

## Reading Middle English: Answer Key for Instructors

Notes on the first transcript

Also a preest þouȝ he be

*Instructor: note the thorn and yogh, the “tall lower-case s”, the irregular spelling of preest (to us), the r formed with using the side of the p.*

Try the next three lines:

Synful and oute of charite  
He is goddes ministre and holy chirches  
(next page) þat þe sacrament of þe autere Worches

*Instructor: note the abbreviation for “r” and a vowel that the scribe expects the reader to fill in.*

Transcription

...þe sacrament þat is so holy  
May noght apaired be þoruȝ his foly  
þan may þe masse soules fro helle brynge  
Alle þouȝ a synful preest hit synge  
For in goddes name he synges þe messe  
Undre whome in order he es  
Bot special preyers with good entent  
þat ben made bysyde þe sacrament  
Of a good preest ben wel bettere  
þan of an yuele and to god swettere  
Bot þe offrynge of goddes body  
Helpiþ the soules principally  
Where it semep þat messe syngyng  
May most þe soules oute of peyne brynge.

Translation

The sacrament that is so holy  
may not be spoiled through his folly  
so that the mass may bring\* souls from hell  
Although a sinful priest sings it  
For he sings the mass in God’s name  
Under whose orders he is [ie, who he serves]  
But special prayers with good intent  
that are made in addition to the sacrament  
by a good priest are much better  
than an evil one’s, and sweeter to God  
But the offering of God’s body  
Helps the souls principally  
Wherefore it seems that the mass-singing  
May save the most souls from pain [in hell].

\*save

*Instructor: If you have read more passages from the Book of Margery Kempe, you might discuss this episode in comparison with of Margery’s narrated conflicts with clergy and laymen as they seek to quiet her or challenge her. Alternatively you could use it as a bridge between this discussion of this passage and the next (when Margery goes to Norwich and sees a pietà) featuring two good priests at the beginning, and one bad “uncharitable” one at the end.*