

♪ Oh ♪ ♪ Crown him Lord of all ♪ ♪ From every kindred every tribe ♪ ♪ On this terrestrial ball ♪ ♪ To him all  
majesty ascribe ♪ ♪ And crown him Lord of all ♪ ♪ To him all majesty ascribe ♪ ♪ And crown him Lord of all ♪ ♪  
Oh that with all the sacred throng ♪ ♪ We at his feet may fall ♪ ♪ We'll join the everlasting song ♪ ♪ And crown  
him Lord of all ♪ ♪ We'll join the everlasting song ♪ ♪ And crown him Lord of all ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- There is nothing that mankind ever does that is more important to him than to come into the presence of God and pray to God. Let us now do that. Our heavenly Father, the almighty God, we recognize your greatness, your holiness, your truth and your love. We are contrite in heart as we come to make our confessions before you, for you know our hearts better than we know them. And yet there seems to be a need for us to express our sins in your presence. We come acknowledging that we have not beaten our swords into plow shares, nor our spears into pruning hooks. Nation still lifts up sword against nation, mankind still learns to make war. We who call ourselves by your name do not act as though we love our neighbors as ourselves. We are more careful to protect our pride than we are to protect our character. We often expect the impossible of you, oh God, and of ourselves. We have not been poor in spirit, and yet we assume we shall enter the kingdom of heaven. We have not been very meek, and yet we act as though we should inherit the earth. We have not been very merciful, but we are bold enough now to ask for mercy. We have not been pure in heart, and still we wonder why we do not see God. We even blame you for being so hard to find. We often are unwilling to endure persecution for righteousness' sake, and yet we claim the kingdom of heaven. But now in your presence, we are aware of how wrong it all seems, how impossible our pretenses. And we realize that these have estranged us from you, but we find grace in our hearts, prompting us to repent and to seek your forgiveness. Give that to us now, grant us more grace, that we may be able to amend our ways and live godly lives for your name's honor and glory through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. The comforting words of scripture were written for our benefit. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. May it be. Because of that we are grateful in our hearts. Now let us unite our hearts and our voices in a prayer of thanksgiving, let us pray. Almighty and most merciful father, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. We yield the praise and thanks for all thy mercies. Thy goodness hath created us, thy bounty hath sustained us. Thy fatherly discipline hath chastened us, thy patience hath borne with us. Thy love hath redeemed us. Give us a heart to love and serve thee, and enable us to show our thankfulness for all thy goodness and mercy by giving up ourselves to thy service, and cheerfully submitting in all things to thy blessed will, Amen. (inspirational organ music) (choir sings inspirational music)

- The first lesson is from the Book of Genesis 3:1-7: Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree

was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And the second lesson is from the Gospel according to Saint Luke, the 13th chapter, the first five verses: There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. For those 18 upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." ♪ Glory be to the Father ♪ ♪ And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ Is now and ever shall be ♪ ♪ World without end ♪ ♪ Amen Amen ♪

- The Lord be with you.

- Let us pray.

- Let us pray. Our Father, outwardly we are now in a posture of prayerful reverence, but you see how inwardly our contradictory lives need your guidance, how our unclean hearts require your cleansing. And so from the contagion of worldliness, its low aims and foul practices, we come to you to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. If the shabby behavior of others has begotten resentment in us, so that we have come to this sanctuary with bitter and vindictive attitudes, elevate us to a nobler mood. Let your love be shared abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we may remember how much we have been forgiven and may thus be enabled to forgive those who have despitefully used us. If the hardships of the world have discouraged us, so that we have come to this hour of worship with whipped and beaten spirits, oh God, let your finger touch some strong chord of courage in our hearts today. Set us on our feet again, revived and reinforced. If the world has been kind to us, granting us popularity, prosperity and victory, so that we have come here in a gay mood, oh God, guard our lives from pride and selfishness, from the easy assumption that things will always be this way. May our blessings overflow from us to others and grant that our good fortunes be made sacred through devotion to you, and to the welfare of your people. Almighty God who makes all things new, we offer our prayers on behalf of those who do not see in this new year and in this new semester any new beginning in their lives. Grant unto them eyes that see, hearts that can be quickened. Help them to understand their need of a fresh look, of a new approach. As we return to our studies, our teaching, or our research, we remember before you loved ones who are distant. Join our hearts with theirs in a divine fellowship of care and of concern. Oh God, keep us from becoming paranoid and thinking that everyone is trying to do us in. Keep us also from stupid blindness to the existence of corruption and iniquity. Save us from a naive belief that nobody intends any wrong. Help us to discern the presence of evil and give us grace to overcome it with good. May we first cast out of our hearts the selfishness, the arrogance and the greed which is there, so that we may be able to see clearly to cast evils out of our brothers' hearts. To that end may this service of worship today be useful in your sight. Help us now to understand and really to pray the prayer which your son Jesus Christ has taught us to pray saying, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom die 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.

- Greetings to you in the name of our common Lord Jesus Christ. I am very grateful for this privilege of joining the worship of this chapel once again. I was here seven years ago about the same time. This day falls within the octave for prayer for unity. For some number of years now, the period from the 18th of January to the 25th of January is observed by churches throughout the world as a period for prayer for Christian unity. Different churches including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches and the Protestant Churches join in a program for prayer for Christian unity. The question however is, what do we mean by unity? It is with this in mind that I have chosen the theme for this Sunday, "The Deadly Choice". The theme is based on the two passages read as lessons, the passage from Genesis and the passage from the Gospel according to Saint Luke. In Luke's Gospel we read the few words repeated twice, the words of Jesus, "Unless you repent you will all perish likewise". There is a certain similarity in the theme of the Gospel passage and the passage from the Book of Genesis. The story in the Book of Genesis is a well-known one. It is about the Fall of Adam and Eve, and sometimes we think that this is an old-fashioned myth. But actually this passage has a profound insight about the condition of man, not just in olden times but always. In the passage, this account of how man has chosen to live. In the story God tells Adam and Eve that they could do everything in the Garden of Eden. Man can do everything in the created world. He can probe into the secret of life, he can probe into the mystery within the atom, he can probe into space, he can do everything. He can control all of creation. But he's asked not to do one thing, not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the story God tells Adam and Eve, "The day you partake of this fruit you will die." Then comes the tempter who tells them just the opposite, "The day you partake of the fruit of this tree, you shall not die, you will be like God." Now that is the temptation to which mankind has fallen, the temptation to participate in something which is the prerogative of the Creator, to determine what is good and evil. Instead of leaving that prerogative to the Creator, man has tried to determine what is good and evil. And when man tried to determine what is good and evil, he involved himself in a very complex character of disunity, divisiveness. We have defined different types of what is good and what is evil, in terms of language, in terms of culture, in terms of religion, in terms of politics, in terms of moral standards, in terms of race, we have many different ways of defining what is good. And by that kind of definition, we join ourselves into small exclusive groups, and estrange ourselves from others. In the Gospel passage, Jesus is confronted with two incidents. One, Pilate killing some Galileans and mixing their blood with the sacrificial blood. And Jesus says, "Don't say that these Galileans were more sinful and more wicked than others. Unless you repent you will all perish likewise." In the other incident, the tower of Siloam fell on some people and the people were killed. And Jesus says, "Don't think that these people who were killed were more sinful and more wicked than others. Unless you repent you will all perish likewise." There Jesus draws attention to two incidents bringing out the nature of evil, evil caused by man's injustice and cruelty, and evil caused by irrational accidents. We know both types of evil in the world. We have forms of evil caused by man, man's cruelty, man's injustice, like war in Vietnam, or the recent war in Bangladesh, and we can give many other examples of such evil and suffering brought upon man. We also know of the natural calamities, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, bringing suffering upon man. But when such calamities happen, man is tempted to think that some people are more wicked, some people have deserved this suffering more than others. But Jesus says, "Unless you repent," unless you completely make a right about turn, for that's what repentance means. Sometimes we mistakenly regard repentance as sometimes feeling sorry for some of our actions. Certainly

we should feel sorry for some of our actions, but that is not what repentance in Jesus' words means. Repentance there and in many other New Testament passages means a complete reorientation of our outlook, a complete change in our way of looking at things. The common way of looking at ourselves and looking at people is in terms of some kind of moral, spiritual, or other types of evaluation, and then decide that we are better than others, or some people are better than others, and we justify the position that we make, justify the disunity that exists. Even the Church which came into being through the work of Christ divided in that manner. We have divided that Church into so many parts. Perhaps it would be interesting to reflect on whether mankind has been divided by any other name as much as through the name of Christ. I begin to wonder sometimes. I know of very little else which has divided humanity more than the Christian Church. We have define ourselves as Methodists, Congregationalists, Catholics, Baptists, or what not, and each group thinks that some way that group is better than the others, and we give justification for the disunity. It is in that context we are reminded that this is something that is a result of a deadly choice that man has made. Man did not listen to God, man listened to the tempter. Instead of accepting the state of creatureliness, accepting the whole of creation as God's gift, and living under the subjection of God's love, God's sovereignty, man chose to participate in the determination of what is good and evil, and that was man's deadly choice, and that deadly choice pervades all our attitudes, including our existence as the Church. And the same way as the insight of the Genesis writer, Jesus' own authoritative words come before us today. You need to repent, you need to give up this prerogative of determining what is good and evil, and learn from God on the basis what is good and evil. And Jesus came to tell us how to accept what is good and evil, and he came to tell us that love is the remedy, love is the basis. The deadly choice that we have made is to be overcome by the love which we have seen in Jesus Christ. And this is what he himself did. He came to a situation where the Pharisees had determined what is good and evil, and regarded a large section of people as publicans and sinners, unfit to be part of the people of God. They had excluded lepers, many others as outcasts, not fit to be counted as the people of God. But Jesus comes and identifies himself with them, so that he was called the friend of publicans and sinners, and he tried reverse the consequences of the deadly choice. Where people had for ages learned to be exclusive, divisive and separated, he demonstrated the love of God, which sought to be inclusive. And that's precisely what he demonstrated in his own baptism. Through his baptism, he identified himself with sinful humanity. He did not allow his sinlessness, his righteousness, his godliness, to stand between God and man. He did not allow that to stand between him and man. He stood along with sinful humanity, and that is what he wants the Christians to be and to do, to be inclusive, rather than to be exclusive. Now what does this mean for our understanding of Christian unity and Christian existence? There are three questions we need to ask. First, what is our identity as Christians? Of course we are Christians, we are baptized. We are baptized into particular churches. I belong to the Church of South India, some belong to Methodist, or Presbyterians, or Anglicans, or different churches, and that is our identity. But Jesus Christ takes us further and challenges us to accept a different identity. The identity that Jesus gives through this teaching is the identity of humanity. To be a Christian, to be baptized into the Church, means commitment to belong to humanity, and to move from the narrow circles based on language, or culture, or nationality, or political ideology, or wealth, or the many different ways of our drawing a circle within which belong. To belong to Christ through baptism means reaching out of these circles, and to take the circle as wide as possible, to include the whole of humanity. To be a Christian is to be committed to belong to humanity. Everything else is of less consequence than humanity, and this is exactly what Jesus explicitly taught in many other passages. He said, "Judge not that you be not judged." He told

the parable of the wheat and the tares. Certainly wheat is good, tares are bad. But then, that is for God to decide, not for us. Let us not to separate the wheat from the tares. Let us not to judge who is good and who is bad. All belong together, and the correct choice is to belong together with the whole of humanity, that is our identity. Secondly, this also raises a question of our solidarity. In some ways to belong to humanity is a very romantic concept. Sometimes it becomes easy, and the world citizen might belong to humanity. But what does that mean? Dostoevsky speaks of a woman who can love humanity, but who cannot come down to love her next door neighbor whom she knows too well. It's easy to love humanity and to belong to humanity, and become romantic like that. But to come down to love concrete people living in particular situations, facing concrete needs, that becomes difficult. It is there that we have to recognize our solidarity and oneness, whether we like it or not. God has given certain people to us. This is one of the new insights which has come forcibly into the ecumenical movement. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has been concerned with problems of the Church's unity and disunity, and they have been discussing questions of order, faith, worship, and so on. But when they had their meeting last August in Louvain in Belgium, they had a new theme, the oneness of the Church and the oneness of humanity. And within that theme, the one sub-theme, namely the role of the Church's unity with regard to the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, and so on. Those who live marginal lives. Of course to some extent this looked somewhat farfetched. How does this become an issue of faith and order? But as we considered this at the conference. it became obvious that unless we deal with these sections of humanity, we are not really dealing with the oneness for which Christ came. Christ came to unite humanity into one family, and to humanity belong different types of people having different types of needs. The physically handicapped, the mentally handicapped, the physically poor, all these belong to humanity, and unless we take our responsibility to those people seriously, we are not properly understanding our human solidarity. They belong to us, not claiming our charity, but claiming our love. It is their right to be rehabilitated as full members of the human society. And thirdly, these lead us on to the question of is the Christian mission which arises out of the new sense of identity and the new solidarity? The Christian mission, and that is what Church's unity means, is the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of building bridges, of removing the gaps that exist. And that's what Saint Paul says happened by the death of Christ on the Cross. He says, "By the death of Christ on the Cross, the wall of hostility between the Jew and the Gentile was broken down, and the two were made into one new man." And this, Saint Paul says, is something that concretely happened by what Christ did. Christ did away with the animosity between the Jew and the Gentile. And therefore, Saint Paul goes on to say that this same type of reconciliation between man and man should go on. The task for the Church today is to discern the areas of disunity, the areas of hostility. The areas of disunity can certainly be discerned in the relationship between churches, and therefore when we pray for Church unity, we should pray for the relationship between the different churches being brought closer together, to visible manifestations of the oneness of the people of Christ. But there are also other gaps which we should discern, the gaps between the rich and the poor, the gaps between different races, the gaps between different nations. There are so many events of disunity that split humanity into broken units. Christ's work caused us to become instruments of his love, and there is no limit. There is a beautiful prayer by Michel Quoist, that French Catholic Priest, a prayer called, "Lord, Why Did You Tell Me to Love?" And there he very graphically describes his cozy existence in a home, living comfortably, sheltered from the outside world. Then he throws open his doors in response to Christ's command to love. And people come in, different types of people. Then he is standing by an uncomfortable throng, who there become Michael Quoist's vision. And

that is the vision that Christ gives to his Church, that is called repentance. There is no limit to the demands of our love. Every area where man and man are estranged from each other is an area where Christ's love has to come in, and bridge the gulf. And that is the meaning of praying for unity, and may God grant that we, when we pray for unity, we become instruments of going beyond the distinction between good and evil. We are beyond distinctions, and become instruments of love, which gathers together the whole humanity into one family, strengthened by the bond of love. Let us pray. Oh God, we lift up our hearts to give praise for your Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you have loved us even when we were sinners. Give us the same love that we also may love others without distinctions of language, race, religion, political ideology, or anything that keeps us separated from others, and so make us instruments of the oneness of the family of man. Through Christ our Lord, Amen. ♪ The Church's one foundation ♪ ♪ Is Jesus Christ our Lord ♪ ♪ She is His new creation ♪ ♪ By water and the Word ♪ ♪ From heaven He came and sought her ♪ ♪ To be His holy bride ♪ ♪ With His own blood He bought her ♪ ♪ And for her life He died ♪ ♪ Elect from every nation ♪ ♪ Yet one o'er all the earth ♪ ♪ Her charter of salvation ♪ ♪ One Lord one faith one birth ♪ ♪ One holy name she blesses ♪ ♪ Partakes one holy food ♪ ♪ And to one hope she presses ♪ ♪ With every grace endured ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Unto God's almighty son ♪ ♪ Hallelujah unto God's almighty son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In sounds of joy ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ In holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ And praise the Lord ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Ye bright angelic choirs ♪ ♪ In sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Holy sounds holy sounds ♪ ♪ Holy sounds of joy ♪ ♪ Man proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Man proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Unto God's almighty son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Man proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Man proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Proclaim His grace and glory ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ God's almighty son ♪ ♪ God's almighty son ♪ ♪ God's almighty son ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Unto God's almighty son ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs in songs ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord ♪ ♪ Praise the Lord in holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ In holy songs of joy ♪ ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise Him all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Praise Him above all heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Oh God we come before you to praise you with holy songs of joy, and holy gifts of money, and the holy dedication of our lives. The glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ ♪ Amen ♪ (bells tolling) (church organ inspirational music) (congregation chattering)

- Oh stop, stop, stop.