



In Solemn Assembly...

(Originally written by Rev. Robert Frederick)

We confess that our very view of God has been shallow and simplistic. We have slighted Him by barely knowing Him. We have been content with learning the most obvious of His ways. We have had too little thirst for a fuller understanding of His mind, His heart, His will, and His ways.

We confess that we have substituted an easy certainty for humble inquiry. We have been satisfied to sip at truth when we might have drunk deeply at the wells of God's revelation.

From lack of faith, we have failed to study and investigate. We have allowed dogmatic certainty to interfere with the search for truth. We have assumed that old answers are adequate for new equations. We have allowed ourselves to be engulfed by busyness, leaving too little for being still to listen, to inquire, and to search.

We have not prayed as we ought. We have allowed prayer to become an opening salute and a closing formality to both our worship and our deliberations. We have forgotten that through prayer miracles can take place. We have made prayer an effort to gain divine approval for what we have done, rather than the avenue through which we experience what God Himself would do.

We have neglected the Holy Spirit and His gifts. Our fear of extremes has resulted in churches where the Holy Spirit is known on paper but unknown in intimate communion.

We have been quicker to find reasons to separate from other believers than to discover and capitalize upon our common ground. Lord, you know that we often tend to stay to ourselves. As local churches we have little if any contact with sister churches in our area or other like-minded churches. We are not showing forth the love and unity that is ours in Christ and we confess the sin of our independent spirit.

We confess that we have allowed the inevitable depression of our spiritual malaise to dull us to the glorious hope, joy, and freedom of our life in Christ. We have neither appropriated nor expressed the joy of the Lord. Our life in Christ has been all too joyless and too often void of the exuberance of life in Christ.

Lord, when we walk through your letters to your churches, we are forced to agree that we have forsaken our first love. We have compromised our lifestyles with materialism, license, comfort, and the self-centeredness of this world's gods. We have become complacent, accepting mediocrity and rationalizing failure. We have ascribed the sterility of our body life to the hostility of the world rather than to the barrenness of our own souls. We have chosen the lukewarm safety of mediocrity and unchallenged tradition over the higher but dangerous road of, sacrificial love. We have not reached

for the unknown and undiscovered heights of spiritual intimacy and fruitful life which You long for us to know. In our practices and programs, we have allowed old patterns to continue beyond their usefulness out of fear of change and the cost of the new.

We have limited our commitment by dividing our love between the church and the world.

Lord, in all these things we have failed to recognize Your grace and Your love. We have not seen Your tears; we have not recognized Your generous love. We have accepted Your patience as though it were Your approval. We have not understood nor recognized the grief of Your heart when we live on the peripheral of Your blessing and might have enjoyed Your lavish hand.

Lord, we have accepted Your grace without appreciating its cost. We have taken comfort in that grace for ourselves while reluctantly extending it to those who have injured us. We have squandered the spiritual wealth given to us while extending only the most limited gospel handouts to the broken people who surround us and the world, which is our parish. For lack of faith we have lived as paupers when we might have lived as princes. We are a people who could have turned our world upside down but instead have allowed that world to quarantine, confine and sterilize what should have been contagious communities of faith.

We are weak where we could have been strong.

We are divided where we could have been one.

We are despised where we could have been respected.

We are depressed where we could have been triumphant.

We are the people of a risen Lord who have existed like the remnant of a crucified martyr.

We are not the worst that we might have been, not the least that we could have become, not the lowest to which we could fall; but we confess, with shame, that we are not what we might be. We have not become what we ought to become, and in no way are we the people that a risen Lord, an omnipotent Father and an all-powerful Spirit would have made us had we been willing to yield to Your desires.

All of this and much, much more we stand to confess before our Master in solemn assembly and in deep shame. We have sinned; we have failed. We plead Your grace, Your mercy, and Your blood. We ask for pardon which we in no way deserve and for forgiveness that only our Savior's death can offer. Nonetheless, we pray with confidence, believing with certainty that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin, and in this we find hope and peace and comfort.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Savior, and Master. Amen