

(flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music)

- Grace and peace to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We welcome you to this service of worship at Duke University Chapel on this first Sunday in Lent and we pray that you will receive a blessing during this hour. We send special greetings to any of you who may be visiting our campus for the first time and also to those of you in our radio and television audiences. You are reminded that next Sunday afternoon at five o'clock pm the Duke Chapel Choir and Orchestra will perform The Sacred Service by Earnest Bloch. Tickets are still available at five dollars each and may be obtained at Page Box Office or by writing the Chapel Music Office. Please note the remaining announcements as they are printed in your bulletins and now let us continue our worship as we join in the Great Litany. Please rise. ♪ Maker of heaven and earth ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Oh God the sun, Redeemer of the world, ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Oh God, the Holy Ghost, ♪ ♪ Sanctifier of the faithful ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Oh Holy, Blessed, and glorious trinity, ♪ ♪ One God ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Remember not, Lord Christ, our offenses ♪ ♪ Nor the offenses of our fore bearers ♪ ♪ Neither reward us according to our sins ♪ ♪ Spare us good Lord ♪ ♪ Spare Thy people whom Thou has redeemed ♪ ♪ With Thy most precious blood ♪ ♪ And by Thy mercy preserve us forever ♪ ♪ Spare us oh Lord ♪ ♪ From all evil and wickedness ♪ ♪ From sin ♪ ♪ From the traps and assaults of the devil ♪ ♪ And from everlasting damnation ♪ ♪ Good Lord deliver us ♪ ♪ From all blindness of heart ♪ ♪ From pride, ♪ ♪ Vain glory and hypocrisy ♪ ♪ From envy, ♪ ♪ Hatred and malice ♪ ♪ And from all want of charity ♪ ♪ Good Lord deliver us ♪ ♪ From all inordinate and sinful affections ♪ ♪ And from all the deceits of the world, ♪ ♪ The flesh, and the devil ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ From all false doctrine, ♪ ♪ Heresy and cism ♪ ♪ From hardness of heart ♪ ♪ And contempt of the word and commandment ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ From all oppression, conspiracy ♪ ♪ And rebellion ♪ ♪ From violence, battle and murder ♪ ♪ And from dying suddenly and unprepared ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation, ♪ ♪ By Thy holy nativity ♪ ♪ And submission to the law ♪ ♪ By Thy baptism, fasting and temptation ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ By Thine agony and bloody sweat ♪ ♪ By Thy cross and passion ♪ ♪ By Thy precious death and burial ♪ ♪ By Thy glorious resurrection and ascension ♪ ♪ And by the coming of the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ In all time of our tribulation ♪ ♪ In all time of our prosperity ♪ ♪ In the hour of death ♪ ♪ And in the day of judgment ♪ ♪ Good Lord, deliver us ♪ ♪ We sinners do beseech Thee to hear us ♪ ♪ Oh Lord God ♪ ♪ And that it may please Thee to rule ♪ ♪ And govern Thy Holy church universal ♪ ♪ In the right way ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to illumine all bishops, ♪ ♪ Priests and deacons ♪ ♪ With true knowledge and understanding of Thy word ♪ ♪ And that both by their preaching and living ♪ ♪ They may set it forth ♪ ♪ And show it accordingly ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee ♪ ♪ to bless and keep all Thy people ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to send forth laborers ♪ ♪ Into Thy harvest ♪ ♪ And to draw all people into Thy kingdom ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to give to all people ♪ ♪ Increase of grace to hear and receive Thy word ♪ ♪ And to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee ♪ ♪ To bring into the way of truth ♪ ♪ All such as have erred and are deceived ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us

oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to give us a heart ♪ ♪ To love and fear Thee ♪ ♪ And diligently to live after Thy commandments ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee so to rule the hearts ♪ ♪ Of Thy servants, ♪ ♪ The President of the United States, ♪ ♪ And all others in authority ♪ ♪ That they may do justice and love mercy ♪ ♪ And walk in the ways of truth ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee ♪ ♪ to make wars to cease in all the world ♪ ♪ To give to all nations unity, ♪ ♪ Peace and comfort ♪ ♪ And to bestow freedom upon all peoples ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to show Thy pity ♪ ♪ Upon all prisoners and captives, ♪ ♪ The homeless and hungry ♪ ♪ And all who are desolate and oppressed ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to give ♪ ♪ And preserve to our youth ♪ ♪ The bountiful fruits of the earth ♪ ♪ So that in due time all may enjoy them ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to inspire us ♪ ♪ In our several callings ♪ ♪ To do the work which Thou givest us to do ♪ ♪ With singleness of heart as Thy servants ♪ ♪ And for the common good ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to preserve ♪ ♪ All who are in danger ♪ ♪ By reason of their labor or their travel ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to preserve ♪ ♪ And provide for all women in childbirth, ♪ ♪ Young women and orphans, ♪ ♪ Widowed, and all whose homes are broken ♪ ♪ Or torn by strife ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to visit the lonely, ♪ ♪ To strengthen all who suffer in mind, ♪ ♪ Body and spirit ♪ ♪ And to comfort with Thy presence ♪ ♪ Those who are failing and infirm ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to support, ♪ ♪ Help and comfort all who are in danger, ♪ ♪ Necessity and tribulation ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all people ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to give us true repentance, ♪ ♪ To forgive us all our sins, ♪ ♪ Negligences and ignorances ♪ ♪ And to endue us with the grace ♪ ♪ Of Thy Holy Spirit ♪ ♪ To amend our lives according to Thy Holy word ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, ♪ ♪ Persecutors and slanderers ♪ ♪ And to turn their hearts ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee ♪ ♪ To strengthen such as do stand ♪ ♪ To comfort and help the weak-hearted ♪ ♪ And to raise up those who fail ♪ ♪ And finally to beat down Satan under our feet ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to grant ♪ ♪ To all the faithful departed ♪ ♪ Eternal life and peace ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ That it may please Thee to grant ♪ ♪ That in the fellowship of all the Saints ♪ ♪ We may attain to Thy heavenly kingdom ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us oh Lord ♪ ♪ Son of God, ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us ♪ ♪ Son of God, ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee to hear us ♪ ♪ Oh Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Oh Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Oh Lamb of God ♪ ♪ That takest away the sins of the world ♪ ♪ Grant us your peace ♪ ♪ Oh Christ hear us ♪ ♪ Oh Christ hear us ♪ ♪ Lord have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ Lord, have mercy upon us ♪ ♪ 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, ♪ ♪ The power, ♪ ♪ And the glory forever ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Oh Lord, ♪ ♪ Let Thy mercy be showed upon us ♪ (congregation chants) ♪ Let us pray ♪ ♪ Almighty God ♪ ♪ Who has promised to hear ♪ ♪ The petitions of those who ask ♪ ♪ In Thy Son's name ♪ ♪ We beseech Thee mercifully ♪ ♪ To incline Thy ear to us ♪ ♪ Who have now made our prayers ♪ ♪ And supplications unto Thee ♪ ♪ And grant that those things ♪ ♪ Which we have asked faithfully ♪ ♪ According to Thy will ♪ ♪ May be obtained effectually ♪ ♪ To the relief of our necessity ♪ ♪ And to the setting forth of Thy glory ♪ ♪ Through Jesus Christ our Lord ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ The grace

of our Lord Jesus Christ ♪ ♪ And the love of God ♪ ♪ And the fellowship of the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Be with us all evermore ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Let us pray. Open our hearts and minds, oh God, by the power of your Holy Spirit so that as the word is read and proclaimed we might hear with joy what you say to us this first Sunday of Lent. Amen. Please be seated. The first lesson this morning is taken from the book of Genesis, the ninth chapter, verses eight through 17. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you. The birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, this is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations. I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. God said to Noah this is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. Here ends the lesson. The second lesson is taken from the book of the prophet Ezekiel, the 26th chapter verses 22 through 32. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God. It is not for your sake, oh house of Israel, that I am about to act but for the sake of my holy name which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. For I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you. I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your ancestors and you shall be my people and I will be your God and I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. It is not for your sake that I will act says the Lord God. Let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, oh house of Israel. Here ends the lesson.

- We have begun today's service by chanting the words of the Great Litany and what an appropriate way to begin the season of Lent. In those ancient cadences we confess our manifold sins and faults, all the ways that we fall short and again and again we say good Lord, deliver us. And the Lord will deliver us, at least that is the testimony of Scripture. Our God hears and acts. God is deliverer. And today's Scripture from Ezekiel speaks of that divine deliverance. God says I will take you. I will gather. I will cleanse you. I will bring you. I will give you. As God delivered Noah and his family from the flood, God shall deliver Israel. The prophet

speaks these words to exiles, people who had been cruelly deported from their country to another country. And to these exiles in an alien land, to people down and out having hit bottom. They hear this word. I will be your God. I will deliver you. And of course, you know that this message of hope is not original with Ezekiel. The prophets are unanimous in their assertion that ours is a God that hears and delivers. We pray because this God delivers. And as a pastor, I can tell you that I am glad that I have that word to speak, for as the Great Litany has reminded us there, there are always enough reasons for despair in this life to be grateful that God is deliverer. I am grateful that the prophetic word is that when you are like Israel, when you are down and out, when you are utterly without possibility, when you've hit bottom that there is hope. God will deliver. When every prayer uttered by a believer, every anguished cry for help from a faithful person is based upon that assertion. God delivers. Now that hope is not being debated in today's text. There is another issue behind today's text. Did you hear it? Thus says the Lord God. It is not for your sake, oh house of Israel, that I am about to act but rather for the sake of my holy name. which you have profaned among the nations. Through you I will vindicate the holiness of my great name. It is not for your sake that I will act says the Lord God. It is not for your sake that I will act. The question in today's text is not one about theodicy, whether or not God will act. The question being debated today is, Why? On what basis does God act to deliver? 'Cause it makes all the difference in the world when you pray, when you reach out. On what basis shall God deliver? Well, we answer God delivers because God is love, because God cares, God loves us. But Ezekiel doesn't say that. Nowhere is it said that God's great heart goes out to poor suffering Israel. Now Jeremiah said that and so did Isaiah. But Ezekiel says that God has come to such a low opinion of his own people, you have profaned, you are unclean, you idolaters, your deeds are no good. That God has come to such a low opinion of his people that if there is to be deliverance that Israel has absolutely nothing to contribute to that deliverance. By its behavior, the nation now waits empty handed for whatever God chooses to give. It is not for your sake, oh house of Israel, that I am about to act but for the sake of my holy name. Through you I will vindicate my holy name. The nations will know that I am God. Walter Brueggemann says, "I regard this text from Ezekiel "as one of the most dangerous "and stunning texts in the Bible "because it sets God's free, unfettered sovereignty "at a distance even from Israel." God will act, but God's action will have nothing to do with having pity or mercy or compassion on Israel or us. You can forget that motherly love business in Isaiah or Jeremiah. Ezekiel knows nothing of it. Oh I've preached about such a basis for God's intervention. I've heard the cry of my people in slavery and I will deliver them, Exodus. The Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, deliverance to the captives, Isaiah, Luke. A friend of mine, working at a penitentiary where every week he observed parents of prisoners coming to visit their imprisoned sons and every week he watched as their sons refused to speak to them and yet every week the parents came back, and he said God is just like that only more so. But what happens, today's text asks, what happens when even God's compassion goes dry? What happens when God has gone the second, third, fourth, fifth mile with his people and still they disobey, what then? Ezekiel says God has had it with Israel. Took them back once, twice, 30 times. But now the mercy, the compassion, the pity of even God have gone dry. What then? Then, our text answers, then, there is holy God and all of God's unaccommodating, prickly self concern. God's reputation, God's good name are important to God even though they may not be important to us. The nations have watched God's treatment of Israel, and now the nations wonder what's God gonna do with Israel now that it's blown its 30th second chance to straighten up and fly right? What will God do now? God's reputation is on the line. Ezekiel is portraying God here like parents with their children in a restaurant with everybody watching them. The children are tired and they're not behaving very well. The parents are also

tired and embarrassed. There's not much at stake for the children. They're behaving just like children. But a great deal is at stake for the parents because everybody is watching. Oh they might like to swat the children, really let them have it, but they can't or people in the restaurant will think that they're bad parents. How are they gonna look when word gets around town that they can't even cope with their own children? So what do they do? They become the very models of parental patience. Would you like to take the soup bowl off your head and get down off the table, dear? After all, people are looking. And Ezekiel says God got into the same kind of dilemma. Israel had thrown one long tantrum and God acted like the long suffering patient parent until God could just take it no longer. All the nations were watching to see what God would do now that Israel had pushed God just a little too far. Here, at the end of the rope, in utter desperation, here there's no more mushy talk about compassion, mercy, pity, the tolerance of God. Now there's nothing left but just God. There's nothing that Israel could repent of or vow this time to get right that could change things. It's a text about what you'd do when you have hit bottom and you have blown your 30th chance to straighten up and fly right. It's a text about that. What now? Now, Ezekiel says, God's gonna look after God for a change. Now that may sound hard-nosed. We are obsessed with what God thinks about us. What do we need to do right to get ourselves right with God? What do we need to do right on this first Sunday of Lent to set a few Lenten resolutions and to set things straight? So we come to church on Sunday morning and we feel as if we oughta get our money back if the preacher spends too much time talking about God and not enough time talking about us. We don't wanna know what God's doing. We only wanna know what we're supposed to do. And of course, that assumes that God actually needs something we're supposed to do. But Ezekiel says it's way too late for that. Now the future rests solely upon the hope that God will take seriously being God. I'm not going to deliver you because of you but because of me and my holiness that the nations will see that I am God. They will watch, and they will know it takes a really great God to love a people like you. Hope, our text suggests, hope is a byproduct of God's free, unfettered Godness. Our only hope when the chips are down is that God will remember to act like God. In today's text in the Noah story, Noah and his family get through the flood, and God establishes a covenant with Noah. And God says in effect to Noah, I know you're gonna forget your side of the covenant and I tell you when dealing with you people I might forget my side of the covenant. So I'm gonna put a rainbow in the sky, and every time I get ready to let you have it, I'm gonna glimpse at that rainbow and say oh, I remember. I made a promise to these people. The rainbow will be there as a reminder that God will be God. And I'll admit we're unaccustomed to that kind of thinking. There is hope for us because we think that after all, down deep, when the chips are down, we are very nice people who are at least, you have to give us credit, we're doing the best we can and after all, isn't that enough for God? We really don't mean to base our whole civilization on nuclear weapons. We really don't mean to be self-centered, violent, cruel to one another. So hope lies in our attempts to straighten up and fly right, to do better. Better education, more brightly lit city streets, a tighter national security, a new administration in Washington. Give us time, we can get get it together. Christ has no hands but our hands. You've heard that sermon. God just can't get along without good people like us. The worst sin of all, says Augustine, is the sin of the conceit of merit. The notion that somehow God's love is our entitlement. But if we are honest about ourselves, our motives, our reasons, the way we live and love with one another, the secret undisclosed desires of our hearts, we feel deep, deep guilt, and they're thereby driven to deep, deep despair. And today's text from Ezekiel speaks to that kind of despair. The despair of knowing that when the chips are down, we're not worth saving. That we've cashed in all our chips and called in all of our markers. That we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep and what then? Maybe you've never come to that point in your life. So

I think this text speaks only to the most honest of people who are drawn to that brand of despair. I tell you that one reason we are forever indebted to Israel is that Israel dared in its Scriptures to be so utterly self-critical. And this text stands as a rebuke to those in Israel in Ezekiel's day who assumed that their restoration as a people was a matter of their own merit. Oh there were those in Israel who thought that God just had to have a temple priesthood. God really wanted a royal dynasty. So God would of course deliver them. We are a Christian, a Democratic country. God really needs us. I have tithed. I've gotten up on a February morning and gone to church. I've never knowingly sinned since graduation. God must deliver me. How is God gonna save the Freshman class without me? God is my patron rather than my sovereign. And to this, Ezekiel puts forth the stunning assertion that hope depends upon God not having such commitments to us. That our hope is that God won't be committed to us. We want to believe that God is dependent on our goodness, on our ability to get things together, on the survival of Democratic capitalism or the defeat of racism or the establishment of socialism, because then, you see, we can manage the future. It's in our hands. Conversely, if God is free to be God, to play this thing any way God chooses, then maybe God might surprise us. That latter possibility requires of us not goodness but something I think even more difficult for us modern people than even goodness. It requires that we trust God. It requires that we trust the significance of our lives or the hope for our future and we place it in God's hands. Which of the two views offers a surer hope? I suppose it's all dependent on whether or not God can be trusted, or whether our best hope is in ourselves and our systems. And you know that we are just notorious for our attempts to harness God for our own schemes. You remember Jesus told a story about two men went to church to pray? A story, Jesus said, told to those--what?

--who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. The first man was a Pharisee, a good Bible-believing, church-going, tithing person. A religious liberal. The very embodiment of self trust. He was religiously confident, psychologically well-balanced, politically bold, and he prayed oh God, I thank you. I'm not like other people. The unjust, extortioners, adulterers, people like them. I fast twice a week. I give of everything I get. God, I thank Thee that I am not sexist or racist or materialist. God, I thank Thee for me. But oh, how such pretentious, posturing prayer crumbles before today's text. It is not for your sake but for the sake of my holy name that I act. Israel had hit bottom and languishing in exile began to see that hope is possible. Not because God has a preferential option for the poor in Israel. Not because the old man has finally gotten soft on sin. But because God wants to be God. I remind you that when we pray, first we say our Father who art in heaven, holy be your name, and it's only then that we dare to pray give us this day, forgive us our trespasses, deliver us. God is holy. Not us. Therefore we pray. The philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach argued that God is a mere projection of my ideal image of myself, Feuerbach said God has no real independent existence. When you pray to God, you see, you're merely speaking to your highest ideal of who you wish to God you really were. I got to admit that Feuerbach's charge is very difficult to refute today when many would make a virtue out of such projection. God is my father or my mother or my sister, my brother. The justification for my particular ideology of the right or the left. God is on the side of the poor. God is for the Contras. I can't relate to God unless God is my gender, my class, my race, my size. Narcissistic theology based upon my inflated ego is the order of the day. Theology isn't any good unless it does something good for me and my minority. God can be worshiped and prayed to only because God is a reflection of my ego. Therefore, God is drawn into and identified with my particular social commitments at the moment. Worship is a time for the preacher to identify which side God is on to we can all get on with the business of rushing

over and standing on that side. Conservatives just know that God is against homosexuality and communism. Liberals just know that God is pro-choice, pro-blessing. Now it all sounds well and good that we should be about doing good things that God wants us to do. But ultimately, that leads to despair. We stagger out of church on a Sunday morning under the burden of thinking that because we know what God wants, and we are able to do what God wants, we've got to be like gods ourselves. What a reprimanding word is this from Ezekiel. Don't get confused. It's not for your sake but for the sake of my name that I act and surprisingly, what a word of hope. Hope. Because all of our feverish, desperate attempts to be right are put in perspective. We don't have to brag in our prayer like that Pharisee because finally, prayer is not a matter of cataloging my virtues but rather laying myself bare before a holy God and I tell you in this society, paralyzed by its guilt, immobilized by its fear, beset with survival issues on exile in an alien land, we need to hear this hopeful word that finally, when the chips are down, tomorrow is a matter of who God is rather than who we are. That finally tomorrow is something to be determined in God's own freedom to be God. Our best hope, in life or death, is that God will be God. Which I'll admit may sound threatening or ambiguous, or it may cause us to fall back on a power greater than our own which the Bible teaches is the path to true hope. Let us pray. From our anxious attempt to know and be and do, good Lord deliver us, not for our sake but for the sake of Thy holy name. Amen. (flowing organ music) (congregation singing hymn with organ) (congregation singing hymn with organ) (congregation singing hymn with organ)

Woman: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

- Let us pray. Oh ever living God, who dwelleth at the same time in high places and in the hearts of those who are humble, we are gathered once again gratefully to acknowledge that Thou hast been and continues to be our God and our shepherd. We have not wanted. As our cup has overflowed, so now do our hearts with thanksgiving that we are alive and that the call to discipleship has been heard in this place. In response to Thy gracious word, we offer now these prayers for others as a sign of our oneness with our sisters and brothers around the world. Oh creator God, we pray for the needs of the entire human family. Look with kindness upon those who have separated themselves from one another and from Thee. Take away the self-righteousness which infects our hearts and unite us in bonds of love across the lines of nationality, of race or of creed. In Thy goodness and mercy, Lord, hear our prayer. Oh ever loving God, we pray for Thy holy Catholic church. Fill it with all truth and peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it. Where it is in error, direct it. Where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it. Where it is in want, provide for it. Where it is divided, reunite it. In Thy goodness and mercy, Lord, hear our prayer. Oh sustaining God, send down upon our bishops and other clergy and upon the congregations committed to their charge the healing spirit of Thy grace. Grant that your word may be truly preached and truly heard, your sacraments faithfully administered and gratefully received. By Thy spirit, inspire us to greater service according to the example of Thy Son and grant that our lives may reflect the light of Thy glory among all those with whom we live, work, and play. In Thy goodness and mercy, Lord, hear our prayer. Oh eternal God, we pray for all our relationships that we may cherish them without possessing them, challenge them without competing with them, believe in them without idolizing them, as Thou has loved us unconditionally, oh God, as revealed in Thy Son Jesus Christ. Strengthen us to love with such conviction, such freedom, such grace, not just those

whom we already know and love but even our enemies. In Thy goodness and mercy, Lord, hear our prayer. These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, amen. As a forgiven and reconciled people, let us make an offering of our gifts and ourselves unto God. (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (choir singing hymn in foreign language) (choir singing hymn in foreign language) (choir singing hymn in foreign language) (choir singing hymn in foreign language) (choir singing hymn in foreign language) (flowing organ music) ♪ Praise God, from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise him, all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Praise him above, ye heavenly host ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Almighty God, giver of all life, we Thine unworthy servants do give Thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men and women. We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life but above all, for Thy gracious love and the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory and we beseech Thee, give us that due sense of awe, Thy mercies, that our hearts may be forever thankful and that we may show forth Thy praise not only with our lips but in our lives by giving up ourselves to Thy service and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days. Through Jesus Christ our Lord to whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, world without end, amen. (flowing organ music) ♪ O God, our help ♪ ♪ in ages past, ♪ ♪ Our hope for years to come, ♪ ♪ Our shelter from the stormy blast, ♪ ♪ And our eternal home ♪ ♪ Under the shadow of Thy throne ♪ ♪ Thy saints have dwelt secure ♪ ♪ Sufficient is Thine arm alone, ♪ ♪ And our defense is sure ♪ ♪ Before the hills in order stood, ♪ ♪ Or earth received her frame, ♪ ♪ From everlasting Thou art God, ♪ ♪ To endless years the same ♪ ♪ A thousand ages in Thy sight ♪ ♪ Are like an evening gone ♪ ♪ Short as the watch ♪ ♪ that ends the night ♪ ♪ Before the rising sun ♪ ♪ Time, like an ever-rolling stream, ♪ ♪ Bears all its sons away ♪ ♪ They fly forgotten, ♪ ♪ as a dream ♪ ♪ Dies at the opening day ♪ ♪ O God, our help in ages past, ♪ ♪ Our hope for years to come, ♪ ♪ Be Thou our guard ♪ ♪ while life shall last, ♪ ♪ And our eternal home ♪

- And now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music) (flowing organ music)