

- And still we begin one more Sunday, testing 1, 2, 3, 4. ( orchestral music)

- We confess our sins together. Would you be seated? Let's pray. Oh, Father in heaven, who does fashion our limbs to serve thee and our souls to follow hard after thee. With sorrow and contrition of heart, we acknowledged before the, the false and failures of the day that has now passed. Too long oh father, we have tried thy patience, too often we have betrayed the sacred trust thou has given us to keep. You at thou art's still willing that we should come to thee and lowliness of heart as now we do. Beseeching thee to drown our transgressions in the sea of thine own infinite love. Amen. The words of assurance are these; Jesus said I am the light of the world he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Now, you join me reciting together the prayer of our Lord. Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us, our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Psalm 148. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the Heights. Praise him all his angels. Praise him all his host. Praise him sun and moon. Praise him all you shining stars. Praise him you highest heavens. And do you waters above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord. For he commanded and they were created and he established them forever and ever. He fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed. Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command. Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all Cedars. Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds. Kings of the earth and old peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth. Young men and maidens together, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord for his name alone is exalted. His glory is above the earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people. Praise for all saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the Lord. (orchestral music) Scripture lesson for this morning is in two parts. First from Isaiah, the 55th chapter verses six through 11, "Seek the Lord while he may be found "call upon him while he is near. "Let the wicked forsake his way "and the unrighteous man his thoughts, "let him return to the Lord "that he may have mercy on him "and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, "neither are your ways my ways says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth "so are my ways higher than your ways "and my thoughts than your thoughts. "For as the rain and snow come down from heaven "and do not return there but water the earth, "making it bring forth and sprout "giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth, "it shall not return to me empty "but it shall accomplish that which I purpose "and prosper in the thing which I sent it." From the gospel according to Luke 11th chapter verses one through 13 "He was praying in a certain place. "And when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." "And he said to them when you pray say, "father hallowed, be thy name, "thy kingdom come. "Give us each day our daily bread "and forgive us our sins "for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us "and lead us not into temptation." "And he said to them, "which of you who has a friend "We'll go to him at midnight and say to him "'friend lend me three loaves "'for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, "'and I have nothing to set before him.' "And he will answer from within, 'do not bother me. "'The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. "'I cannot get to get up and give you

anything.' "I tell you though, "he will not get up and give him anything "because he is his friend yet because of his importunity "he will rise and give him whatever he needs. "And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you, "seek and you will find knock, "and it will be open to you. "For everyone who asks, receives, "and he who seeks finds, "and to him who knocks it will be open. "What father among you, "if his son asks for a fish, "will instead of a fish give him a serpent "Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? "If you then who are evil, "know how to give good gifts to your children, "how much more will the heavenly father "give the holy spirit to those who ask him." Let us get together on feet. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in the true man Jesus to reconcile and make new who works in us and others by his spirit. We trust him. He calls us to be in his church to celebrate his presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil. To proclaim Jesus crucified and risen, our judge and our hope, in life, in death and life beyond death. God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God. The Lord be with you. Let us pray. Eternal God our father, maker of heaven and earth. We pause in this moment from the frantic pursuits of our workaday lives to be reminded that we cannot save ourselves either by work or by righteousness. Our father for your mercy and your infinite patience with us your disobedient creation, we offer our prayers. We celebrate your wisdom and making a world that has predictability and regularity built in. Provide us with a sense of order. We also celebrate the mystery and surprises woven into the fabric of our creation, which keeps us from being bored by never changing routine. And our father for the risk of your love and the vulnerability of incarnation. We rejoice and honor your name, Confessing our sin. We are embarrassed because we have asked for forgiveness for the same thing so many times. Yet we know we can come again in repentance and be made whole. Oh God, forgive us for continual disobedience for liking ourselves too much or too little, for wasting our unique gifts and talents or losing confidence in the power of your love. We are wearing ourselves out in pursuit of making it in this world. Our Father, we offer thanksgiving for the glory of spring, the joy of planting seeds and watching their transformation into flowers and fruit and soft green lawns. We thank you for friends in our times of need, for those who refuse to let us just get by and inspire the best in us. For those who continue to love us when we are miserable mean and hateful. We thank you for sleep, which restores body and mind and for your mercy which renews our hope and refreshes the soul. Keep us this day in health of body and soundness of mind and purity of heart and cheerfulness of spirit. In our labor, strengthen us. In our pleasure, purify us. In our times of confusion direct us, in danger defend us, in our troubles, comfort us. Oh God, search the hearts of those who are here this morning and listening to the service and minister to our individual needs. We are lonely and lost. Some of us are tired of living. Some haven't yet begun to live. Some have too much work to do and others have no work. There are those for whom the future contains in this particular moment, no possibility of light or hope. We pray for children whose parents don't love them and for parents who have been deserted by their children. We pray for those who are in pain and those who face the uncertainty of an unchecked disease. For those who face death. For those who face life without someone who had given life significance. Father, we seek your healing power for the yields of this community and for our country and world. Guide us into more abundant living and use us as instruments of peace in the world. Spirit and power of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Our father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, amen. This day, according to traditional Ecclesiastical calendars is the Sunday of Rogationtide, which has been historically a mini penitential season preceding the celebration of the Ascension, which falls on the Thursday following us. The Rogation days, literally meaning days of asking, constitute of preparation for that feast. In years past in rural areas, Rogation time was the time when the fields were blessed at planting and when petitions were offered for gentle rain, a favorable growing season

in summer and for a bountiful autumn harvest. In years past my own denomination, along with others added something to Rogationtide. That addition was called Rural Life Sunday. The life and work of the farmer received its proper attention when viewed as a partnership with the creator in giving food to the world. Life lived near the soil did have its own values and honest toil did have its own rewards. It is not quite so easy today to celebrate Rural Life Sunday, for the business of agriculture is no longer a way of life, it is industry. The rural values have all but disappeared from our lifestyle. I suspect that the significance of Rural Life Sunday and rogationtide declined, as the population in the rural setting declined. These days, the future and preservation of the cities has occupied much of our attention. It is with some sadness (indistinct) that I recently noticed, that the latest Ecclesiastical calendar is from my own denomination. Carried a new subtitle for Rogationtide, Environmental Sunday. I suppose that in the scheme of things, this is the way that it should be since that is a more recent concern. There was nothing wrong and celebrating an environmental Sunday. After all we do celebrate and know things of lesser importance in the church. But I do often wonder whether or not the liturgical bus who embark on these quests for relevance, take the time to do any theological homework. For if one does note Environmental Sunday, he must also take into account some kind of theological encounter with the world. And our theology of creation is woefully inadequate. In spite of our attempted flirtation with a new theology, our efforts are still a long way from being complete. We have, for example, talked about loving the world as God loved it, but we are still afraid to do that fully. Consider what happened in theological circles and especially in church denominational offices when the environmental crisis was made a part of our corporate consciousness. What a rush there was to appropriate this new area of concern. Frustrated departments of stewardship, which actually developed gimmicks to raise money, had a new and relevant gimmick to you. The earth was suffering from pollution and garbage because man had been a lousy and incompetent steward of nature and creation. While they, that may have been part of a cause the pollution of water and air and the depletion of resources did not come solely from a lack of a sense of stewardship. The theological definition of the environmental crisis is best defined in terms of blasphemy. Taking a gift of grace and abusing and misusing it, nor will the problem disappear if liturgical efforts include more prayers and more responses and more services of our ecology. Man must face up to his own responsibility for blaspheming in God's face. The latest issue of the Atlantic has a remarkable biographical essay, which best defines and outlines a starting place in considering this phenomenon. In this essay entitled Catholicism First, Poet Ned O'Gormand laments the current preoccupation in church life with simply renovating the trappings. And he says in a rather lengthy way, "I learned to love the world "amidst the whimsical conjunction of the old world "at its end and the new world of the church "and its war with modern life and it's beginning. "I am glad I was not born at that time. "When I would have learned, "had to learn of the church under the sun, "the shadow of a second Vatican council "and a totally liberated universe. "It would have been a little for me like learning "to love music through Wagner. "There was still then dial enough, "left over from the past to enable me to worship the Lord, "fear him, adore the world, "honor my parents, "delight in the day, Keep chase "and yet wonder continually "about what a glorious, bountiful, tragic, "sensitive thing life was. "The world "and the church had much yet succumb to banal language, "marketplace liturgies, "dread of transcendence at a general agreement "among all the enlightened that mystery, "glory, holiness, elegance, eternity "and judgment are evil words "transmitted with evil intent by neurotic saints "and even more neurotic churches. "We must suffer now with mock celebrations "and the disappearance of theology and sermons. "I am delighted with much that has gone, "but I am not delighted with the wasteland "that has taken its place. "My childhood church was

no wasteland. "It did not lead me into vulgarity, "but sermons were mere lessons in hell and sin "went through all the clumsiness and bad history "and style there ran right with mystery, "the riddle of the Lord and the incarnation. "I think my love of the church perhaps began in those days "when the church in her monolithic, unliberated, shriveling, "period could still announced the mystery of creation "and not fall victim to the marketplace. "Now, in this new church, "everything becomes very quickly, very dull. "There are no processions, no incense, no seed, "no candles, no vestments, "no long drawn out liturgies "where one was forced to think "whether one liked it or not about the divine. "Everything now is short, clean, brightly, modern, "and for all the relevance morbidly uninteresting." A strong statement, but the setting in which we might try to understand the world today. O'Gorman comments that he was impressed very early in his life by the redemptive aspects of Christ's death and the meanings of them for the life of the world. But he said, "the church never really believed "that the world was quite as good as it was. "It had never quite gotten used "to the sheer corporate reality of it. "That it seems to me strikes "at the heart of the dilemma that is before us today. "For in fact, "we have been anxious to develop a relevant position "that will assist us in relating to the world. "When we are reticent about doing a theology of the world. "we have a dilemma quite like that "positive, positive, viral cartoon "in a recent issue of the new Yorker. "A typical American business executive is stretched out on a psychiatrist's couch and there he laments my Protestant work ethic made me a bundle and my Puritan guilt complex won't let me enjoy it. We have been reticent to enjoy the world of our day. "We have rather taken "with almost fanatical Zeal "the biblical exercitation to subdue it. "We need to be reminded constantly that creation is good "and it is fragile. "As a Lutheran document stated several years ago. "'This is God's world. "The object of God's love, "the arena of man's achievement "and the seed of man's struggle.' "In the biblical accounts of creation, moreover, "the verbs used to describe "the creative activity are strong. "God makes, fashions, "creates, speaks "with the imagery of mystery incoming, "one might conclude that, "when God decided to invent everything, "he took one breath bigger than a circus tent "and everything began. "Into the world, God placed man to have dominion over it "and to subdue it. "Creation is a gift of grace to man. "He is to share it in a loving "and countering transaction with the creator. "He is to respond to it in love "and whenever he fails to do this, "he is guilty of blasphemy. "Man is charged with the care of this berkeley "and cosmic garden. "The Earth, the created universe is the theater of grace "where God and man meets. "The creation is not some inner mass "nor some sculpture form, "nor some master architect's construction, "nor a mechanic's contraction. "It is vibrant and alive. "A machine derives its meaning "and virtue from exterior sources. "The world of creation contains life within it. "It does not move merely at the whim of the creator, "the creation and the creature "can even rebel against the creator. "It is not as philosopher David Hume suggested, "a first root essay or prototype of a better model. "It is good. "The Old Testament law in the book of Leviticus "provided some guidelines for the care of the earth. "The land was to lie fallow for one year in each seven. "There was to be care and sharing with everyone "and especially with those who had no land "and there was to be conservation, "and the whole nation would prosper. "Where there is the investment of self, "of God's own self and being in the creation. "Anthony town was moved to write "a few years ago with Tongue In Cheek "excerpts rom the Diaries of the Late God "and in an apocryphal manner, he quotes, "God is saying, "'I am bored with it all "'here I sit, "'I am omniscient, "'I am omnipotent, "'I am omnipresent, "'I am divine, "'I am Supreme, "'I am a map of the bull. "'I am in short God, "'but I am condemned to look out "'interminably in all directions into an impenetrable void. "'If only I had something to do, "'something creative, "'I am only bored. "'I am so full of myself, I think I could create a world. "'I have created the heavens and the earth "'alpha to omega. "'Why don't we do this again? "'The

toughest part of it was setting it all up "so that later on geologists and paleontologists "and whatnot would be able to satisfy themselves "that it all happened naturally "and in no way, violated the evolutionary process. "I carefully included skeletons of prehistoric monsters, "remnants of a missing lake, "bits of meteorites from other planets, "rock formations "that might have been caused by glacial erosion and so on. "I wanted there to be sufficient evidence to rule out "absolutely any suggestion "that my creation was some sort of supernatural phenomenon. "There was nothing, whatever supernatural about it. "It was blood, sweat, and tears "if you want to know the truth. "There is nothing the least bit spooky "believe me about playing hard work. "What a satisfaction to have had a dream "to have nurtured and intended it "and finally to have seen it become a reality. "I have seen that it is good. "So it is that the creation was begun and continued. "Here are the contradictions from the biblical tradition, "rise up to frustrate us. "Gloria pottery affirms a world without him "while the second epistle of Peter "informs us that the day of the Lord "will come like a thief. "And then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise "and the elements will be dissolved "with fire and the earth will be burned up. "And the writer of the revelation envisions "a new heaven and a new Earth, "for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away "and the sea was no more. "And I saw the holy city, "new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven "from God "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. "And I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "behold, the dwelling of God is with men. "He will dwell with them and they shall be his people "and God himself will be with them.' "And he who sat upon the throne said, "behold, I make all things new.' "Clearly, "these writers expected "the complete destruction of creation "and did not look forward just a renovation of it. There would be a complete replacement by God, "a new creation. "These days, we no longer speak in those terms. "There is indeed the capacity in the world "to reduce it to ashes, "but it is man who possesses that power "and threatens to use it. "Not God. "In fact, I suppose it might be "that the new health player preachers of damnation "and the destruction of the world, "are those who have made the environmental problem "number one on their list of priorities. "They recognize the law of retribution "and can effectively use fear to bring about strain. "And I am not inferring that that is bad. "It may well be that is what is needed "to shake us off our liberty "or if this earth is to be replaced, "then the pollution of our environment "may just be a passing phase of little significance. "Yet, I cannot believe that "we should wait for that to happen. "Just how one should deal "with the passages of cosmic doom "in these days I am not certain. "But I remain convinced of one thing. "The environmental problem is the sin of blasphemy "as the gospel for this day said, "God gives good gifts. "Creation is that gift. "It may be that the new earth may emerge "only as man gives himself to its renewal "instead of continuing to stand recalcitrance "and grumpy in the presence of a gracious God. "Some years ago in a volume entitled "Significantly" "the Christian doctrine of creation "and redemption. "Theologian Ameil Bruno noted that man "realizes his divine destiny "only when he rises above nature "and looks at it from a distance. "If he worships nature, "he does not maintain a proper perspective. "His civilizations and cultures must be humane "and creative, otherwise, "he will destroy himself and nature. "And Bruno concludes upon this foundation alone "will a man use his mastery of natural rights? "Only thus will need be preserved from a selfish, "arrogant exploitation of nature, "which is a perversion of his power. "Man is not called to an absolute arbitrary "mastery over nature, "but to a mastery of nature, "which remains under the order of the creator "and therefore honors and loves the created universe "as God's creation. "I am convinced "that man has been summoned to fill the earth "and to clean it up. "He may now live east of it, "but he lives in an ecological setting "which implies an interdependence "so that what he does affects everything and "every one in the world. "For the

theologically attentive, "it is God the creator who has issued the sermons. "God after all is not found in theology, "nor in dogmas, "nor in the Bible, "nor in creeds, "but in the processes of the earth. "And when the Bible and creeds of theology are applied "to the building of the earth. "Only then do they become the revelation "or self-disclosure of God. "or as the Bible speaks Of salvation. "So if they find salvation as any event of recreation, "saving the creation is like the imagery "of Gerard Manley Hopkins who's verse bring "best get us the picture of what happens "in the process of creation and redemption. "Nothing is so beautiful as spring "when weeds and wheels shoot long and lovely and lush "Russia's eggs look little oh, heavens "and thrust through the echoing timbers "does so rinse and ring the year. "It strikes like lightnings to hear him say, ""glassy pear tree leaves and blues. "They brush the descending blue, "the racing lambs to have fair they're playing. "What is all this juice "and all this joy? "strain of the earth, "sweet being in the beginning, in Eden garden.' "And Hopkins reminds us and yet another verse. "And for all this nature is never spent "their lives the dearest freshness, "deep down things because the Holy Ghost "over the bent world broods with warm breasts "and with our right-wing. "Alfred North Whitehead and processing reality, "described God as the poet of the world "with tender patience, "leading it by his vision of truth, "beauty and goodness. "What does the future hold? "One cannot be certain, "but one can guess that man could make this place "uninhabitable by his carelessness "or the promises of creations renewal "are to be found within nature itself "and within the faith that occasions, "even this modest attempt "to deal with the theology of everything. "The earth is the Lord's "and the fullness thereof just as the Psalmist said it was. "It can be a man's home or it can be his undoing. "It was Joseph Sittler "who declared in new Delhi over a decade ago "when millions of the world's people "inside the church and outside of it "know that damnation now threatens man "and societies in history. "It is not likely that witness to a light "that does not unfold on a loom in the world as nature "will be even comprehensible. "For the root pathos of our time, "it's the struggle by the people of the world "in many and various ways "to find some principle order or power, "which shall be strong enough "to contain the raging Thrones, dominions, principalities, "which restrict and ravage human life. "If to the longing of all men everywhere "we are to propose him of whom "and through whom and in whom are all things. "Then that proposal must be made in redemptive terms "that are forged in the furnace of man's crucial engagement "with nature as both potential to blessedness "and potential to fail. "That redemptive task must begin now. "Our God has never said that his comments "and commands of old are now inoperative. "This is the time to see "that vision of his new heaven and Earth "this is the time to say it again. "With mystery comings, you can always quote in church. "I thank you God for most this amazing day "for the leak thing greenly spirits of trees "and a true blue dream of sky "and for everything which is natural, "which is infinite, which is yes." Let us pray. Dark days and troubled nights take their toll oh Lord, tragedy abroad and indifference at home was sent the spirits of man. We pray for light against the darkness and for the sword of your spirit against the bonds of indifference. That we may come alive and be useful to you in the days to come. Amen. (orchestral music) Our Father, we offer in dedication these gifts as a reasonable and significant part of our worship it's our prayer that they will be received in the spirit in which they are given as free gifts. Our father may they symbolize the giving of our lives into thy total service. In Christ's name we pray. (orchestral music) (feet shuffling) (orchestral music) (bell chiming )