

- Almighty God, your Blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations and, as you know the weakness of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, amen. ♪ O for a heart to praise my God ♪ ♪ A heart from sin set free ♪ ♪ A heart that always feels Thy blood ♪ ♪ So freely spilt for me ♪ ♪ A humble, lowly, contrite heart ♪ ♪ Believing, true and clean ♪ ♪ Which neither life nor death can part ♪ ♪ From Him that dwells within ♪ ♪ Thy nature, gracious Lord ♪ ♪ Thy nature, gracious Lord impart ♪ ♪ Come quickly from above ♪ ♪ Write Thy new name upon my heart ♪ ♪ Thy new, best name of love ♪

- "Where cross the crowded ways of life." These are the words of a great social gospel hymn written by Frank Mason North. Frank Mason North was an idealistic young student, working among New York City's desperately poor in the Hell's Kitchen area of New York. And this hymn arises out of his experiences there in 1903. "Where cross the crowded ways of life." Right there, in the middle of human need and suffering there is where we hear the voice of Jesus. In the middle of the marketplace, amid dark despair, wherever there is war or suffering, there the cross is raised again and again and there is our Lord. When I came to Duke Chapel a decade ago, we initiated the stations of the cross on Good Friday. Beginning at the Bryan Center, walking behind the cross, a procession moves to various stations around the campus. And at each station, we remember some event from Good Friday, the trial, the crucifixion and the death of Jesus. That Stations of the Cross has become for many of us one of the most memorable services of the year. There's something about walking behind the cross, hearing the words of Scripture, describing the suffering, the injustice, the death of Jesus, juxtaposed with the Duke campus on a spring day at noon. Students are sunning themselves on the lawn. People toss Frisbees, shout to one another. And there, there moving through it all is the cross and people walking behind it, a pastor chanting from one of the psalms of lament, Christians gathered around their Scriptures, walking behind the cross. One year, we even got a call from someone over at the admissions office asking us if we could cancel the service, or at least move it discreetly inside the chapel because they were having a special weekend to recruit Duke students. And, as they said, "Some of the prospective students "might get the wrong idea about Duke "from witnessing the procession." Wrong idea, indeed. Well, we didn't cancel the service. I'm sure there are those who think that Christians ought to keep such services to ourselves, ought to tuck them safely within the chapel where no one could be made uncomfortable on a spring afternoon by a man dying on a cross. The trouble is, Christianity is the sort of religion that thrives in the marketplace, amid the tug and the pull of daily life, proceeding into where we live, intruding into where people work or play, suffer, live and die. "Where cross the crowded ways of life "Where sound the cries of race and clan "Above the noise of selfish strife "We hear your voice, O Son of Man." It's Lent, it's the time of the year when we remember our God did not stay aloof, uninvolved, some high and untouchable ideal. Our God came among us. "Where cross the crowded ways of life." That is one of the reasons we call that Friday good. ♪ Where cross the crowded ways of life ♪ ♪ Where sound the cries of race and clan ♪ ♪ Above the noise of selfish strife ♪ ♪ We hear the voice, O Son of Man ♪ ♪ In haunts of wretchedness and need ♪ ♪ On shadowed thresholds fraught with fears ♪ ♪ From paths where hide the lures of greed ♪ ♪ We catch the vision of your tears ♪ ♪ From tender childhood's helplessness ♪ ♪ From human grief

and burdened toil ♪ ♪ From famished souls, from sorrow's stress ♪ ♪ Your heart has never known recoil ♪ ♪
The cup of water given for you ♪ ♪ Still holds the freshness of your grace ♪ ♪ Yet long these multitudes to
view ♪ ♪ The sweet compassion of your face ♪ ♪ O Master, from the mountainside ♪ ♪ Make haste to heal
these hearts of pain ♪ ♪ Among these restless throngs abide ♪ ♪ O tread the city's streets again ♪ ♪ Till all the
world shall learn your love ♪ ♪ And follow where your feet have trod ♪ ♪ Till glorious from your heaven above
♪ ♪ Shall come the city of our God ♪

- We can think of the life of Jesus as a series of journeys. When reading the scriptural account of his life on earth, it's striking how often Jesus was on the move. We're invited to follow Jesus on all the roads of his life. In this Lenten season of spiritual reflection, let us look anew at those journeys. There was the great entry into Jerusalem, a parade of shouting children and palm branches. And we, too, should follow, praising and worshiping the One who comes in the name of the Lord. There was a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, Jesus tells us, a journey interrupted so one man could care for another, a Samaritan for a Jew, even though the world called them enemies. And we too should follow in acts of service, sharing the love which has been our greatest blessing with the sick, the needy, the distressed. There was a road to Emmaus, a strange encounter with that mysterious man Jesus, who showed that God often finds us where we least expect Him. And we too should follow, alert to the signs God gives us in the majesty of His creation, in the blessings of this life, in the loving kindness of our fellow travelers, the signs God gives us of His abiding presence. There was a road to the cross, a way of sorrows, a path of pain where Jesus bore the whips and shouts of abuse to free humanity from its bondage to sin. And we, too, should follow, taking up our own crosses and in our lives lived against the world, enduring its scorn and pain so that in our sacrifice, in our pain, we might know the sacrifice of the most innocent, the sacrifice that redeemed us. There was also a road to the tomb, a road that began in weeping, but ended in shouts of joy. Jesus is risen, praise God. And we too should follow, rejoicing in the great miracle that defeated death itself, rejoicing not just here on Earth, but some day in the presence of the risen Christ in heaven. "If thou but suffer God to guide thee "and hope in God through all thy ways, "He'll give thee grace, whate'er betide thee "and bear thee through the evil days. "Who trusts in God's unchanging love "builds on the rock that naught can move." The good news is that God is with us on all our journeys, guiding us in our joy and in our pain. Jesus told the crowd, "I am the Good Shepherd "and I know my sheep and am known by my own. "As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father "and I lay down my life for the sheep." The promise of Jesus is that He will guide and direct our lives with the hand of a loving sacrificial shepherd. As we stop this Lent to examine our lives, let us look for that shepherding hand. As we seek to renew our faith, let us trust more fully in the wisdom of the good shepherd, the strength of the rock we are built upon. As we look at life and across its shadow, let us return love so freely given with acts of mercy and reverent worship, amen. ♪ If thou but suffer God to guide thee ♪ ♪ And hope in Him through all thy ways ♪ ♪ He'll give thee strength ♪ ♪ Whate'er betide thee ♪ ♪ And bear thee through the evil days ♪ ♪ Who trusts in God's unchanging love ♪ ♪ Builds on the rock that naught can move ♪ ♪ Be still and await His leisure ♪ ♪ In cheerful hope, in cheerful hope ♪ ♪ With heart content, with heart content ♪ ♪ To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure ♪ ♪ To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure ♪ ♪ And His discerning love hath sent ♪ ♪ Nor doubt our inmost wants are known ♪ ♪ To Him who chose us for His own ♪ ♪ Sing, pray and keep His ways unswerving ♪ ♪ In all they labor faithful be ♪ ♪ And trust His Word, though undeserving ♪ ♪ Thou yet shalt find it true for thee ♪ ♪ God never yet forsook in need ♪ ♪ The soul that trust in Him indeed ♪

- God of the cross, chafe our shoulders with the cross of Thy love. O love, deep and wondrous, be here now. The back bent under toil, the knee under sin, the hands to the face under fear, the head bent under grief. Bow stubborn knees. Greet this great burden with gratitude and joy. God of the suffering cross, from the cowardice that dare not face truth, the laziness that is content with half-truth, and the arrogance that assumes to know all truth, save us. God of redemption, so that by the soul of Christ may I be sanctified. By the body of Christ, saved, by the blood of Christ, inebriated, by the wine that stung His lips, awakened, by the weight of the cross, strengthened, forever and ever, amen. ♪ Lord, who throughout these forty days ♪ ♪ For us did fast and pray ♪ ♪ Teach us with thee to mourn our sins ♪ ♪ And close by Thee to stay ♪ ♪ As Thou with Satan didst contend ♪ ♪ And didst the victory win ♪ ♪ O give us strength in Thee to fight ♪ ♪ In Thee to conquer sin ♪ ♪ As Thou didst hunger bear and thirst ♪ ♪ So teach us, gracious Lord ♪ ♪ To die to self and chiefly live ♪ ♪ By Thy most holy Word ♪ ♪ And through these days of penitence ♪ ♪ And through Thy passiontide ♪ ♪ Yea, evermore in life and death ♪ ♪ Jesus, with us abide ♪ ♪ Abide with us, that through this life ♪ ♪ Of doubts and hope and pain ♪ ♪ An Easter of unending joy ♪ ♪ We may attain at last ♪

- As Christians baptized into the millions who join the theme, we do not choose our song. As the martyrs sang your song by sword, by stone and by cross, so we open our mouths and receive your perfect song for us. I believe in God the Father. What wondrous love is this? It is a question from the foot of the cross. Why create something that will have to be redeemed by nails? Why this love that looks like death? "For God so loved the world "that He gave His only Son "that whoever believes in Him may not perish "but have eternal life." What is this wondrous love? It is God Himself. Why is it here with us? Because God loved. God was Himself love, and He loved into existence the world so that it might know love. Love is the Creator. Love creates. And we the creation, we are told, "Love one another, "as I have loved you." But we don't do this. We are the missing part. And so, we sing not because of our faith, but because of our lack of it, because, in our inability to believe, we want to believe. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. We are caught up in a song. And the hope of it is that we could not have written it, could not have conceived of a God who bleeds and dies. The song we are given is always one of the future, as if by singing, we will be propelled to that time, when, free from death, our praise is unthwarted and our breath for song endless. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Why does the Christian sing? We sing because we have been given a song, a wondrous love, and we must sing it or be consumed by it because it is terrifying, this love of the great I AM, who was, who is and who is to be. And if we were singing it alone, we might think we could decide not to want to do it, this complete love that smothers, that nails, that kills. Because we cannot stand the total debt of this love, that our lives are not our own, so that our triumphs are not our own. Our talents are not our own. Our decisions are not our own. Our failures are not our own. Our humiliations are not our own. Our deaths are not our own. They are Christ's, begotten for the purpose of taking them, as we were created to be enveloped into a totalness of praise for the love by which we exist. And even now, we are approaching that end, and we cannot change our course. We are stuck, singing for eternity. Thanks be to God. ♪ What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul ♪ ♪ What wondrous love is this, O my soul ♪ ♪ What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss ♪ ♪ To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul ♪ ♪ To bear the dreadful curse for my soul ♪ ♪ When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down ♪ ♪ When I was sinking down, O my soul ♪ ♪ When I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown ♪ ♪ Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul ♪ ♪ Christ laid aside His crown for my soul ♪ ♪ To God and to the Lamb ♪ ♪ I will sing, I will sing ♪ ♪ To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing ♪ ♪ To God and to the Lamb ♪ ♪ Who is the great I Am ♪ ♪ While

millions join the theme ♪ ♪ I will sing, I will sing ♪ ♪ While millions join the theme, I will sing ♪ ♪ And when from death I'm free ♪ ♪ I'll sing on, I'll sing on ♪ ♪ And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on ♪ ♪ And when from death I'm free ♪ ♪ I'll sing and joyful be ♪ ♪ And through eternity ♪ ♪ I'll sing on, I'll sing on ♪ ♪ And through eternity, I'll sing on ♪ ♪ And joyful be ♪ ♪ What wondrous love is this ♪ ♪ O my soul, O my soul ♪ ♪ What wondrous love is this, O my soul ♪ ♪ And through eternity, I'll sing on ♪

- Have you ever noticed that things sometimes start out so wonderful and then, before you know it, everything gets all messed up? Suddenly things are ever so wrong. That's how it was in Jerusalem. Could it have been only five days since Jesus rode into the Holy City, with the crowds waving palm branches in greetings? Shouts of, "Hosanna," loud, "Hosanna," they cheered. Now the same crowd was begging Pilate to crucify Him. On His back was the cross on which He would die. In that same place, mounted with a skull, placed in the midst of two other nameless people. But yet, His cross was marked: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Even Pilate, when asked to change it, said he meant what he'd written. As was foretold, he was nailed to a cross, stripped of his clothes for the whole world to see and given bitter wine to drink. Even after this, His love reached out to His mother, as He turned her care over to Peter. And with only love for those who persecuted Him, He died. How painful, how painful to watch a love offered so freely, so bitterly rejected. How could they ever know that the one mocked would offer mercy, that blood shed would cleanse the ones stripped of dignity. But just who was mocking whom? In his account of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel describes the scene of a young boy being hung from the gallows. In anguish, one of the elders cries out, "Where is God?" Another responds, "He is hanging in the gallows." Perhaps Dietrich Bonhoeffer was right: "Only a suffering God can save." That's what Lent is all about, God dwelling among us to save us, to redeem us. Thanks be to God, amen. ♪ To mock your reign, O dearest Lord ♪ ♪ They made a crown of thorns ♪ ♪ Set you with taunts along that road ♪ ♪ From which no one returns ♪ ♪ They could not know, as we do now ♪ ♪ How glorious is that crown ♪ ♪ That thorns would flower upon your brow ♪ ♪ Your sorrows heal our own ♪ ♪ In mock acclaim, O gracious Lord ♪ ♪ They snatched a purple cloak ♪ ♪ Your passion turned, for all they cared ♪ ♪ Into a soldier's joke ♪ ♪ They could not know, as we do now ♪ ♪ That though we merit blame ♪ ♪ You will your robe of mercy throw ♪ ♪ Around our naked shame ♪ ♪ A sceptered reed, O patient Lord ♪ ♪ They thrust into your hand ♪ ♪ And acted out their grim charade ♪ ♪ To its appointed end ♪ ♪ They could not know, as we do now ♪ ♪ Though empires rise and fall ♪ ♪ Your Kingdom shall not cease to grow ♪ ♪ Till love embraces all ♪ ♪ Were you there when they crucified my Lord ♪ ♪ Were you there ♪ ♪ Were you there when they crucified my Lord ♪ ♪ Were you there ♪ ♪ Oh, oh, ♪ ♪ Sometimes it causes me ♪ ♪ To tremble ♪ ♪ Tremble, tremble ♪ ♪ Were you there when they crucified my Lord ♪ ♪ Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb ♪ ♪ Were you there ♪ ♪ Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb ♪ ♪ In the tomb ♪ ♪ Oh, oh ♪ ♪ Sometimes it causes me ♪ ♪ To tremble ♪ ♪ Tremble, tremble ♪ ♪ Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb ♪ ♪ Laid Him in the tomb ♪

- Psalm 130: "Out of the depths, I cry to thee, O Lord, "Lord, hear my voice. "Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. "If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, "Lord, who could stand? "But there is forgiveness with Thee, "That Thou mayest be feared. "I wait for the Lord. "My soul waits, and in His word, I hope. "My soul waits for the Lord, "More than watchmen for the morning. "More than watchmen for the morning, I wait. "O Israel, hope in the Lord, "For with the Lord, there is steadfast love "And with Him is plenteous redemption. "And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities, amen."