

(organ plays, choir singing)

- Christian brothers and sisters. We've come to that part in our service of worship, where we confess before God and in the company of each other, not only the fact that we are sinners and in need of forgiveness, But the particular ways in which we need to be forgiven. We do not all have exactly the same needs at the point of confession and forgiveness. And each one of us is expected silently and personally to give conscious expression to God of his own sense of guilt. But in this particular instance, as in every other prayer of confession and corporate worship, we use words which have been found by the church through the ages to be spiritually useful to Christian people in expressing their sense of guilt and their need of forgiveness. Today, we use the words of John Knox. So may we join together in this unison, prayer of confession, let us pray. Oh, eternal God and most merciful father we confess and acknowledge here before thy divine majesty that we are miserable sinners. That in us, there is no goodness, but since we are displeased with ourselves, for the sins that we have committed against thee, and do sincerely repent of the same, we most humbly beseech thee, for Jesus Christ's sake to show thy mercy upon us, to forgive us all our sins, and to increase thy holy spirit in us, help us to bring forth such fruits as may be agreeable to thy most blessed will, not because of the worthiness thereof, but for the merits of the ideally beloved son, Jesus Christ. Our only savior, amen. In the book of Micah, we hear again today, the familiar words, which are so assuring and comfortable. Who is like unto God, who pardons iniquity, and passes over transgression. He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion upon us. He will tread our iniquities under foot. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. So be it. (organ plays) (distant door shuts) (choir singing) Scripture lesson this morning comes from the 12th and 13 chapters of Matthew. When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits, more evil than himself. And they enter and dwell there. And the last state of man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be with this evil generation, another parable he put before them saying the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up in bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the household came and said to him, sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds? He said to them, an enemy has done this. The servants said to him, then do you want us to go and gather them? But he said, no, blessed in gathering the weeds. You root up the wheat, along with them, let both grow together until the harvest. And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn. May the Lord blessed us, the reading of this word. Amen. (organ plays, choir sings) The Lord be with you. (audience murmurs) Let us pray. Almighty God, on a day when action is the order of the day, we pause in thy presence to get our bearings. All about us, and within us, we are aware of stirring action In distant lands, men take up arms against each other. In our land, we strive earnestly against those who oppose our policies. O creator of the universe. Help us to know thou art also active, that the living God is not dead, nor doth he sleep. Grant unto us the vision to see thy works and the wisdom to join the divine action. Heavenly father, we are not sure that

all the voices we hear or all the words we speak are really very wise. We pray for grace to know where good judgment may be found. We don't mind being disturbed and in turmoil, if progress is really being made. And if thy will is being worked out. So amid all the loud contentions and counterclaims, help us to hear thy still small voice, God, we ask this both for others and for ourselves, O Lord, as the end of the academic year comes swiftly enable us to compose our thoughts to sift the important from the expendable. To make good use of the remaining time. While in thy Providence, we follow the holy vocation of being students and scholars. Do thou give clarity to the confused, give nerve to the hesitant, give tranquility to the fevered mind, give love to the lonely, give relaxed courage to the defeated. We pray for fresh grace to be given to those who suffer from the traditional ills. Sickness, sorrow, tragic accidents, and that sort of thing. But who find these traditional problems very pointedly personal, when they become the victim, we pray for them. We pray for those who plan their marriage. For those who have a new baby, We pray for our student leaders, for the faculty, for the administration, for the trustees. That all of these people may see themselves, not mainly in these roles, but see themselves standing under thy awful judgment And see themselves as candidates for thine amazing grace. We pray also for the parents who sacrifice that we may be here. Especially today, we offer our prayers for the mothers of the world upon whom so very much depends. Give them sobriety, give them love, patience, strength. Give them the willingness to wait many years for the reward of their devotion. And now unto all men and to us. Grant thyself most of all, O God. And grant unto us. Not mainly the answer to our prayers, But the spirit of prayer is taught by thy son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has taught us when we pray to say, 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. In the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit. Amen. One hears a great deal these days about America being a violent nation. No doubt it is. But truth, we think, is better served by remembering that it is man, raw human nature, that is violent. Cruelty has no nationality, and violence neither has nor needs a flag. To the extent that we are members of the human race, just to that extent, we are at least by imports, however, civilized or however sublimated, at least by imports, we are violent. And to the extent that we live in company with our fellows, we live in company with violent men and in a violent culture potential always, actual to often, it is not by accident that God spoke to Kane of sin being like a beast, crouching, always ready to spring upon a victim, for it is this way with sin and violence, which issues from it. Verily we are men of violence. And we live in the midst of a people of violence, and yet it is possible, even for this violence to be born of good intention, of the desire and the touching faith that life can be good. So much is true. Our indignation is often as not, righteous, even though our actions, God forgive us are self righteous. We assume for ourselves the aura of nobility, of self-sacrifice, and of grandeur by the actions that we do sometimes even with justification. But for the most part, we are rather like the apostle Peter on the night of the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. He saw the one whom he had followed set upon like a common felon. He was threatened and in danger and Peter, impulsive, angry and involved snatched his sword and lashed out about him madly, he was not able to forestall the arrest of Jesus, he did actually no injury to the enemies of Jesus. He simply succeeded in cutting off the hair of the servant of the high priest. And yet we are sympathetic with Peter because he was crowded by powers and forces, which he could not understand. And he felt he had to do something, that he must take some action, that any action was better than no action. And we understand quite well this experience, for we have met it in our own personal and inner histories. When we look about us and we see ignorance and weakness

and squalor, and disease, and bloodshed, and death, we want to do something about it. We want to tear down walls. We want to burn away barriers. Most of all, we want to strike out at the oppressor, but alas, we do not always know who the oppressor is. And so we lash out blindly at that person or institution that is nearest at hand, because we feel we must do something. And any action is better than no action. But sadly, we are very often like those pitiful blind children of whom we read. Striking their sightless eyes because they know instinctively that they should be able to see, even though they cannot, they must do something. Now, whatever else this kind of behavior reveals about ourselves, it is of clear admission that we acknowledge a man's own heart as the nursery of evil. We know this, we have lived in the midst of sin, which is the product of greedy and apathetic and prideful hearts. And we have seen that sin added and multiplied so that in the end, it creates out of our own hearts, vicious systems and tolerates oppressive powers. Consider, surely no one, except the psychopath is eager willfully to bring down wasting disease upon his neighbor. We do not revel in human suffering. And yet we live in the midst of much disease and sickness because our hearts are evil. We have not visited ourselves to make intelligent warfare upon disease. Not because we hate our brothers, but because we forget them or ignore them. And yet out of our own selfish concern for our comfort and for our pleasure, we have allowed the inevitable infection to spread and to bring down as its victims, those ill housed and undernourished folk who are defenseless and powerless against it. We have encouraged the spread of epidemic because we have tolerated the rat infested slums, where it can fester. And we know this somehow in our heart of hearts, each man knows it. We do not have to look too deeply to realize that the ills which beset the society that we know are finally the responsibility of individual men and mortals, for the fault is not with ourselves, but with our stars. But with ourselves that we live in the midst of a social mores, we have done it to ourselves and to our brothers, or let me put it this way. Jesus knew this, everything that he said and everything that he did was upon the assumption that there will never be a better world until there are better people in the world. Again and again, he spoke of ultimates in terms of the lowest common denominator, the human factor. And so it is not strange that he should give to us a comet that sheds a bleak light upon the origin and the problem of evil by looking at the human heart, which begets it. For he knew where evil comes. The wisdom is contained in an eerie story about a haunted house. But the parable throws light upon our present predicament, upon the chaos, which is in essence upon the frustration, which it begets and upon the violence, which always follows it. Once upon a time, there was a demon who lived with what measure of comfort we can only imagine, but we think rather happily, a demon who lived in that favorite of all hearts for demons, a human heart, better than a deserted place, better than an empty tomb. A demon preferred the heart of a man. Now, this particular demon, for what reasons we can only conjecture, had at the part at which Jesus began his story, left his familiar home. And the suggestion is very strong that he had been turned away. And so he went, as the Bible tells, through the waterless places, seeking for a place to domicile and rest. Now demons seem to be fond of desert places, but they are fonder of compatibility. And so, 'cause he was a resourceful, as well as an evil and unclean spirit. He bethought himself of his former life. And he said, I will go back to the house from which I came and he returned and sad to relate. Say from the demon's point of view, he found that house empty and swept and in perfect order, he did not even stop, but went quickly. I imagine, and gathered to himself seven other demons, more wicked and more sinister than he and they established residence in that cursed soul. And so concludes Jesus. The end of that man, his latter state was worse than the first. Now we have had this story repeated often enough in our own experience and in the society about us, that we cannot deny it's true, whatever else it says. It says this, depressing as the story may be, that evil finally cannot be destroyed. It can be banished. It can be

riposte. It can be conquered, but it cannot be destroyed. Like the lurking beast, it is waiting always on the threshold of consciousness for evil is a force at bay, but never an enemy that is slain. The implication is very clear in this story. Negative action alone is not enough. It does no good to turn the evil out of the heart unless we have something constructive and positive to put in its place. It is useless to slay the lie unless we give birth to the truth. It is futile, always, to stop the war unless we begin the peace. For in doing so, we do nothing less than to deny temporary lodging to a demon who will wander and in due course come again to his old heart and establish residence there with other devils even worse than himself. What this means is that so long as they are only negative, all our rallies, all our marches, all our enthusiasms, all our actions, violent or otherwise, are of little worth. There must be something embraced and established in the place of that which is destroyed, nor is this a provincial truth that I speak. Even the most jaded of us subjected as we are, not simply to the huckstering intimidation of television, but exposed also to the beautiful and strange and far away sights. Even the most sophisticated and the most jaded of us is likely to be breathless on first encounter with the Indian God Shiva in his native land. There is a kind of snakey bird, a fascination about this destroyer who dances before us. We see him upon the squirming, writhing body of the demon of destruction. He waves forearms gracefully. A crescent moon is upon his head, the water of the Ganges flows in his hair. And he is called the destroyer, the manslayer, the threatener, his presence is always in disease and death. And he stands close by every funeral power. And we identify with him. We too would like to be able strike down our enemies with the twinkling of an eye, to destroy those who oppose us with a word of our mouths. Particularly when those who oppose us seem to stand in the way of progress, or seem to condemn the innocent to undeserved and cruel death. And yet even as the parable of the demon turned out of his home, illustrates that destructive action alone is not enough. So the truth is built also into the myth of Shiva. In his dim beginnings, when he first appeared, he used to descend from his mountain home in raids that were punitive and destructive. And yet those who penetrated his remote and mountain fastness found curiously there, that there were medicinal herbs growing under his watchful and tender care, which were meant for the healing of nations and of man. Could it be that man had misunderstood Shiva? Was it possible that his visitations were blessings in disguise? Gradually as they reflected, they understood the true role and the principle incorporated in the person of Shiva. While he was a destroyer, not by way of being negative, but because of the activity that was itself constructed, he destroyed in order to bring into being a new creation. Is it not ever thus? The egg disappears when the throb of life begins, the embryo is destroyed when the child is born. When the man appears the child is no more, this is ever the way it is. Or if we say it in Christian idiom, a man dies to the world, and he lives to Christ and is made a new being. Now, what we have tried to say is obvious enough, what we have communicated is another matter, let us review. There is violence in the world and we contribute to the violence. We live in a violent time. And so periodically we lash out against the violence, but our efforts are not effective. We are somehow not able to restore. And we find ourselves in a situation like that described in the parable told by Jesus of a man who banished a demon from himself and yet was visited subsequently by others. So that the last state was worse than the first. This suggests to us, that part of our difficulty is that we lack positive and constructive action. Destruction itself is of little value, except as the poet tells, we do so to build more stately mansions, oh my soul. Recently, Hannah Arendt has reminded us yet again, that violence may be the tool of power, but violence can never be power. And so we come to focus finally, to the insistent question that will not be pushed. Why, why? And the riddle, and the question does not ask why our efforts are ineffective. It does not ask why we have built nothing in the place of that which we have destroyed. Rather, the question asked, why have we not been

able enthusiastically and actively to embrace and to build something with the same deep vigor and the same devotion and the same energy that we turn upon the structure, and I'll submit to you that the answer lies in our idealism, naive, touching, impractical. Yes, but naive even so, but we have not been able to give ourselves wholeheartedly to building again for the simple reason that we have not found the perfect program in which we can participate. Do you see what we want is instant millennium and the world is not structured after this fashion. Because we want to do away with all the poverty. Now, we find it difficult to be glad that 100 men can be spared. Because we want to stop all the war and have all the men home. Now, we cannot rejoice in one life that is spared. But we found ourselves rather in the role of starving men who, because they are not bidden to a feast are unwilling to feed upon path alone, much less upon crimes. Does it surprise you that our offer in support and illustration of this point of view, yet another parable that was told by Jesus, in the once upon a time of this parable, the time is your time. Anytime, my time, all the days of our lives, for whatever else the parables are, they are universal. Once upon a time, there was a man who sold good seed in a field. What were the seed? Whether your dreams, your plans, your program for a school where children might learn, not simply their letters, but their lives, your plan for a community where people could live together in love, your plan. Even for a world without war, a plan that would work, no matter. We all sow our seed and have our dreams. And once upon a time, a man sold good seed in the field. And as he slept, an enemy came and sowed darn weeds amongst the wheat so that when the grain was green and the crop began to develop, the weeds appeared also, did you find that those working closest with you were not always responsible or always trustworthy, were not always interested in the movement or in the cause? No matter, the weeds appeared then as they always will, and as they always do. And his servants came and told him and he said, an enemy has done this. And his servants were eager to root out the weeds, all the weeds then, but the master did not suffer them to do so. No. He said, let them grow. For in the end, the weeds will be destroyed. Meanwhile, the wheat will be preserved. And so the story ended. But for our part, let us end the story at that part when the master gave advice to his servants and said, do not destroy the weeds, rather accept the world as it is. Distressing advice, but realistic advice, and merciful. To you, and to me. I dare not expect or demand a perfect student until I am a perfect teacher. I dare say the converse is true. We cannot expect a perfect university until each of us is ready to contribute, however modest and small our participation in the university is, perfection. And the same thing might be said of the community or the world in which we live. Or shall I put it this way? We are such ambivalent men, that we can build no more than an ambivalent world. Why do we think that our brothers who also are man will build anything but an ambivalent world? Mind you, I am not saying that one should ever want or seek less than perfection. We should not suffer for less than millennium. This is what we should desire and seek and draw after. But since we cannot achieve it instantly, let us not be unwilling in the place of that which we destroy, to plant something positive. However modest. However tentative, we are men of ambivalence. A contemporary novelist has said that men are much of a mediocrity be they British or Russian or German or French or Spanish. And he might have added or be they Asian or African. But this is true. We are not so much men as we are civil wars within ourselves. We are voters about what we can't do. We are humble about what we can. We are liars in safety, but we are truthful in danger. We are cowardly in smoke rooms, but we are courageous and brave in shell holes. Lewd with strange women. Tender with our wives. We live ourselves beneath the stars in the sky, not caring and yet look at poor pathetic human nature. All these men with bellies and eyes and fingernails and hair, all stamped with God's image. And also very pitiful when they are asleep. Surely it is our business and our duty to teach them how to love one another. But for God's sake,

while we strive and long and wait for the millennium, let us not forbear to do whatever little we can positive. Because the perfect is not available to us. Millennium does not come instantly. It may never come, but it will surely never come at all if we forbear to do anything in God's cause. No one calling himself a Christian dare do less. Because we cannot instantly and now achieve. Almighty God, forgive us for the infirmity of our purpose, for the weakness of our will, for the littleness of our imagination. Grant unto us the faith to hope when hope seems hopeless. Grant unto us, the faith to strive when striving seems of nothing worth. Grant unto us indeed, the grace to be embraced within thine own purpose and will, and to seek, to discover thou will for us rather than proudly to invent the goals that we have established as eternal. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. Amen. (organ plays) (choir sings) (opera singing) (organ playing) (choir singing) Almighty God, we give thee thanks. That in making thy marvelous creation thou has told us it will not be complete without our own contribution. And so now as we see the challenge before us, help us to dedicate even our imperfect efforts and our imperfect abilities to a perfect effort of helping to finish thy creation for the glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now may the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ be with us all. (choir singing) (church bell rings) (peaceful music)