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Dear Joe,

How wonderful to hear from you, and to receive a final draft of "Latin Prayers." Congratulations! It is a beautiful job. One can immediately sense the depth of thought and work that went into each prayer, by the way you have laid out your editions.

Honestly, I found myself praying the prayers more than reading them. In these troubled times, reading penitential prayers, and prayers for healing from a distant age came home to me with their true power. Maybe it is such work as yours that should be the true reason for scholarly research and writing, for making the past present. Never have I felt so close to an age as when I read their prayers, their epitaphs. I was enchanted at seeing the connection between prayer no. 1 and Psalm 3 ("I have risen up" being taken for the resurrection).

I did struggle with no. 18's translation, because you asked, not because I noticed anything offensive in what you give. I could not do any better. Anyway, since you so clearly discuss alternative readings, the reader is given a choice. Whoever reads this work for publication by Brepolds may have their own ideas; that will be fine, and may help us all.

Thank you for your words about our attack on Iraq, because you helped me to see that our prayers, fasting, vigils, and protests were and are not entirely in vain. As you say, perhaps they are the shadow of a conscience that something is very wrong here. May you receive many blessings for your work helping to start a transitional house for men coming out of the Alabama prison system. If more people were engaged in such tasks to heal humanity, how could we tolerate such a total denial of these efforts by the easiness of violence and ignorance?

May Christ's healing act this week be the final blood poured out upon the whole world, and may Easter give you strength to continue in your work, with faith.

Much love,