Hic est dies verus Dei

This is truly God’s own day
gleaming with his blessed light—
the day when his sacred blood
washed away the crimes of a sinful world,

restored faith to the lost,
and gave the blind the gift of sight.
Breathes there a soul still bound by fear
although he sees the thief absolved of guilt?

He turned his cross into a reward,
gained Jesus by a moment’s faith,
was the first to reach the kingdom of God,
and entered in before the just.

Even the angels were astounded
to see Christ’s body scarred with pain,
and, close to him, the penitent thief
entering into the life of bliss.

Oh, mystery full of wonders:
that a whole world’s filth,
the sins of all mankind, and the vices of
the flesh
should be cleansed by flesh itself!

Nothing could be more sublime
than very guilt begging for grace,
than love putting an end to fear,
dead giving back life again,

dead swallowing its own hook
and binding itself with its own bonds,
everyone’s life dying the death
but rising to life again,

dead felling all of mankind
only to see it rise anew,
dead destroyed by its own blow
and grieving that it alone has truly died.

—St. Ambrose
trans. Edmond Bonin