

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Season in Lent

Six O'clock in the Evening

### ***The Worship of God***

The Prologue

The Lenten season is traditionally thought to be a time where we are reminded of Jesus' life and death. It is a time of self-examination and penance. In many traditions it is a time when one thinks about what one can do without. You are being invited to continue your Lenten discipline in a new way, while maintaining traditional themes. We may begin our contemplative exercises by reflecting on our unity with all that is, remembering that each of us is part of an immense and continuous creation, a creation which entails the entire universe. Although we humans are a vital part of creation, we are by no means the center. Yet we know that all too often we imagine and act as if we were the center—as if everything were created for us, that all creation is ours for our use alone, for our own purposes, that everything is given to meet our wants and needs. And yet in our hearts we know that we live in and through a complex set of relationships, and that it is our responsibility, as it has been the responsibility of each generation that preceded ours, to bequeath a healthy, fruitful, legacy, and a beautiful world for all who follow in our footsteps.

Gathering Music

The Greeting

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

**And also with you.**

The Call to Worship and Welcome.

The Music for Contemplation

The Opening Prayer

Let us pray to the Lord,

Holy and gracious God, as Jesus carried his cross up Calvary's hill, you were with him every step of the way carrying your own cross of love. We are called to remember that lonely road, wishing to have fellowship with you in your sorrow, so that through your suffering we may find strength and peace. Help us to be strong, so that we may never betray you as Judas did, nor deny you as Peter did. We remember how the crowd spat upon you! How they mock you! How they pierced your hands and feet! How they called you names! Even in the midst of immense pain, sorrow, and agony, you quietly prayed, "Father, forgive them for they, know not what they do." During this Lenten Season, may we too learn the meaning of forgiveness, so that we may learn to love as you love us. Forgive us, Holy One, for being afraid. We have often been afraid to try and go the second mile. We have been afraid to return good for evil. We have been afraid to let love rule in our relationships with others, allowing ourselves that level of vulnerability. We have been afraid to surrender ourselves completely to your will. Forgive us, Gracious One, and help us to realize that we cannot authentically follow you until we permit your still speaking Spirit to remove all fear from our minds, replacing our anxiety with your peace and hope. All this we pray through Christ Jesus our Lord, friend, guide, and mentor.

**Amen.**

The Opening Hymn, No. 200

*What Wondrous Love Is This*

WONDROUS LOVE

The Litany

In the beginning, the energy of silence rested over an infinite horizon of pure nothingness.

**The silence lasted for billions of years, stretching across eons that the human mind cannot even remotely comprehend.**

Out of the silence arose the first ripples of sound, vibrations of pure energy that ruptured the tranquil stillness as a single point of raw potential, bearing all matter, all dimension, all energy, and all-time, exploding like a massive fireball.

**It was the greatest explosion of all time!**

An eruption of infinite energy danced into being. It had a wild and joyful freedom about it, and like a dance it was richly endowed with coherence, elegance, and creativity.

**The universe continued to expand and cool until the first atoms came into being. The force of gravity joined the cosmic dance, atoms clustered into primordial galaxies.**

Giant clouds of hydrogen and helium gases gathered into condensed masses, giving birth to stars!

**Generations of stars were born and died, born and died, born and died, and then our own star system, the solar system, was formed from a huge cloud of interstellar dust, enriched by the gifts of all those ancestral stars.**

Planet Earth condensed out of a cloud that was rich in a diversity of elements. Each atom of carbon, oxygen, silicon, calcium, and sodium had been given during the explosive death of ancient stars. These elements, this stuff of stars, included all the chemical elements necessary for the evolution of carbon into basic life forms.

**With the appearance of the first bacteria, the cosmic dance reached a more complex level of integration.**

Molecules clustered together to form living cells!

**Later came the algae, and then fishes began to inhabit the waters!**

Thence the journey of life on land and in the sky began. Insects, amphibians, birds, reptiles, and mammals began to flourish and diversify, and enhancing and elaborating the themes of life. And now it is our time to join in the creative dance of life.

**This is our story.**

The story of our beginning, or cosmology.

**Humans were invited to care for the earth.**

But often we tried to conquer and subdue it, a misuse of God's gift of dominion!

**The burden is ours to own and bear! It is our glorious responsibility, accountable to our Creator!**

The Confession

We continue our Lenten journey by turning our hearts and minds toward God. It is a time when we look at how self-centered our lives have become, when we acknowledge that we often fall short of what we want to be. It is a time when we call all our angers, hatred, and jealousies out from their dark corners and embrace them as part of us. Lent is also a season of healing. We open our lives to the spirit that we may see into the depths of our souls. It is a time of confession. "Stardust" is not only a reminder of our need for forgiveness but also a reminder of our connection with earth and the universe and the unlimited ways we can be instruments of healing of this planet and our human race.

And so, we will continue our Lenten Journey this Wednesday.

**With an open heart asking the Creator**

To show us how to take the daily things of life and see them as sacred.

**May God guide us in the daily things of life, empowering us to see and to know that they are sacred.**

May God guide us as we perform simple acts of love and prayer,

**And real works of reform and renewal.**

Let us love deeply the earth which gives us air to breath, water to drink, and food to sustain us.

**May we remember that life is begotten from stardust, radiant in light and heat.**

We are all one—all of creation, all that now live, all that have ever lived.

**Remember we are stardust, and to stardust we return.**

Remember we are connected and to connection we return.

**Remember we are part of the great mystery.**

Remember we are stardust and to stardust we return.

A Reading from Scripture

PSALM 130

The Meditation

Dale Bishop

*"Beautiful Things"*

by GUNGOR

Phoebe Spier, soloist

*This Is My Father's World*

The Closing Hymn, No. 56

TERRA BEATA

The Benediction

The Music for Reflection

Accompanist, Linda Brainard

These materials have been accessed from various websites and are not to be disseminated for public consumption.