5th Wednesday in Lent / 1992
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Sarasota, FL

IN NOMINE JESU

St. John II: 17 - 44

In the stillness of eternity did you ever hear a Heart break?
In the chill of infinity did you ever hear the Heart of God break?

THE HEART OF CHRIST

Everytime I think about and meditate on the CROSS and BITTER SUFFERINGS and DEATH of CHRIST FOR US, I cannot help visualizing His BLEEDING, BROKEN HEART. What makes the Cross HOLY is the HEIGHT and DEPTH and LENGTH and BREATH of His FULL and OVER-FLOWING HEART OF LOVE - FULL to the BRIM with LIFE and SALVATION, MERCY and GRACE, FORGIVENESS and RECONCILIATION, PEACE and SERENITY.

Think about it - the BLEEDING, BROKEN HEART OF CHRIST! If you are at all SENSITIVE to what went on in His LIFETIME as well as our OWN LIFETIME, you cannot escape the HEART-RENDING TRAGEDY of it all. Right at the beginning of John's Gospel it says, "HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD CAME INTO BEING THROUGH HIM; YET THE WORLD DID NOT KNOW HIM. HE CAME TO WHAT was HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN PEOPLE DID NOT ACCEPT HIM".... .... A couple of Chapters later John makes the OBSERVATION, "THE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD AND PEOPLE LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS ARE EVIL."

THE BLEEDING, BROKEN HEART of Christ is none other than the BLEEDING BORKEN HEART of GOD HIMSELF - GOD OUT OF GOD, LIGHT OUT OF LIGHT, TRUE GOD OUT OF TRUE GOD! DESPISED - REJECTED - A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF - we HID, as it were, our FACES from Him! Was there ever LOVE like this? With His stripes we are HEALED!

The HEART OF CHRIST goes out to us in our SUFFERING and DYING. When Jesus hears that His GOOD FRIEND, LAZARUS, was DEAD, He GREIVES and MOURNS THE LOSS. There is no more WARM-HEARTED SENTENCE in all of Scripture, "JESUS WEPT!" He broke down and CRIED! And then came those of-repeated words of COMFORT to MARY and MARTHA:

"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN ME, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE, WILL LIVE, AND EVERYONE WHO LIVES AND BELIEVE IN ME WILL NEVER DIE!" For this He came down from heaven - to die OUR DEATH so that WE MIGHT SHARE HIS LIFE.

Talk about a BIG HEART! Our CURSE, OUR JUDGMENT sticks like a DAGGER IN His HEART. HE NEVER STOPS LOVING! He never stops CARING! "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM," He cries from the GALLOWS! Then, turning to the PENITENT MALEFACTOR He promises, "TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE." Through the SUFFERING and AGONY He catches a glimpse of His MOTHER and entrusts her into the CARE and KEEPING of John, "BEHOLD YOUR SON!" Behold, your mother!

At last there comes the last and FATAL MOMENT when He LIFTS HIS HEART and places it in the HANDS OF HIS HEAVENLY FATHER, "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT" .....and He DIES! But MORE - MUCH MORE! With His Death, DEATH CEASES to be OUR ENEMY. With His Death LIFE IS BORN! Our relationship with God is RESTORED and PARADISE is REGAINED!

Now our HEARTS have a CHANCE at being LIFTED UP WITH SONGS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING! We REJOICE that His Heart of LOVE keeps CALLING OUT TO US: "WHEN I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH I WILL DRAW ALL MEN TO MYSELF!" Again and again the words keep RESOUNDING in our ears, "BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU SHALL LIVE ALSO"....."TRULY, TRULY I SAY TO YOU, IF ANYONE KEEPS MY WORD, HE WILL NEVER SEE DEATH" ..... "I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. YOUR FATHERS ATE THE MANNA in THE WILDERNESS AND THEY DIED. THIS IS THE BREAD WHICH COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN; IF ANY ONE EATS OF THIS BREAD, HE WILL LIVE FOREVER; AND THE BREAD WHICH I SHALL GIVE FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD IS MY FLESH."

Jesus not only has LIFE. HE IS LIFE. He is LIFE because the HOLY SPIRIT IS HIS SPIRIT --- and THIS SPIRIT Who is "THE LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE" ITSELF, HE GIVES TO US! He is LIFE and HIS LIFE becomes our LIFE. Listen: "WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVE IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE!"

THANK YOU, JESUS, FOR YOUR BIG HEART!

Amen.