ASH WEDNESDAY
March 7, 1973
Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008

Rev. Carl F. 'hrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 33, 34: AND WHEN THEY CAME TO THE PLACE WHICH IS CALLED THE SKULL, THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM, AND THE CRIMINALS, ONE ON THE RIGHT AND ONE ON THE LEFT. AND JESUS SAID, "FATHER , FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.

You must NOT look for the CROSS of CHRIST in PALESTINE alone - - or as something that happened a LONG TIME AGO "on a HILL FAR AWAY." Rather, you must see the CROSS of CHRIST RIGHT HERE among us NOW! You must see it as a PRESENT REALITY! The BLACK SKY brooding over Golgotha is ARCHED above US TOO. The TEMPST and the EARTQUAKE which terrified Jerusalem TERRIFY US also. The cross is as NEAR and CONTEMPORARY as anything can be.

Even tho it is CERTAIN that Christ DIED ONLY ONCE and will NEVER DIE AGAIN - - - it is just as CERTAIN that He has NOT CEASED to SUFFER with MANKIND. There is no human distress that He does not SHARE. There is no human despair which He, too, does not FEEL. For when HUNGER torments one of US He says, "I AM HUNGRY." When one of US suffers THIRST, He says, "I AM THIRSTY." There is NO NAKEDNESS of which Christ does not say, "I AM NAKED" - - - no SICKNESS of which He does not say, "I AM SICK." So it is that the CRUCIFIED LORD continues to SUFFER THROUGHOUT the AGES - - and He comes to us in the SORROW that is ours and in the SUFFERING that is our NEIGHBORS.

The CROSS of CHRIST STANDS AMONG US - - in our NATION, in our CITY, in our HOMES.

None of us can say that we are NOT STANDING under the CROSS OF CHRIST. And it is terrible that CHRIST'S SUFFERING has NOT COME to an END! The crucifiers are NOT just in Palestine alone - - - WE ARE the CRUCIFIERS! God HELP US - - - YOU and I are the VERY ONES STILL CRUCIFYING HIM!

We crucify Christ if we do not HUNGER with THOSE who HUNGER and do not MOURN with THOSE who MOURN. We crucify Christ when we LEAVE a DESPERATE PERSON to his DESPAIR - - - or ABANDON the LONELY. We CRUCIFY CHRIST when we SHUN our FELLOW MAN. We CRUCIFY CHRIST when we IGNORE our BROTHER in his MISERY. We RAISE the CROSS of CHRIST again and again when we REBEL AGAINST our own SUFFERING and CURSE GOD. - - - - who wants to CLOTHE US with HIMSELF and His OWN CROSS. We EXTEND the CROSS and the SUFFERING of CHRIST when we do NOT SEE in our OWN SUFFERING HIS CROSS - - - do not take it upon us and LOVE IT! We are the ones who KEEP ON CRUCIFYING CHRIST ANEW.

When Jesus was REVILED, He did NOT REVILE AGAIN. He knew everyone who had RIDICULED and BEATEN Him and NAILED Him to the CROSS. But He did NOT SINGLE OUT any ONE of them. He answered His crucifiers with a PRAYER: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT

WHAT THERE DOING".

Can you IMAGINE the HOLY SON of GOD crying out in the moment of His AGONY and DEATH - - - - "FATHER, DON'T REMEMBER YOUR MAGESTY AND UTTER HOLINESS & Justice - DON'T REMEMB YOUR POWER AND YOUR HONOR AND YOUR GLORY - - - FATHER, FORGIVE!" Can you IMAGINE anyone HANGING from a CROSS, BLEEDING - DYING - - - - and saying, "FATHER, FORGIVE THE CRIME THAT IS BEING COMMITTED HERE!" He does NOT DAMN His enemies - - nor does He DAMN US - - - - - - - but HE PRAYS. He calls for MERCY rather than JUSTICE.

I cannot understand that - - and I'm sure YOU CANNOT EITHER. It is NOT the way with US MEN. We are ALWAYS so QUICK to CONDEMN. We are ALWAYS so SWIFT to PASS JUDGMENT. .....But unlike the ROMANS and the JEWISH POPULATION at that time - - - we live on the OTHER SIDE of EASTER! In a sense, we KNOW what we are DOING. We have KNOWN from CHILDHOOD that the CRUCIFIED is the VICTOR who HOLDS the WHOLE WORLD in His HAND - - - - who even NOW SITS at the RIGHT HAND of GOD. He is LORD! And that means we have even MORE RESPONSIBILITY than did those people who NAILED Him there or stood b MOCKING and JEERING and SPITTING upon Him.

When with our LOVELESSNESS - our SMUGNESS - our FEARS - - - - we revile, and BEAT,

and CRUCIFY CHRIST ANEW - - - - - - - - - - we KNOW what we are DO ING.

The great thing is that OUR LORD has NOT CHANGED. I'm sure He continues to PRAY:

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!" In the SACRAMENT TONIGHT we will come to RECEIVE HIM ANEW

- - - we will COME to RECEIVE HIS BODY and HIS BLOOD for the FORGIVENESS of our SINS.

And we can be SURE that HE LOVES US - - - we KNOW that - - - HE DIED FOR US and LOVES

US to the END. If HE can PRAY for those who CRUCIFIED HIM - those who NAILED Him to the

CROSS - - - we can be SURE that HE is PRAYING and LIVING WITH US and FOR US. So ASH

WEDNESDAY doesn't become JUST a DAY of ASHES - - - - it is a DAY of EXPECTATION!

We are the PEOPLE of God - the REDEEMED of God - the LOVED by God! For US He GAVE

His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into DEATH!

And we must go AWAY from THIS CHURCH TONIGHT to LOVE - and HELP - and BE a PART of

THAT LOVE - - - - - be a PART of THAT FORGIVENESS - - - - to ALL with whom we COME in

CONTACT. Amen. !!!