

(instrumental music)

- Let us pray. Give ear, Lord, unto our prayer and attend to the voice of our supplications. Teach us thy way, Lord. We would walk in thy truth. Unite our hearts to fear you. We would praise thee, Lord, our God with all our heart and we would glorify thy name forevermore for a great is thy mercy toward us. Amen. Our hymn of praise is number 27, "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise." (instrumental music) Please be seated. There is no greater evidence for our need of confession of sin than the conviction of our own righteousness. And there is no greater readiness for confession than our own sense of failure in loving God wholeheartedly. Let us confess our sins to almighty God. Eternal God our judge and redeemer, we confess that we have tried to hide from you for we have done wrong. We have lived for ourselves. We have refused to shoulder the troubles of others and turned from our neighbors. We have ignored the pain of the world and passed by the hungry, the poor, and the oppressed. God, in your great mercy forgive our sin and free us from selfishness that we may choose your will and obey your commandments through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his holy spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (instrumental music) (opera music) Let us hear this witness to the word as we find it in the old covenant, the eighth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat, and be full and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes, which I command you this day. Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with this fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of a flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. You shall remember the Lord your God for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may confirm His covenant, which He swore to your fathers, as at this day. And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you this day that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God." The gospel lesson from St. Luke's gospel the ninth chapter. The apostles have just returned from the mission on which Jesus had sent them throughout the land. "On their return, the apostles told him what they had done, and he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed Him and He welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cure those who had need of healing. Now the day began

to wear away and the 12 came and said to him, send the crowd away to go into the villages and country roundabout to lodge and get provisions for we are here in a lonely place. But He said to them, you give them something to eat. They said, we have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go and buy food for all these people, for there were about 5000 men. And he said to his disciples, make them sit down in companies about 50 each. And they did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven and blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd and all ate and were satisfied and they took up what was left over 12 baskets of broken pieces." Here ends the morning lesson. (instrumental music) Let us confess our faith. We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come and the true man, Jesus, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by His spirit. We trust Him. He calls us to be His church, to celebrate His presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen our judge and our hope in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God. The Lord be with you.

- Be with you too.

- Let us pray. Lord, who provided manna for the fathers in the desert wanderings and equipped our master's disciples for mission when they had need of it hear now our prayers for our time and our world. In a world fragmented by politics, direct peoples and nations that we may learn to live nation with nation searching diligently for arms instead of arms for the brother and sister of other lands. In a world of broken by economic greed and self-interest, we pray that our diverse economic plights may show us our mutual dependence and drive out our collective greed. In a world divided by race, direct our way with affections that we may come to love and appreciate the brother and sister of unlike mind and perspective. We pray, Lord, for thy church, bring her many members to her one true baptism in her crucified and risen Lord, that every member may be nourished by the diversity of gifts in the oneness of spirit. Let us remember this day, this land, and our people that we may find a strength in our emerging frailty, that times of adversity may give birth to new vision, new promise, and hope. We remember today, Lord, especially the involuntarily poor, the unemployed and the unemployable. And we pray that thou will help this land toward economic justice that participates however remotely in thine own righteousness. We bring these prayers to thee our Lord at thy invitation. As children to a loving and kind parent, our comfort and assurance are that you are not only our Lord, but Lord of history. So we pray or Lord as you will, so be it. Let us join now in the prayer our Lord has taught us saying, 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 God our creator, redeemer, and sustainer. Amen. Isn't it amazing how the lectionary lesson from Deuteronomy describes who we are? A people living in a good land, a land in which we can eat bread without scarcity, a land in which we like nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills we can dig copper and we shall eat and be full. And because this is who we are, we must take heed lest we forget the Lord our God by not keeping God's commandments and our covenantal relationships. Lest when we have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and live in them, we forget the Lord our God and say in

our heart, "Our power and the might of our hand have given us this wealth." And if we forget, we shall surely perish. This is who we are, people who have forgotten that the earth is a gift to be used, to be cared for, to be shared. And so we are at the close to the point of perishing. We know this, but we do not comprehend. We know that people are actually starving to death And we can remember just a little while ago when we were concerned about how many people went to bed hungry each night. These people are now starving. We know that we are moving from a time of abundance to a time of scarcity. But it is difficult for those of us who live in this good land to comprehend. We have been inconvenienced by some shortages and we've been irritated by most prices, but it is difficult for us to comprehend the scarcity and the crisis. The American Friends Service Committee has described part of our situation in this analogy. If we imagine that our world is a global village consisting of 100 people, 100 people who have not yet died from starvation, then 70 of this 100 would not be able to read, one would have a college education, and of the 100 who have not yet died of starvation, 50 will be suffering from malnutrition, 80 will live in substandard housing. And we know that even in this good land, in which we can eat bread without scarcity, there are countless persons suffering from malnutrition. Dr. Shinoa reports in his book, "The Malnourished Man," on a team of noted pediatricians, who with senators, visited many areas in Mississippi in 1967, and they found that in every county they visited there were boys and girls who were suffering from severe malnutrition with injury to body's tissues, it's muscles, bones, and skin, as well as the associated psychological state of fatigue, restlessness, and exhaustion. They found homes in which children were lucky to have one meal a day. But even that meal was inadequate nutritionally. These children are out of sight and ignored. They received no help, no food, no medical attention. They were living under such primitive conditions that it was hard to believe that they lived in the United States in the 20th century. And unfortunately, these conditions are not in the past and I'm not limited to Mississippi. Dr. Shinoa says that the victims of hunger often look healthy and well fed. This appearance is deceiving and is caused by the swelling of tissues, a common symptom of sustained malnutrition in children. He attributed this ignorance to the Mississippi Governor's callous response to our reporters' question about the hunger among the poor blacks. This governor said, "All the Negroes I have seen around here are so fat, they shine." Now we know that starvation has become more disparate since 1967. With the high cost of food, the high unemployment rate, the possibilities of an adequate diet has been lessened. And Dr. Shinoa's acute concern is for the children who suffer permanent brain damage from an inadequate diet, especially from the absence of the correct protein in their diet. Now an adult can suffer from malnutrition and with a proper food can become healthy again. But from the time of gestation until the child is four years old, an inadequate diet causes permanent brain damage, damage which nothing we can do can correct. Now, not only are people malnourished, but people are actually starving. We know this, but this too is difficult for us who live in this good land to comprehend. No one can give us an exact count of how many people are dying from malnutrition. The estimate varies from 10 to 20 millions of persons per year. And it seems that 12 million is a reasonable estimate, if you dare use the word reasonable in the same sentence with starvation. But I have difficulty comprehending what it means that 12 million people die each year from starvation. I can understand it better if I imagine if this were not a Recess Sunday, we would probably have approximately 1400 people more or less in this chapel worshipping. And during this one hour, while we worship this number of people, 1400 people will die from starvation, and from starvation alone, not from related affects. Several Saturdays ago, some of us attended a conference at Chapel Hill, a conference for Duke, UNC, and State. It was a seminar on limits to growth. Dr. Robert Patterson from state calibrated a metronome to tick to indicate the right people are dying from

malnutrition alone. This communicated to me the awfulness of our situation, the terror most graphically, each tick represents one death. (metronome ticking) For those of us who live in this good line, our first step in responding to the command to take heed is in some sense to comprehend what these ticks mean, that these are human beings. Once we comprehend, we are compelled to act responsibly. Now, we are sophisticated enough to know that what we are discussing is not simple, that we live in a world of limited resources and that some of our simplistic solutions may cause more complex problems. But we are also sophisticated and know that we may be paralyzed into no action if we listen uncritically to such warnings. We know that we must face the critical nature of our survival, that we must move from a time of abundance to a time of scarcity. We know that we are people who must take heed lest we shall surely perish. This is who we are. This word, which comes to us though, is not hopeless. The biblical word admonishes us to take heed, the scientific word shouts at us to take you. But both words offer some hope for the future and the hope is conditioned on our being morally responsible persons. The scientific word to us is that the future of our world may not be as hopeless as some people have feared, that we can support a viable standard of living for the inhabitants of this earth if we use our creative intelligence as morally responsible people. There is no doubt, if this is to happen, we will have to make some radical changes in our lifestyles in this country, radical. And we will have to take responsibility for the leadership essential for this to happen. The biblical word, rest on our understanding of who we are in relation to God who has created us and given us this world. And it rests on our understanding of who we are as human beings. Simply stated the responsibility which has been given to us is to care for our brothers and our sisters and the world, which is our home. And simply stated, our understanding of who we are as human beings is that we are people who are capable of caring, of loving, of serving, but we are also people who can be blinded to the needs of our brothers and sisters by our personal desires, which at times, cause us to act as if we had special rights and privileges which do not extend to all peoples. Lord, forgive us. And we are people who can be forgiven. We can turn around. And this is what we must do if we are to act as morally responsible people and here lies our hope. Let's seem to be an appropriate time, a good time to begin this. Recall the invitation from the Ash Wednesday service. I invite you to the observance of holy land by self-examination and repentance, by prayer and fasting and self denial, and by reading and meditating on God's holy word, and to make a right beginning of repentance as a remark of your moral nature. Combine this with the reading for Ash Wednesday from Isaiah, which reminds us that fasting is not an end in itself, rather it is a preparation which can sensitize us and enable us to let the oppressed go free, to share our bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless into our homes. Then shall the light break forth like dawn. Then we shall call and the Lord will answer. Now, there are those of us here present today who see lent as a time of preparation, of renewal, a time of repentance, as a time for new beginnings, which do not end on Easter Sunday. And surely, all of us here today are caring people, we are concerned people, we feel responsible. We want to do what we can, but we also feel hopeless, helpless, and at times, discouraged. We feel alone isolated with our concerns. We are afraid that what we can do is so insignificant that it is not worth the effort. And we wonder why we should deny ourselves when no one else does, especially when some people ridiculed our efforts saying. "How stupid to think that turning off lights or giving up one meal will help this world?" We feel that the problem is too big and too complex and we are too powerful and ignorant of the real facts. Okay, that's where a lot of us are, but that is not where we have to stay. So today we are being called to claim what is possible and what may be uniquely possible as Christian communities. For it is as we work together that it will be possible for us to care for our neighbor who is starving, who is malnourished, who is hungry. We have

seen evidences of such work in the past, and we see evidences of it in the present. We give thanks for what is happening now in this university as a result of the leadership of two students, Drake Boyd and David McCauley. But they cannot, in their communities, cannot do it alone. They need the support of the broader segments of the university and the larger community around us. We must work in groups and communities and within our institutions. Now, there are many reasons why it's critical for us to work corporately. Basic is the awareness of the presence of the power of the holy spirit, which has been promised to us and which is evidence within the community. Unless we have the perspective and the awareness of the supporting guidance of our holy God, we will become weak and discouraged. The spiritual dimension is essential for the direction and the sustaining of our work. And one of the people who have ever done this and have shown us the power is Dom Helder Camara, the Archbishop in Brazil who says, "The real God does not create our own misery, we cause it by our injustices." We need the support of the real God, which is given to us in the community. And we know that we have more power in our corporate action. We need personal support, both to correct us when our vision is distorted and to sustain us when we become discouraged. The task facing us is an impossible one in isolation. When we consider the enormity of the information, we need to have at our disposal in order to act responsibly, information about food production and distribution, fertilizer, the number of persons this world can support, the role our government can and should play, the long range application of our actions, and on and on. We are overwhelmed. For one person, this is an impossible task. Working corporately, it becomes possible to share the responsibility in such a way that we will have the necessary knowledge available to us and that we can get the necessary work done. Now you found in your bulletin the covenant of simplicity, which was developed by the Duke University Parish Ministry based on the Shakertown page of The American Friends Service Committee. We are convinced that we must develop a more simple lifestyle. And those of us who choose to move toward a more simple lifestyle will find that the discipline is made easier and clearer when it is undertaken with persons who share these same values. Some of us have some fears of what this will mean, fears that we will be committing our families to less than human existence, that we will become malnourished, that we will not be able to tolerate a lifestyle without all the luxuries we are used to, and that's probably our real fear. And yet our rational nature knows that few of us in this congregation today are anywhere close to a minimum level of existence. Simple living does not mean ugliness, drabness, boredom. In fact, it means just the opposite, health, joy, aliveness, beauty. When we think of people for whom life has had the most meaning, the people who live by the values we cherish, we find little correlation between their way of living and their accumulation of possessions and luxuries. We are convinced that we must develop a more simple lifestyle in this country. We are convinced that this cannot be done in isolation. So we are called forth today to assume the moral leadership, which is necessary at this time. We are invited to seriously consider this covenant of simplicity now, but more important later with your family and friends when you can discuss which of these you choose to accept, what additions you want to meet, and decide what this means for you and your family and friends. Now, if you are visiting us today, we encourage you to go back to your community and give leadership to these issues. If you are a part of the Duke community, we encourage you to let us know if you accept this covenant so that we may develop a network of groups who can give leadership which will help. This community respond personally and corporately to see that food, a basic human right, food, a basic human right, is available to all persons. And to see that this happens both immediately and is also available for future generations. We are called forth to meet human need before we satisfy our personal desires. One of Rilke's poems haunts me constantly. Hear only one verse from it.

(metronome ticking) "Whoever dies anywhere in this world, without cause dies in this world, looks at me."
We are called for to change the death rate from starvation of one person every 2 1/2 seconds to zero.
(metronome ticking) We are forth to work that all may eat and be satisfied. (metronome ticking) May God
help us. (metronome ticking) Amen. (metronome ticking) (instrumental music) (opera music) (instrumental
music)

- Thou whose nature is itself true charity blessed these our gifts with thy bountiful graces that their fruits
may be multiplied many times to everlasting praise and the salvation and nourishment of humankind.
Amen. (instrumental music) The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and
be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace. Amen. (bell
ringing) (instrumental music)