

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Santa Clarita
Ash Wednesday
12:30 PM — February 18, 2026

Prelude

Guárdame, Señor (Bless and Keep Us, Lord)

Mark Sedio

As the procession begins, please stand as you are able.

-Processions have long been an important part of liturgical worship. At the beginning of the service they signify an intention to move toward the altar and into direct relationship to worship God. Those who wish to may bow in reverence as the cross passes to acknowledge Christ's sacrifice upon it.-

-The liturgy is God's community gathered to actively share the Word and the Eucharist. We invite and encourage your participation in this community. Please join in the spoken responses and hymns shown in the service bulletin.-

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

-The opening acclamation is the greeting of the people by the presider and their response, which begins the service. Its purpose is to bring the congregation corporately into dialogue with the presider and set a tone for the celebration.-

Priest: Blessed be the God of our salvation:

People: **Who bears our burdens and forgives our sins.**

-A Collect is a short prayer with a specific structure. Its purpose is to gather into one the individual prayers of the People. The Collect of the Day is a specific prayer that reflects upon the lectionary readings for the given day of the liturgical year.-

The Collect of the Day

Priest: God be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Priest: Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Please be seated.

THE LESSONS

The First Reading Joel 2:1-2,12-17

Reader: Bob Gregor

A Reading from the Book of Joel.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near--a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come. Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and

relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

-The Book of Common Prayer has always placed great importance on the Psalms in worship. They are sung or said in every service of the church, and their words make up the petitions and language of our liturgy.

Psalms 103:8-14

- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
- 13 As a father cares for his children, *
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.
- 14 For he himself knows whereof we are made; *
he remembers that we are but dust.

The Second Reading 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see — we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

-The Gospel procession moves into the congregation as a liturgical reminder that Jesus walked among us.

Please stand as you are able.

Gradual

Lord Jesus, Think On Me

William Daman

1. Lord Je - sus, think on me, and purge a - way my sin;
2. Lord Je - sus, think on me, with care and woe op - pressed,
3. Lord Je - sus, think on me, nor let me go a - stray;
4. Lord Je - sus, think on me, that, when the flood is past,
from earth-born pas-sions set me free, and make me pure with - in.
let me Your lov - ing ser - vant be, and taste Your prom-ised rest.
through dark-ness and per - plex - i - ty make straight the heav'n - ly way.
I may e - ter - nal bright-ness see, and share Your joy at last.

-The Gospel is comprised primarily of the words Christ himself spoke, and so we stand out of reverence for the good news that has been brought for us and all people.

Those who wish, make the sign of the cross with the right-thumb on the forehead, the lips, and the heart when the Gospel is announced, praying silently, God be in my head and in my thinking. God be in my lips and in my speaking. God be in my heart and my departing.-

The Gospel Reading Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Priest: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People: Glory to you, O Christ.

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves

treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Priest: The Gospel of the Savior.

People: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Please be seated.

-The Sermon or Homily helps us apply the words of the early prophets and Christ in our lives.-

The Sermon

The Very Rev. Christopher Montella
Rector

A period of silent reflection follows the sermon.

Please stand as you are able.

Invitation to the Observance of a Holy Lent

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Savior’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before our maker and redeemer.

Silence is then kept for a time, all kneeling.

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Imposition of Ashes

Please stand or kneel as you are able.

Psalm 51

Cantor: Robert Dunlap

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your
loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.

- 4 Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- 14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.
- 16 Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- 17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice; *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Kneeling as you are able.

Litany of Penitence

Priest and people say together:

Most holy and merciful God:

**We confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.**

Priest: We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

People: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Priest: We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

People: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Priest: We confess to you all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,

People: **Have mercy on us, O God.**

Priest: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,

People: **We confess to you, O God.**

Priest: Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

People: **We confess to you, O God.**

Priest: Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

People: **We confess to you, O God.**

Priest: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

People: **We confess to you, O God.**

Priest: Accept our repentance, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

People: **Accept our repentance, O God.**

Priest: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

People: **Accept our repentance, O God.**

Priest: For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

People: **Accept our repentance, O God.**

Priest: Restore us, gracious God, and let your anger depart from us;

People: **Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Priest: Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,

People: **That we may show forth your glory in the world**

Priest: By the cross and passion of your Son our Savior,
People: **Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

Celebrant

Almighty and Ever living God, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to ministers in the Church to declare and pronounce to God's people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. God pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe the holy Gospel.

Therefore we beseech God to grant us true repentance and the Holy Spirit, that those things may please God which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

-The Peace is an extension of Christian greeting and teaching to love our neighbor as ourselves. It symbolizes our intent to forgive as we are forgiven, to live in peace with all people. Members are encouraged to greet one another with a sign of God's peace with the clasping of hands, a reverential bow, a hug, or a peace sign.-

The Peace

Priest: The peace of Christ be always with you.
People: **And also with you.**

Members of the congregation who are joining us via livestream are encouraged to post "Peace be with you" in the comments or to use the "like" or "love" reaction button to take part in the virtual exchange of God's peace with the rest of the congregation at this time.

Please be seated.

Offertory Sentence

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.
-Hebrews 13:16

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Offertory

Create in Me a Clean Heart
St. Stephen's Parish Choir

Victor C. Johnson

Black Composer — Victor C. Johnson: Victor C. Johnson, a native of Dallas, Texas, is currently the School Choral Editor for Sing!, the educational publishing division of Choristers Guild. A prolific black composer and arranger, he has over 500 choral works, vocal solo books, and keyboard collections currently in print.

Prior to his position at Choristers Guild, from 2000-2018, Victor was a choral director at Ft. Worth Academy of Fine Arts (FWAFA). At FWAFA, Victor directed the Academy Singers, Academy Men's Choir and was Artistic Director of the Singing Girls of Texas and Children's Choir of Texas.

-A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself. For Anglicans there are two great sacraments: Eucharist and Baptism.

As continuation of thousands of years of spiritual practice, talent, treasure, and oblations are offered before the altar in our response to God's care and nurture.-

Please stand as you are able.

Doxology

Old 100th

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures,
here be - low. Praise God, you hosts in heav'n a -
bove; Praise God the Trin - i - ty of Love. A - men.

-The Sursum Corda (Lift up your hearts) is a form of introduction to prayer handed down over the centuries. This dialogue is an invitation for the people joining in the Eucharistic offering, to raise minds and hearts to "things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

Priest: God be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to God.**

Priest: Let us give thanks.

People: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

-We praise God for the long arc of salvation history. We do not approach with petition but simply with grateful remembrance of all that God has done.-

It is truly right, and good and joyful, to give you thanks, all-holy God, source of life and fountain of mercy.

Through Jesus Christ our Savior, who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again.

Therefore, joining with Angels and Archangels and with the faithful of every generation, we lift our voices with all creation as we say:

-The holiness of God is a strong theme in the Old Testament, present here in the Sanctus, which echoes the words of the high angels in the prophet Isaiah's vision of the dwelling place of God (Isaiah 6:1-3).

Our worshipful cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy," is coupled with the acclamation "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

Sanctus

Baity

Ho-ly, ho - ly, ho-ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, — Ho-ly, ho - ly, ho-ly Lord,
 God of pow-er and might, — Heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry, heav-en and earth are
 full of your glo-ry. Ho-san-na in — the high - est, ho - san-na in — the high - est.
 Blest is he — who comes in the name, comes in the name, comes in the name of the Lord.
 Ho - san-na in — the high - est, ho - san - na in — the high - est.

Please stand or kneel as you are able.

Blessed are you, gracious God, creator of the universe and giver of life. You formed us in your own image and called us to dwell in your infinite love.

You gave the world into our care that we might be your faithful stewards and show forth your bountiful grace.

But we failed to honor your image in one another and in ourselves; we would not see your goodness in the world around us; and so we violated your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love. Yet you never ceased to care for us, and prepared the way of salvation for all people.

Through Abraham and Sarah you called us into covenant with you. You delivered us from slavery, sustained us in the wilderness, and raised up prophets to renew your promise of salvation. Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word, made mortal flesh in Jesus. Born into the human family, and dwelling among us, he revealed your glory. Giving himself freely to death on the cross, he triumphed over evil, opening the way of freedom and life.

On the night before he died for us, Our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

-The epiclesis is the point at which the church, through the voice of the Celebrant, asks God to make holy, 'sanctify', 'send', 'pour', 'breathe', both the gift of bread and wine and also the gathered community.-

Remembering his death and resurrection, we now present to you from your creation this bread and this wine. By your Holy Spirit may they be for us the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. Grant that we who share these gifts may be filled with the Holy Spirit and live as Christ's Body in the world. Bring us into the everlasting heritage of your beloved children, that with Stephen and all your saints, past, present, and yet to come, we may praise your Name for ever.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

-The fraction (breaking of the bread) is a crucial link between what has come before and what comes after it. Christ has offered his life for us, and the breaking of the bread makes it possible for all to share in that life.-

Please remain standing during the Fraction Hymn

Fraction Hymn #S161

Hurd

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world: have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world: have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

-The outward and visible sign in the sacrament of the Eucharist is the bread and the wine. We eat and drink the sacramental foods. Through the inward and spiritual grace of this sacramental action we are reconstituted as Christ's body, infused with Christ's life, and empowered to be Christ's presence in the world.-

The Gifts of God for the People of God.
Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

*All are welcome to receive communion. The table we set belongs to God.
Wherever you find yourself on your spiritual journey you are welcome to receive
the Bread and Wine made holy.*

*The church teaches that temporal isolation cannot constrain the sacrament's ineffable power.
Calling us to "massive, corporate, spiritual communion,"*

The Invitation to Holy Communion

A spiritual communion is a personal devotional that anyone can pray at any time to express their desire to receive Holy Communion at that moment, but in which circumstances impede them from actually receiving Holy Communion.

Priest and People say together:

O Jesus Christ, you have instituted for us a great sacrament in your promise of life and love, which we remember now as we hear your words again: "This is my body; this is my blood — given for you." Feed us in our hearts with faith and trust, draw us closer to you and to each other, and strengthen us for service to our neighbor. We come before you now, with hearts you have fed all our lives with the promise that you have given yourself for us. Keep us strong in that faith until we can meet at your table again. Amen.

Please be seated.

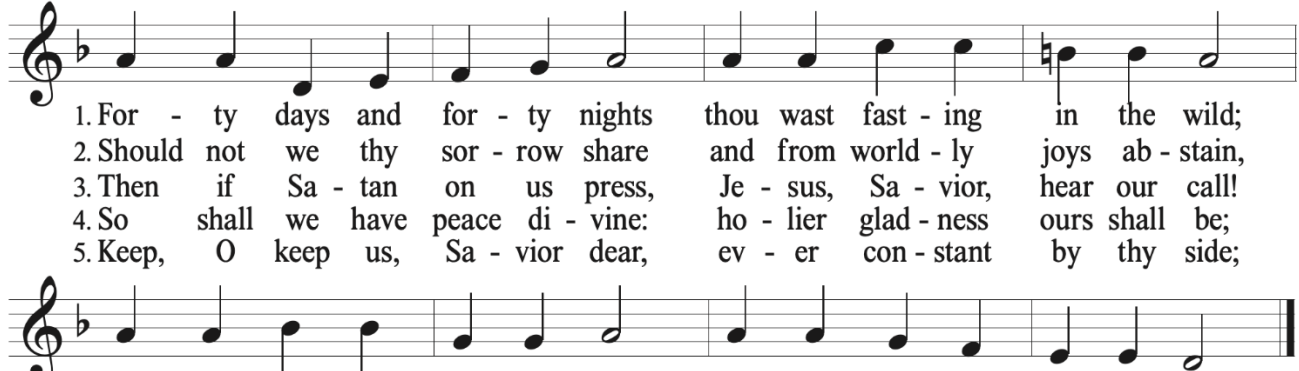
Please follow usher instructions for taking communion.

Communion Music

Post Communion Hymn #150

"Forty days and forty nights"

Aus der Tiefe rufe ich



1. For - ty days and for - ty nights thou wast fast - ing in the wild;
2. Should not we thy sor - row share and from world - ly joys ab - stain,
3. Then if Sa - tan on us press, Je - sus, Sa - vior, hear our call!
4. So shall we have peace di - vine: ho - lier glad - ness ours shall be;
5. Keep, O keep us, Sa - vior dear, ev - er con - stant by thy side;

for - ty days and for - ty nights tempt - ed and yet un - de - filed.
fast - ing with un - ceas - ing prayer, strong with thee to suf - fer pain?
Vic - tor in the wil - der - ness, grant we may not faint nor fall!
round us, too, shall an - gels shine, such as min - is - tered to thee.
that with thee we may ap - pear at thee - ter - nal Eas - ter - tide.

-In the post communion prayer we give thanks for the sacramental signs of Christ's presence to us and we ask God to empower and accompany us into the world to witness to God's love.-

Please stand as you are able.
Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray.

**God of compassion,
through your Son Jesus Christ
you have reconciled your people to yourself.
As we follow his example of prayer and fasting,
may we obey you with willing hearts
and serve one another in holy love;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

-The blessing is God's promise to be with us as we leave communal worship and return to the world to serve God and God's people.-

Blessing

May God,
who does not despise the broken spirit,
give to you a contrite heart.

May Christ,
who bore our sins in his body on the tree,
heal you by his wounds.

May the Holy Spirit,
who leads us into all truth,
speak to you words of pardon and peace.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the one, holy and undivided Trinity be among
you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

-The dismissal asserts the relationship between worship and living. It is a call to mission, a call to live the baptismal and Eucharistic life in the world.-

The Dismissal

Priest: Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People: Thanks be to God.

-The altar party departs in silence.-

Service Music Credits

From *The Hymnal 1982* #150 "Forty days and forty night", Words: George Hunt Smytten (1822-1870), alt. Music: Aud der Tiefe rufe ich, melody att. Martin Herbst (1654-1681), alt; harm. William Henry Monk (1823-1889).
Lord Jesus, Think On Me, Text: Synesius of Cyrene c. 410; trans. Allen W. Chatfield, 1876. Music: William Daman, *The Psalms of David*, 1579
Doxology — Music: Old 100th, melody from *Pseumes octante trois de David*, 1551, alt; harm. After Louis Bourgeois (1510?-1561?).
Sanctus 3, Judith M. Baity. Copyright © 2009, Celestial Melodies Publishing, Sherman Oaks, CA. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission.
Lamb of God - Traditional Plainchant, arr. Christina M. Laberge
Collect of the Day — page 573 in *A New Zealand Prayer Book*