



A Litany of Offense and Apology

Introductory Address to the People Given By
The Most Reverend Katherine Jefferts-Schori
Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church

Statement of Offense and Apology
Written By J. Chester Johnson

The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 4, 2008

A Service of Repentance

Prelude

A gong sounds and the congregation rises to greet the procession, in silence, of the ministers.

A Litany of Offense and Apology

The Presiding Bishop addresses the people.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we are gathered here to express our most profound regret that the Episcopal Church lent the institution of slavery its support and justification based on scripture, and after slavery was formally abolished, continued for at least a century to support de jure and de facto segregation and discrimination. We gather to repent, to apologize for our complicity in and the injury done by the institution of slavery and its aftermath and to amend our lives, to commit ourselves to opposing the sin of racism in personal and public life, and to create communities of liberation and justice.

Therefore, I invite you to join me in recalling the lamentable events that scar our past, and the wounds that continue in the present. Let us seek God's forgiveness that we may be transformed more fully into the Body of Christ witnessing to God's abundant love.

Litanist O God, be with us, Your Church, today. Remembering its past record of a callous and impervious response to slavery and associated sins, the Church now stands before You in vulnerability and pain. By reciting the numerous and unconcealed acts perpetrated by the Church that aided the continual presence of the diabolical system of slavery and the related evils of segregation, isolation, and the varied forms of discrimination, the Church earnestly desires to receive redemption and reconciliation for its previous conduct. The Church acknowledges that its record of

People racism, weakness, subjugation, neglect, complicity, arrogance and complacency

Litanist in conforming to both slavery and associated evils is an affront to the teachings of Christ, and for these sins and failings, the Church ardently seeks forgiveness. O God, may the reciting of these sins and shortcomings

help to release and expiate the transgressions and shroud of this history and open a new and unending period of true acceptance and community for and in all the Church.

People Amen.

People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to forsake the eloquence that we shall all be united under one Creator, to pare into compounds and targets of isolation the grand diversity,

Litanist did not support the slave's cry for freedom and equal treatment. Indeed, Church members of the Continental Congress permitted slaves to be counted merely as three-fifths of a person, and the Church frequently disallowed African-Americans from even entering a house of God to worship.

People O God, forgive the Church for racism and endow it with a vision and voice for justice renewed in each generation.



People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to dismiss the captivity of Hebrews under the Egyptians and Babylonians,
to condone by weakness the brutal and evil forces of prevailing office,

Litanist has not been an agent for social change and has repeatedly violated Paul's
admonition not to be conformed, but to be transformed. With slavery and
those numerous forms of segregation and discrimination, the Church has too
often been distracted and weakened by popular and institutional concerns, led
away from the instructions of scripture and from the life and words of our
Savior.

People O God, forgive the Church for weakness and endow it with a vision
and voice for justice renewed in each generation.

Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Setting: Jane Emery © 2004 Jane Emery.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to accept the favors and economic plunder of subjugation,
to pretend sanction was conveniently borne upon every blow,

Litanist does acknowledge that clergy and dioceses had owned slaves and had benefited from the many monetary rewards of physical and financial oppression. Subjugation comes in countless and subtle forms, and for much of the Church's history, blacks could not be admitted or ordained as priests, but if they were, they could not find employment in churches. Even today, African-American priests have frequently been deployed into depressed and resource-barren areas.

People O God, forgive the Church for subjugation and endow it with a vision and voice for justice renewed in each generation.

Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Setting: Jane Emery © 2004 Jane Emery.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to approve neglect of those enchained and mockingly apart,
to desert prophetic calls to make free and embolden the captive,

Litanist has deserved the indictment: "What witness then has been borne by the Church against this almost universal sin?" The Church has thus not adhered to the baptismal covenant in which there is that promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons. . . strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

People O God, forgive the Church for neglect and endow it with a vision
and voice for justice renewed in each generation.

Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Setting: Jane Emery © 2004 Jane Emery.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

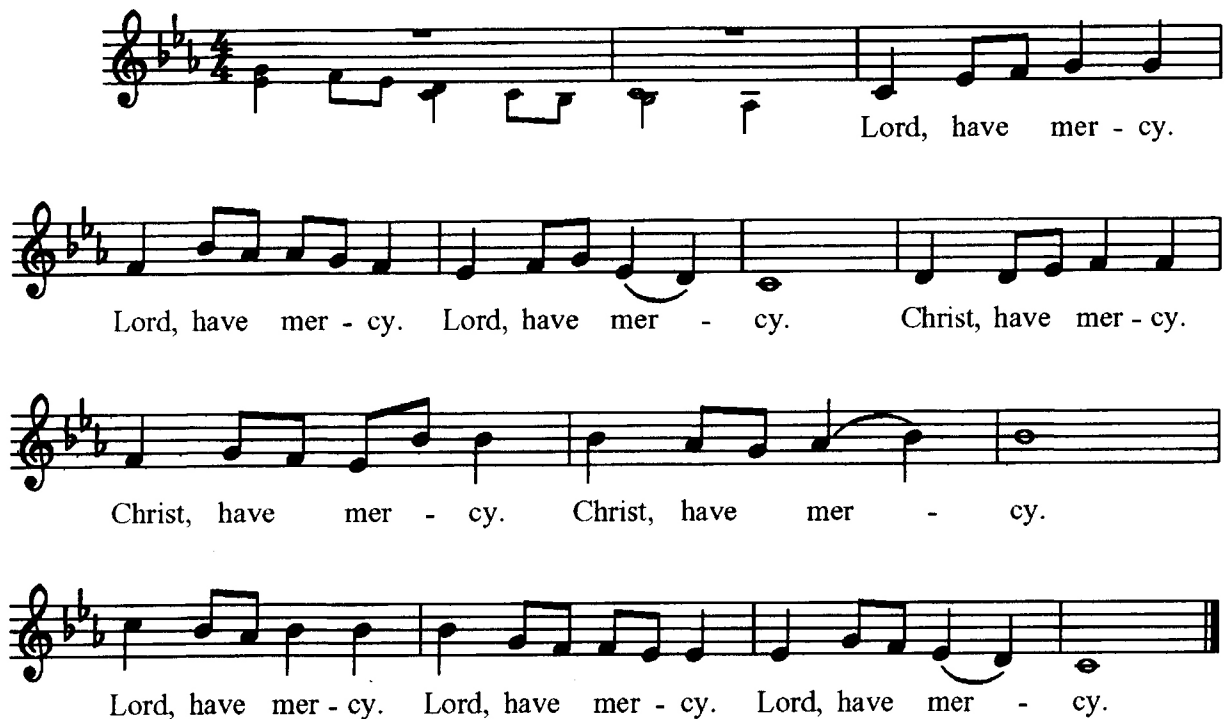
People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to comply with cohorts against the oppressed and desperate,
to side with legions for identity, preservation and accord,

Litanist does acknowledge that for centuries, blacks were not afforded
the dignity of being treated as actual members of the Church, and even as
Bishop White agreed to ordain Absalom Jones, it was established that neither
Father Jones nor his church, this very church, St. Thomas, would participate
fully in diocesan matters. Nor has the Church insisted that parishes and
dioceses integrate.

People O God, forgive the Church for complicity and endow it with a vision
and voice for justice renewed in each generation.



Setting: Jane Emery © 2004 Jane Emery.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

People The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Litanist The Church,

People to elevate the imperfect to imitate the pure,
to designate mere practice to constitute the truth,

Litanist exerted authority to separate God's children in order to enhance whites over blacks, leading to arrogance for whites and degradation for blacks, so that, even after the legal cessation of slavery, the segregation of blacks was seen as a normal part of both community and Church life. Officials and members of the Church have been routinely susceptible to the same aggrandizement that existed in secular circles for the advantaged from the establishment and continuity of slavery and segregation.

People O God, forgive the Church for arrogance and endow it with a vision and voice for justice renewed in each generation.

Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Setting: Jane Emery © 2004 Jane Emery.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Litanist O God, may we, the Church, by acknowledging manifold sinfulness in the support of slavery and its associated evils, hereby pledge to adopt a new spirit and application for freedom and respect, leading to redemption and reconciliation, and may we, the Church, henceforth and ever, value and love others as we do ourselves.

O God, may You forgive the past and enliven the Church with a transformed and invigorated heart, constant courage, and purposeful wisdom to effect Your enduring will.

People Amen.