
God, they smiled at me yesterday.  
God, they were supposed to be my friends.  
God, they are here to kill me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**32. 11/16/2022**

**Arizona**

**Murray Hooper, 76**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“It's all been said. Let it be done...”**

*Pray*

**“Judas kissed him”**

*Reflect*

**God, I can smell your breathe.  
God, I can hear your lies  
God, I know what you are doing.  
God, death is close this night.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**



**33. 11/16/2022**

**Texas**

**Stephen Barbee, 55**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"God knows the truth. He is the truth, the way, and  
the life.**

*Pray*

**“Do what you came here for...”**

*Reflect*

**God, I am not afraid.  
God, I am in your hands.  
God, I will not turn back.  
God, I am yours.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**34. 11/17/2022**

**Oklahoma**

**Richard Fairchild, 63**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"Do not grieve for me."**

*Pray*

**"Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him."**

*Reflect*

**God, I feel their hands.  
God, I feel your hands.  
God, I feel the world's hands.  
God, these hands are going to kill me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**35. 11/29/2022**

**Missouri**

**Kevin Johnson, 37**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I apologize...”**

*Pray*

**“Put your sword back in its place...all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”**

*Reflect*

**God, I see the sword.  
God, it cuts deep.  
God, I am bleeding now.  
God, I thought the sword would save me.**

*Pray*

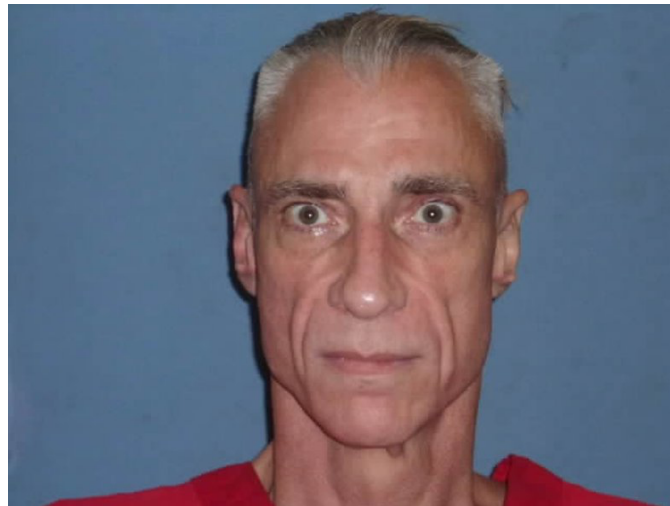
**God, don't execute me.**

**36. 12/14/2022**

**Mississippi**

**Thomas Edwin Loden, Jr., 58**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I love you.” \*in Japanese**

*Pray*

**“Do you think I cannot call on God to stop this?”**

*Reflect*

**God, I am doing what you told me to do.**

**God, I am being who you told me to be.**

**God, I am following your will.**

**God, tell me what to do.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**



**37. 01/03/2023**

**Missouri**

**Amber McLaughlin, 49**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**"I am sorry for what I did, I am a loving and caring person."**

*Pray*

**"It must happen this way."**

*Reflect*

**God, you forced me here.  
God, there is no way out.  
God, don't leave me.  
God, you can make another way.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**38. 01/10/ 2023**

**Texas**

**Robert Alan Fratta, 65**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“No.”**

*Pray*

**“Am I of any danger to you?”**

*Reflect*

**God, I am weak.  
God, you are strong.  
God, I didn't do anything.  
God, they are determined to kill me.**

*Pray*

**God, don't execute me.**

**39. 01/12/2023**

**Scott J. Eizember, 62**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“I'm at peace. My conscience is clear, completely.”**

***Pray***

**“Then all the disciples deserted him...”**

***Reflect***

**God, they have run away.**

**God, it's just us now.**

**God, I lay down.**

**God, don't leave me here.**

***Pray***

**God, don't execute me.**

**40. 02/01/2023**

**Wesley Ruiz, 43**

***Concentrate***



***Meditate***

**“Don’t worry about me. I’m ready to fly.”**

***Pray***

**“...and fled.”**

***Reflect***

**God, I'm confused.**

**God, I'm afraid.**

**God, I'm alone.**

**God, I'm tired.**

***Pray***

**God, don't execute me.**