

(hymnal singing)

- Sunday worship service, Duke chapel, October 14, 1979. (organ music) (organ music) (organ music)
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- For nearly 4,000 years, from Abraham through 40 centuries to the present, our spiritual ancestors and we have expressed a primal need. To confess collectively our unworthiness and need for grace. Let us therefore confess as a congregation our personal prayer of confession. Oh God, we who have been called to be your people confess that we have been given new life but we have not lived. We have been called to freedom but we have found the burden heavy, the anxiety painful and have returned to our illusions about life and our deceits about ourselves. We have talked about getting involved, serving our neighbor, opening our eyes and ears and senses to our world but we keep finding reasons why it isn't possible right now. We who should be full of faith and hope are empty and lost. We long for the freedom and joy you promise if we follow you but we are afraid of the demands, the pain, the involvement, the time and perhaps the cross, that are a part of that freedom and joy. Increase our hunger for you, oh lord. Forgive our fears and weaknesses. Drive us, intrigue us, love us until we can give you our lives. Bless the lord our God who forgiveth all our iniquities, who redeemeth our lives from destruction, who crowneth us with loving kindness and tender mercies. Let us give thanks, for God is good and God's love is everlasting. Thanks be to God. Love creates us. Thanks be to God, whose mercy redeems us. Thanks be to God, who sustains us. As the presiding minister this morning, I have the opportunity to welcome each of you. Many of you close friends and colleagues for at least a decade. And to welcome those who are worshiping with us for the first time. Each of us participating in this service hopes that your heart will be stirred by the love and voice of God as we together worship him. It is also my privilege to draw your attention to the organ recital this afternoon by Virginia L. Vance. The particulars will be found on the back of your bulletin. The service, as a organ recital, begins at seven this evening.

- Let us pray. Prepare our hearts, oh lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own that hearing we may also obey your will through Jesus Christ our lord. The epistle lesson is from the first chapter of first Corinthians, verses 10 through 18. I appeal to you brethren by the name of our lord, Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you. But that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, I belong to Paul, or I belong to Apollos. Or I belong to Cephas, or I belong to Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I am thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that you were baptized in my name. I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel and not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Here ends the reading from the

epistle, amen. (organ music) (hymnal singing) Will the congregation please stand for the reading of the gospel lesson? The gospel lesson is from the 17th chapter of John, verses one through three and 20 through 26. When Jesus had spoken these words he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify thy son, that the son may glorify thee. Since thou hast given him power over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life. That they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent. I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word. That they may all be one. Even as thou, father, art in me and I in thee, that they may also be in us so that the world may believe that thou have sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them. That they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me That they may become perfectly one. So that the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am. To behold my glory which thou hast given me and thy love for me before the foundation of the world. Oh righteous father, the world has not known thee but I have known thee and these know that thou hast sent me. I made known to them thy name and I will make it known that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them. Here ends the reading from the gospel. All praise and glory be to God. (organ music) (hymnal singing)

- Grace to you and peace from the lord our God who creates us, redeems us and sustains us, Amen. Pope John Paul II has just this past Monday, completed an historic visit to the United States. Untold millions, literally, heard him, saw him in person, watched him on television and read about him. His presence, his speeches and sermons, his warmth and graciousness, his wit and wisdom, his love and compassion moved and stirred all of us. Roman Catholic and non-Catholic, Christian and non-Christian. His presence among us with all the attendant news and publicity and acclaim, raised many very serious questions for the Catholic church, for all of us who are Christian, and for us as a nation. Many issues were addressed by him that will be debated and argued for a long time. It is yet to be seen and known whether his visit in the long run will prove to have been a unifying or a divisive influence. But one question which Pope John Paul II's visit raised for me is a question raised by Paul in his letter to the Corinthian Christians. Is Christ divided? Paul wrote in the passage we have heard as our epistle lesson. I appeal to you brethren by the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissension among you but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment for it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, I belong to Paul or I belong to Apollos or I belong to Cephas or I belong to Christ. Is Christ divided? And then in the gospel lesson for today, the high priestly prayer of our Lord. These words are included. I do not pray for these only. Presumably those gathered about him. But also for those who believe in me through their word that they may all be one. Even as thou father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them. That they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me and listen, that they may become perfectly one. There is no doubt that the earnest desire and prayer and plea of our Lord is that all who believed in him and were with him and all who were yet to believe in him and yet to be with him, might be one, might even be perfectly one. I find it somewhat intriguing, even compelling and yes, perhaps most importantly, reassuring. To see how constant and consistent is the concern that the church be one. It was for Jesus. It was for Paul. Thus, Paul's question, is Christ divided? I believe that Pope John Paul II's visit reaffirmed for all the church our humanness, our

differences, our dividedness. The question is Christ divided? The answer, made plain and clear and obvious in many ways by the visit by Pope John Paul II, the answer is, surely the visible body of Christ as we know it and see it and experience it is divided. Not only is it divided, it is absolutely rent asunder. That this is so, none could deny. That this is so, flies directly and categorically in the face of cries from the word of God, of the pleas of the early church writers and the longings and prayers of our Lord. What do we have? The church, that is the body of Christ as organization, as institution, as physical and organic entity, split, fractured, divided, dividing, and divisive. The church as present as Christ present, alive and visible among us today is divided. Roman, Eastern, Protestant, liberal, conservative. Evangelical, fundamentalist, mainline, activist, traditionalist, modernist, parochial, regional, national, ethnic, racial, Orthodox, Neo-Orthodox. It is estimated that there are probably more than 3500 different Christian bodies on this Earth today.

Sometimes, when I look at the broken church and when I look at our broken world, I do so with the same feeling and with the same fear. There seems to be absolutely no hope whatsoever. No hope whatsoever, short of some cataclysmic disaster or short of some apocalyptic nightmare and momentarily for me, periodically, I feel very despairing both about the world and about the church and very, very hopeless, but then after those moments and after those periodic times have come and gone, I realize what I often forget, namely that God is in control. That God's purpose and design are being worked out to their appointed end. That God really does know what is going on in the church and in this world. That God's will will be fulfilled. That Jesus' prayer in John that we all may be perfectly one will be answered someday. But you say now, in what way or what ways did the pope's visit reaffirm or make clear again our differences and our dividedness? His positions, lovingly and warmly, graciously, and caringly given on sexuality issues, the sexual orientation and lifestyles of heterosexuals, of homosexuals, of single persons and married persons, as he said. We see so many disturbing tendencies and so much laxity regarding the Christian view on sexuality that all have one thing in common, recourse to the concept of freedom to justify any behavior that is no longer consonant with the moral order and the teaching of the church. His position restated on divorce, the covenant, he said, between a man and a woman joined in Christian marriage is as indissoluble and irrevocable as God's love for his people and Christ's love for his church. His position on the priesthood and on the ordination of men only. He said, priesthood is forever. We do not return the gift once given. The church's traditional decision to call men to the priesthood and not to call women is not a statement about human rights nor an exclusion of women from holiness and mission in the church. His position on contraception and abortion, he said, in exalting the beauty of marriage, you, the bishops in the United States, rightly spoke against both the ideology of contraception and of contraceptive acts. You also gave witness to the truth, serving all humanity when you reaffirmed the right to life and the inviolable ability of every human life including the life of unborn children. His position on church unity. While stating that quote, "The will of Christ impels us to work earnestly and persuasively and perseveringly for unity with all our Christian brethren." He went on to state that, quote, "Full unity in faith is the condition for sharing in the Eucharist." Well, these issues and many more divide the church of Jesus Christ today in this country and around the world. No one, not even Pope John Paul II, I believe, can take an inflexible, unyielding, unilateral position on matters of sexuality, marriage and divorce, contraception, ordination of women, the irrevocability of priestly vows, and who has access to the Lord's table and not make visible the divisions within the body of Christ. On the other hand though, there are many beautiful, disturbing, reassuring, demanding, hopeful ways Pope John Paul II reaffirmed and reminded us often of our oneness, our union with Christ and Christ's spirit, our commonality in the church, our unity of concern and commitment. We are

one in the Spirit. We are one in the Lord in many essential ways. And he recalled all of us to our oneness. Speaking to and for all of us, I believe, that is liberal, conservative, traditionalist, evangelical, he reminded us constantly of the centrality of Christ. Of the need for personal faith in Christ, of the way, the truth, and the life that we find in Christ and in Christ alone. He reminded us of the centrality of prayer and of the personal devotional life. Of life rooted in prayer to help us live in the midst of temptation and testing today and to triumph over them. He reminded us of the central and essential place in the life of the Christian. Of a life of love, truth, justice, brotherhood, mercy, compassion, and service. In New York, for example, you'll remember that he told how that city, indeed, maybe how all cities need a new soul and then went on to tell them how they could find their soul, quote, "By loving each other." He reminded us of the church's love and concern for young people today. He said, "Faced with problems and disappointments, many people will try to escape from their responsibility. Escape in selfishness. Escape in sexual pleasure. Escape in drugs. Escape in violence. Escape in indifference and cynical attitudes." and then he said, "Dear young people, do not be afraid of honest effort and honest work. With Christ's help and through prayer, you can answer his call. Resisting temptation and fads and resisting every form of mass manipulation." He reminded us of Christ's and of the church's concern for the needs of all persons. He said, "We must find a simple way of living. For it is not right that the standard of living of the rich countries should seek to maintain itself by draining off a great part of the reserves of energy and raw materials that are meant to serve the whole of humanity." Christ, he said, demands openness to our brothers and sisters in need. We cannot stand idly by enjoying our own riches and freedom if in any place the Lazarus of the 20th century stands at our doors. Riches and freedom create a special obligation. The poor of the United States and of the world are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You must never be content just to leave them the crumbs from your feast. You must take of your substance. And not just of your abundance in order to help them and you must treat them like guests at your family table. He called all of us to an awareness of the dangers of the arms race in the world today. He said, we are troubled, by reports of the development of weaponry exceeding in quality and size any means of war and destruction ever known before. We must ask ourselves whether there will continue to accumulate over the heads of children, the threat of common extermination for which the means are in the hands of the modern states, especially the major world powers. Are the children to receive the arms race from us as a necessary inheritance? These concerns and many more remind us of our oneness and point out for all of us in the church, the ongoing, essential and desperate need for the church to show its faith and its obedience to Christ through love and justice and mercy, compassion, brotherhood, and service. Surely the world and we in the church will or will not know that we are Christians by our love or our lack of it. Well, so what? You may be saying, just now, all this talk about large and general issues about national and global concerns, about personal and private needs sounds very generous and gracious and magnanimous but so what? The question raised is, is Christ divided? Yes, and so the question, I believe must come home to each one of us personally and realistically. Is Christ divided for me or for you? There is a prayer in the newly approved Episcopal book of common prayer. It goes like this, for all who fear God and believe in you, Lord Christ, that our divisions may cease and that all may be one as you and the father are one, we pray to you, Oh Lord. And so perhaps the real question, the only way to ask the question is to ask it in a very personal way. Is Christ divided for you or for me? In your heart and mind and spirit do you this morning feel a oneness with God, with Christ, with others in Christ? Is your attitude toward others who claim to belong to Christ, one of tolerance, acceptance and communion with them? Is there a place around the table of our Lord in your mind and in your Spirit and in the way that you would have the table shared for those who believe

differently? For those who look different. Indeed for those who behave differently. After all, my friends, as I read and understand this prayer of Jesus in the gospel of John. It was a very, very personal prayer. It was prayed longingly for those who were with him and those who were yet to be with him that we all may be perfectly one. One with God and one with each other. The whole purpose of Jesus, life, and ministry and death and resurrection are summed up in his prayer here. He came that we might love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. He came that we might be one with God and one with each other. It is unquestionably clear that in the mind of Jesus and in the mind of Paul, they do not want us divided or separated. They do not want us divided or separated from God nor from one another. Maybe there are reasons that we're hesitant to make a commitment to oneness in Christ. Maybe it's a very simple reason like Michael Quoist says in his prayer, Help Me To Say Yes Lord. When he says, "I am afraid of saying, yes Lord. For where will you take me? I am afraid of the yes that entails other yeses. And so maybe we are afraid of saying yes to our oneness in Christ because it indeed may entail other yeses and we're afraid of the unknown yeses. I don't know about you but I have been deeply, deeply moved and inspired and challenged by the visit of Pope John Paul II. This morning and many times during his visit I thanked God for him, for his commitment to Christ, his warm and loving and gentle ways. His compassion and deep concern for humanity. And for the ringing call to authentic Christian commitment which he laid before us to live and live faithfully. He has moved me and moved me deeply to pray again with our Lord that we all may be one. I spent two days this week leading a spiritual life retreat for some 150 or so Episcopal women in Alabama from the Gulf Coast diocese of the Episcopal church. During the time we were together, and many times we were together, I was moved and moved deeply by the concerns and the commitments of these fellow Christians, their devotion to Christ, their desire to know and live out their ministry to Christ and to their neighbors today and I came away from that experience deeply convinced that in many ways, in ways that really count, perhaps we are one in the Spirit and I came away praying again as did our Lord that we all may be one. Every Sunday, when I come to worship in this place, I am reminded of the beauty of the body of Christ. For when we gather in this place perhaps as few other places in this country, indeed maybe anywhere, we are of many different backgrounds, we come from many different church traditions. We are of different races and colors. We come from many socio-economic levels, some wear blue jeans and tennis shoes, some wear furs and fancy shoes. Some even, on days warmer than this, come barefoot. But often as I sit in this congregation or as I walk up the aisle or down the aisle, I look around, my friends, and I am thrilled, absolutely thrilled at the differences we all bring to this place and to this service and to Christ. Every time I worship here on Sunday morning I get just a small sense of what the body of Christ really could be like, will be like if, no not if, but some small sense of what the body of Christ will be like when we are all one in Christ. It was the late archbishop, William Temple, archbishop of Canterbury who once said, "I believe in one holy Catholic church and I wish that it were a reality." And so do I. Let us pray. With the words of our Lord, will you join with me as I pray? Our Lord said, to thee, oh God, I do not pray for these only. But I pray also for those who believe through their word that they may all be one. That they may become perfectly one. Oh Lord, our God, take us who claim to belong to Jesus Christ and make us one, we pray in the name and in the Spirit of our lord, Amen. (organ music) (hymnal singing) Let us affirm what we believe. We believe in God who has created and is creating. Who has come in the truly human Jesus to reconcile and make new who works in us and others by the spirit. We trust God who calls us to be the church. To celebrate life and its fullness. 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, in life beyond death, God is with us, we are not alone. Thanks be to

God. The lord be with you. (congregation in unison) Let us pray. Oh lord God, may you be blessed throughout the world. Oh creator, may your creatures turn to you in praise and adoration. Heavenly father, may your sons and daughters realize the graciousness of your creation and their creatureliness. Oh father, thank you for the gift of sonship and daughtership. Oh God, thank you for encouraging us to call upon you. Help us to pray as we should. Help us to learn to communicate with you. Help us to perceive how you listen to our needs even those inarticulated by us and those below our recognitions. Hear us today, oh father. Hear our prayers of praise, thanksgiving, petition and submission. You, oh God, know our needs. Help us. Forgive our weaknesses. Empower us to move more steadfastly from weakness and sin to strength and life with you. Oh lord and master of us all, take our lives and dreams, too. Let them be consecrated always in and for you. May we love you with all our heart, with all our mind and all our strength. In spirit us to love our neighbors so that the grace of charity and brotherly love may dwell in us and so that our envy, harshness and ill will may die. Pour into our hearts the milk of your tenderness, kindness and compassion. May we rejoice in the happiness and good success of others and sympathize with them in their sorrows. Help us to forgive and forget injustices to us and banish all harsh judgements and envious thoughts from us. Help us to move toward you, to follow you, for you are the true way, the perfect love, the first and final goal. We are bold to call to you in whispers from our hearts with bended knees. For Jesus taught us to call you, father and to say when we pray, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. (organ music) (hymnal singing) Heavenly father, we offer our gifts and ties to the teaching of Jesus' way of life. To the leading of every little child to the knowledge and love of thee. To the healing of broken bodies and lives and the soothing of fevered brows. From thee we have received much, please accept these little tokens as symbols of our lives in thee. Amen. (organ music) (hymnal singing) The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. The blessing of God almighty, the father, the son, and the holy spirit be among you and remain with you always. (hymnal singing) (organ music)