



REFLECTIONS

The Seventh Sunday of Easter -
Saturday The First Week of Pentecost
May 21 - June 3, 2023



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MAY 21 - JUNE 3

This season's Reflections were written by

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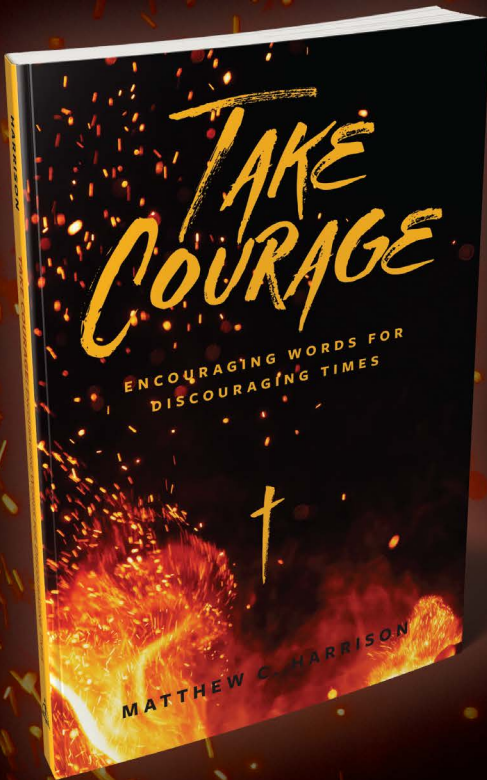
Karrie Jacoby, Reflections Editor

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A Short Form for Daily Reflection

ADAPTED FROM LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

Make the sign of the Holy Cross and say:

In the name of the Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read the Psalm for the Day (A table of daily psalms can be found in Lutheran Service Book, page 304).

Read “Today’s Reading” if there is one listed.

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles’ Creed.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:

(In the Morning)

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

In the morning go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, such as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest.

(In the Evening)

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.

If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

MAY 21, 2023

Today's Reading: John 17:1-11

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 14:1-25, Luke 18:18-34

And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. John 17:11

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Why does it feel so good to lament the decline of civilization? It seems like a solid 80% of the conversations I have with Christians involve some sort of complaint about the world. Why does it feel so good to think there's nothing we can do about it but say "I told you so" in the face of calamity?

Maybe it's because quitting feels easier. Or because when we are powerless to circumstance, it might be our problem but at least it's not our fault. Even with Christ who is risen from the grave, Christians aren't just sad but despondent. Hopeless. That's worse than sad. Sadness can keep fighting. Keep struggling. But when there's no hope, when the world is insurmountable, why bother? Hopelessness creeps into every part of life. Relationships feel broken and unfixable. Anxieties pile up and can't be conquered. Illnesses are terminal and can't be cured. This is what giving up feels like. And it feels good.

Despondency feels good. Complaining about the world feels good. If you couldn't have won anyway, you can be dragged into the same sins you lament in the world, the same culture you decry, but with a superior attitude and "I told you so" on your lips. Despondent people build altars to their own emptiness and turn the church into something that looks like it's dying too. Do you know how pitiful it is to quit something the Lord has already won the victory over? Repent of your hopelessness. Repent of your politics and the despair they bring you. Hear Jesus pray a prayer for glory and fully expect it to be answered by the Father with a cross. Know that this cross is for you. To forgive you your sins. To save you from a world destined to decay. Cling to the resurrection and the promise it yields. Nothing that falls apart won't be put back together. Christ died on the cross to save sinners. To save you. To save those in the world. The world itself may fall apart. But you are already rescued, as surely as He is risen. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Monday - the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 22, 2023

Today's Reading: Acts 1:12-26

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 14:26-45, Luke 18:35-19:10

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. Acts 1:16

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. What do you say at the funeral of a friend? Judas was numbered with them. Spent 3 years with them. Ate, laughed, and cried with them. Then he killed himself. This isn't just a turning point towards the calling of Matthias, the 12th 2.0. It's a loss over what to say in the face of something so awful. Sometimes there just aren't words.

The heavy-handed law to anyone considering Judas' end might look at how they don't know what to say. Look at how much work is still left to be done, but now by another. Look at how little is fixed by this. There is a field devoted to the tragedy that will never be the same to everyone left.

It's so easy to put a better construction on things than they rightly deserve. Find a reason. Peter doesn't do that. He points to the fulfillment of the scriptures, which don't deny Judas his sin, but also provide the answer. The scripture had to be fulfilled. And it was. Jesus was betrayed, crucified, and risen. He ascended to sit upon the throne. It's not what Judas' sin allowed. It's what God insisted would happen, even for sinners like Judas. Hope can draw near and exist even when there aren't words to talk about what happened. There is forgiveness, life, and salvation for all who believe. Don't excuse away actions. Cling to the word of God. That endures to life, even when yours fall short. Trust in the baptism that saves sinners. God saves through faith, even battered and broken.

Then, when you look back to Judas, it can be more than a cautionary tale. If you look at the darkest funerals you stumble across, they can be stories of commending a fallen brother to the mercy of God, and a chance to look forward to seeing God who saves the sinners still at work in your life and to life everlasting. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O LORD God, Dear Father in Heaven, give to us the Lamb in the midst of the throne to be our shepherd, that He will guide us to springs of living water, and will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Amen.

Tuesday - the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 23, 2023

Today's Reading: 1 Peter 4:12-19, 5:6-11

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:1-22, Luke 19:11-28

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:13

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Peter calls suffering a blessing. I wish he wouldn't. It isn't just how much it hurts. It's the question of why. Because a loving God sends some suffering for good. And also, the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking to devour Christians. Working havoc. And suffering. It makes the suffering God sends hard to pick out from the suffering the devil brings. And highlights the question. Why? We try to parse the source of the suffering. We try to parse the reason. When all along, this is simply a call about where to take it. We take suffering to Jesus, who joins us in it.

It's going to hurt down here. Be ready. Some of it will come from the devil. Some of it will come from God. Some of it will come as the consequences of your own sins and sins others commit. And in the middle of it all, you won't understand where it comes from. You'll just pray it will go away. You won't understand why it's happening, be it divine plan, satanic attack, or simply human stupidity. But even if you do, it usually won't be worth the trade to you. We have a bigger problem with suffering than God does.

That's evident. Not just because it's too common or because it hurts, but chiefly in the fact that suffering is how God saves you. He suffers for you. God dwells in suffering first. He died on the cross to save you, not just from the attacks of the devil, but from the consequences of your own sins. So that you could do more than hope that this world too full of suffering might get a little better. He places Himself into suffering so that you can be placed into the resurrection and a world without it.

God dwells in suffering first. His glory is revealed there. Glory is a presence word. It means that God is actually there. God suffers for you on the cross and works good there. When we are close to suffering, we are close to where God works salvation. That's a blessing. When we suffer, we join ours to Him who has already conquered it and we look past the cross to the empty tomb, that we would know suffering isn't all there is, it's just the rocky path already paved smooth by Jesus for your salvation. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O LORD, let us who suffer according to Your will entrust our souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. Amen.

Wednesday - the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 24, 2023

Today's Reading: Luther's Small Catechism Ten Commandments: The Ninth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:23-40, Luke 19:29-48

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. Ninth Commandment

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In mercy, God will even guard your heart. There's already a commandment about not taking what's yours. You shall not steal. You shall help your neighbor improve and protect his possessions and income. We covered this. But your heart can trespass too. It can go where it ought not go. Even the pagans recognize the shortsightedness of materialism. Spending all day on Amazon and ignoring what you've been given is foolishness. That doesn't make the things we would covet sinful. It means that our hearts will do sinful things with them. We usually call it greed. Greed seeks more than God already graciously gives at the expense of others. And greed creates problems with the extra it acquires. To quote the hymnist, "More money, more problems."

So God gives us a commandment to guard our hearts. Because greed is an ugly beast to slay. It looks at the world and the possessions within it as a zero-sum game instead of a heap of gifts given by a merciful Father. And God would rather your heart be fixed on Him who gives what we don't deserve, then keeps on giving it even though everything in the world is falling apart, all just to make you a little more comfortable than you deserve on the beach with one set of footprints because He had to drag you kicking and screaming the whole way into the resurrection because you think your sandcastle is what really matters even though the tide is going to take it by tomorrow anyway.

Thou shall not covet. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Set not your heart on greed, which would take from others, but on God who would only give in mercy. It isn't just instructions to follow for a happier life. It's a joy that the Jesus who died to forgive you all your sins, even forgives your heart. Your heart is forgiven too. The greed that you hide and the greed that you don't is forgiven by Jesus. He numbers it among the 10 commandments He fulfills and the 10 He daily and richly forgives. So count it as a joy that God cares about your heart so much that He'd guard it, redeem it, and seal it for salvation. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

"You shall not crave your neighbor's house Nor covet money, goods, or spouse. Pray God He would your neighbor bless As you yourself wish success." Have mercy, Lord! (These are the Holy Ten Commands, LSB 581:10)

Thursday - the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 25, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 20:1-18

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 16:41-17:13, Luke 20:1-18

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Luke 20:4

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Who is running the verbs? Who is doing the thing? It changes baptism. Not just because the Pharisees were afraid of upsetting the crowds, but because if all we have is a bath of good intentions, the waters never get less muddy.

Pledge yourself to Jesus all you want. But take an honest look at yourself and what you're pledging each time you have to redo it because you screwed the last one up. Do you think God really wants you to pledge Him that? Do you think God really wants your best intentions and the excuses for all the sins that lead you to having to do it in the first place?

But if John's Baptism comes from heaven, maybe it means something that Jesus climbed down in those muddy waters too. God works something in your Baptism. Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. He climbs down from heaven to collect not your good intentions but your sins. He gathers up not your promises to do better, but your past and all your excuses, carries it with your future ones too each step to a cross to bleed and die for you to save you. Baptism is what God would do for you. It now saves you.

The Pharisees didn't understand this. So Jesus won't tell them why He preaches either. It isn't just whether or not Jesus should be allowed to speak in the house built upon His name and promises. It's what He would say there. Does the Gospel Jesus preached actually forgive sins, or is it just a call to try harder and come up with a new life plan? Who is running the verbs? Who is doing the thing? If all you want from Jesus is a chance to prove you can do better, you'll miss out because the answer isn't so tricky. God has authority in His creation. And God wishes to save sinners. So when God works in His church, it isn't actually about you. It's for you. It isn't about your works or your gifts or your intentions or your life changes. It's about salvation given freely to sinners. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

This miracle of life reborn Comes from the Lord of breath; The perfect Man from life was torn; Our life comes through Christ's death. (This Is the Spirit's Entry Now, LSB 591:2)

Friday - the Seventh Week of Easter

MAY 26, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 20:19-44

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 20:1-21, Luke 20:19-44

He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Luke 20:25

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Do you think stamping Caesar's face on a coin makes it not God's anymore? It isn't just whether or not this is God's coin. It's whether or not this is God's Caesar. The Pharisees saw Caesar as something ungodly that came about by the will of men, not God. They saw tribute to him as worship to an idol. Maybe to those who saw him as a god, it was, but isn't that the problem? This isn't about the coin. It's about the face. Is this God's Caesar, or is this Caesar independent of God, and a god himself?

It's the same today. This guy who you don't like and doesn't agree with your beliefs is in charge. He's still not God. Even if some people worship him. Do you think God doesn't work there anyway? Do you think that's not God's creation raised up to the office of president? If God puts someone in the office, He will work there. Even if it's messy. Even if the person put there is sinful. Even if the person put there is ungodly.

The thing that is God's is the authority to establish leaders, and the promise to work through them and their institutions. The tax paid can be called theft. It might not be so far from it. But render unto God the power and will to work good among thieves. He saved you by dying in-between two of them.

Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. He has authority given by God. Render unto God what is God's. He has the will to work good through sinful men and the faithfulness to make His promises worth clinging to.

It makes the questions of church and state easier. If it's against God's 10 commandments, call it sinful. If God is risen from the dead, expect Him to work good through sinners. That good won't be measured in their sins becoming socially acceptable, but in God forgiving sinners by His death on the cross and His day by day working of blessings that should not be able to thrive in a field of so much sin. Yet here we are. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Let us recall that in our midst Dwells Christ, His only Son; As members of His body joined We are in Him made one. (Where Charity and Love Prevail, LSB 845:5)

Saturday - the Eve of Pentecost

MAY 27, 2023

Today's Reading: John 14:15-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 20:22-21:9, Luke 20:45-21:19

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:15

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments". Faith, of course, is presupposed. I guess that's good... we assume Christians believe. But also, when we take faith for granted, all that's really left to talk about is what we want to come out of it. We assume the most important part of what Jesus said, then leave all of the stress on something that wasn't ever given to carry the weight. We focus on the word keep. We assume it's ours to carry as obedience and call it proof we love God. The problem, of course, is that when this is our hope, our lack of obedience can really only be proof we hate Him.

Don't presuppose faith. See it for what it is. The gift of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost celebrates that. God wants to speak and give good gifts to sinners. He sends the Spirit to bring faith, to bring to remembrance the teachings of Good. Not just to know them. To remember them. To love them. To treasure them. That's what keep means. Keep isn't measured in obedience but in love. Love what the world loves not. Love the cross and all it brings. Love the place God puts to death all evil and saves you from yourself. Love the life He gives that only comes on the other side of the tomb, but already belongs to you in your Baptism. And so love the commandments too, as they paint a picture of the Lord who saved you by fulfilling them in your stead and then dying that you would live.

In the promise Jesus makes, you who love the Lord do treasure His words. The word speaks and it shapes us. Each day it forgives, and each day it ties us to the great promise He makes us. The promise we cling to and keep because we love Him who has first loved us. Rise. Let us go from here. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and ever-living God, You fulfilled Your promise by sending the gift of the Holy Spirit to unite disciples of all nations in the cross and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. By the preaching of the Gospel spread this gift to the ends of the earth; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The First Sunday of Pentecost

MAY 28, 2023

Today's Reading: John 7:37-39

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 21:10-35, Luke 22:1-23

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." John 7:38

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. There are certain things in life that are meant to go together, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or bacon and, well, just about anything. And if this is true with some of our favorite things in the kitchen, imagine how much greater it is in Holy Scripture.

There are many things in God's Word that are meant to go together. Law and Gospel. God's gifts of Word and Sacraments. Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The cross and the Christian life. The list could go on.

Here in John 7, Jesus reveals another one of Scripture's sacred combinations, the Holy Spirit and water. This connection between God the Holy Spirit and water goes back to creation. In the beginning, in Genesis 1, the Spirit hovered over the waters as God began his creating work. Fast forward to the beginning of the four gospels and once again, you water and the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan River.

In John 7, Jesus is at the Feast of Booths - the Old Testament feast remembering Israel's wilderness wandering and living in tents - Jesus joins brings water and the Holy Spirit together again. "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

John tells us that Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit who would be poured out at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit who dwells with believers. The Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies you in Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the same Holy Spirit Jesus gives you, and who in turn, gives you Jesus. Jesus makes this connection personal. He takes water and His Holy Spirit and gives them both to you in your Baptism.

Remember the words spoken at your Baptism, as the living water of the Holy Spirit and water were poured over you. I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There it is again. Water and the Holy Spirit. Jesus joins them together so that you would be joined together with Him forever. For you, our Lord brings together the greatest combination of all, water and the Holy Spirit to forgive, save, rescue, wash, and restore you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and to evermore rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Day of Pentecost)

Monday - the First Week of Pentecost

MAY 29, 2023

Today's Reading: John 3:16-21

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:1-20, Luke 22:1-23

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:17

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It's a safe guess that most of us know John 3:16. It rolls off the tongue easily. It's memorable for and memorized by many. It's a great summary of the good news that in Christ God is reconciling the world to himself.

But what if someone asked you to quote John 3:17. Could you do it without looking it up? John 3:17 is also a beautiful, comforting, memorable passage filled with good news for you in Jesus. Notice how John beautifully weaves these two memorable passages together.

"For God loved the world in this way, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

These two verses contain more goodness than a mega-stuffed Oreo. Listen to all the things God is doing in these two verses. God the Father loves. God the Father gave His Son. Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh saves from death. God gives eternal life. God the Father sends His Son. God the Father saves you through His Son. But did you notice the one thing God does not do in these two passages? God does not condemn you. In Jesus, you are saved from condemnation.

Old buildings are condemned. People guilty of crimes are condemned to their sentence. But not you. In Jesus you are not condemned. To be sure, because of our sin we deserved condemnation. But because the Father loves you, because the Father gave and sent Jesus, because the Father desired to save you and give you eternal life, Jesus was condemned on the cross in your place and you were set free. Jesus died in our place to win eternal life for you. Jesus is sent into the world, not to condemn the world, or you, but to save you in His compassion, His crucifixion, and His glorious resurrection from the dead. So, the next time you feel weighed down by guilt, shame, sin, or death, remember this good news in John 3:17. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday - the First Week of Pentecost

MAY 30, 2023

Today's Reading: John 10:1-10

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 22:21-23, Luke 22:24-46

The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. John 10:3-4

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Where do you go to hear God's voice? Some would direct you inward to your desires; "Search your feelings," they say. Some would beckon you to the ways and whims of this fallen world like Ulysses and the siren's call. Some would tempt you to find God's voice in the things of this creation, like Satan tempting Adam and Eve. To find God's voice you need not look inward to your sinful flesh, nor outward to the fallen world, nor to the devil's lies.

Where do you go to hear God's voice? Go where He promises to speak to you in His Word through the voice of His Son Jesus. If you want to hear God's voice look no further than the voice of Jesus who speaks, teaches, preaches, calls, leads, and delivers you in His holy Word. As sheep of the Good Shepherd we could start by listening to Jesus' voice in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But don't stop there. Read the book of Acts and hear the voice of the Good Shepherd leading, guiding, and saving His church. Go on further and read the epistles written by Paul, Peter, Jude, James, and John just to name a few, and hear the voice of the Good Shepherd declaring His promises to you over and over again.

The New Testament is full of the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd, but don't stop there. Wherever you turn in the Old Testament, whether it's the Psalms, prophets, or books of Moses, you will find and hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Wherever you read God's word, from Genesis to Revelation, you are listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

In God's word in your Baptism the Good Shepherd calls you by name. In God's word of absolution, the Good Shepherd calls you out of darkness and into His light and life. In God's word joined to bread and wine, the Good Shepherd feeds you His body and blood. In God's word Jesus the Good Shepherd speaks, calls, saves, leads, and goes before you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

*Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
(Collect for the 4th Sunday of Easter)*

Wednesday - the First Week of Pentecost

MAY 31, 2023

Today's Reading: Luther's Small Catechism - The Ten Commandments - The Tenth Commandment

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 23:4-28, Luke 22:47-71

We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty. Explanation to the Tenth Commandment

God also calls us into various vocations, or callings, throughout our life where we are given many responsibilities and opportunities to love and serve our neighbor, and to love and serve God through our vocations. Martin Luther called these vocations in life the masks of God, where God would hide in us to serve others, and where we would serve God through the needs of others all at the same time. So God calls us into the vocation of the Christian life in His Church. God calls us into vocations within the home and family. God calls us into vocations in daily labors of life in a civil society.

This little word, vocation, is one of the ideas that connects the Small Catechism's teachings in the Table of Duties and in the Tenth Commandment. Both reveal our responsibilities in our various vocations, or callings, in life. The Table of Duties highlights three areas where we love and serve our neighbor, the home, the church, and in society. The Tenth Commandment, likewise, highlights our relationship with our neighbors and the various vocations which are a part of his household and life.

Like all human relationships and vocations, we sin in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and left undone in the home, the church, and society. This is part of the reason God gave us the Scripture passages that are found in the Table of Duties and the tenth commandment, to serve a mirror that shows our sin in our many callings in life.

Thankfully, for all the times we fail and sin in our vocations in life, we rest on and are forgiven in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, whose calling it is to be your Savior. We live in service and love to our neighbor knowing that Jesus perfectly feared, loved, and trusted the Father in all things he said and did for you. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Justin, Martyr

JUNE 1, 2023

Today's Reading: Luke 23:1-25

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 24:1-25, Luke 23:1-25

But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"— a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. Luke 23:18-19

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. When we hear the word martyr, the first thing that most likely comes to mind is a Christian who dies for the sake of their faith in Christ, like Stephen in Acts 6 or Justin, Martyr, whose death at the hands of Roman persecution (A.D. 165) we remember today. This is one meaning of the word martyr, but there is also another meaning.

The word martyr literally means witness. To be a martyr is to give witness to something or someone. So the women and the disciples at the foot of Jesus' cross and around the empty tomb and in Jesus' resurrection appearances were all martyrs. They were witnesses to Jesus' death and resurrection. Later, all of the apostles, except for John, would also become martyrs in dying for the sake of their confession and faith in Christ. Martyrs in life and martyrs in death.

This is also what our Lord Jesus did for us. His very life, death, and resurrection was a witness to God's love, grace, and mercy towards us. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate martyrdom, where he, the innocent one, was taken away into death for us who are guilty. Where Jesus the one who knew no sin became sin for us. Where Barabbas who deserved death walked away while Jesus who did not deserve death faced it on our behalf.

This is the faith that Justin the apologist and martyr for the Christian faith bore witness to in his life, writings, and his death. Thanks to the work of Justin, Martyr, we know a great deal about the liturgy used in the second century Christian Church. Justin writes and gives witness to the early church pattern of gathering for teaching, preaching, and receiving the Eucharist on the Lord's Day. His apologetic writings also give witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Today we join the Church in thanking God for martyrs like Justin who teach us how to be faithful witnesses in our day for the sake of Jesus crucified and risen. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God and Father, You sent Your Son to take our nature upon Himself and to suffer death on the cross that all should follow the example of His great humility. Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in His patience and also have our portion in His resurrection; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Friday - the First Week of Pentecost

JUNE 2, 2023

Today's Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Daily Lectionary: Number 27:12-23, Luke 23:26-56

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 2:21

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In Exodus 20:24, when God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle, He promised, "In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and I will bless you." With God's name comes His peace, presence, and promise. It was true for Israel in the tabernacle. And it is still true for you in the true and greater tabernacle not made with human hands, Jesus, the Word made flesh who dwelt among us, who literally tabernacled among us.

Now wonder the Hosanna crowds rejoiced! Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Not only does Jesus bring the peace, presence, and promise of God, but as true God and true Man, Jesus is God's peace, presence, and promise.

This is what St. Peter preaches to the crowds gathered at that first Pentecost. The rushing wind. The tongues of fire. Speaking the good news of Jesus crucified and risen in the native languages of people gathered. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Church. It's all part of God's plan to give and reveal the saving Name of His Son Jesus once again, this time on and in the Church for the life of the world.

In the Church, once again, God's name is given. God causes his name to be remembered, to be present, and to bless His people once more. You are baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You live in this faith in the name of Jesus who promises to be with you always. You hear, read, mark, learn, and confess His name in the Scriptures. You are absolved of all your sin in the same holy name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Divine Service you are gathered by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who prepares the table of the altar for you with Jesus' body and blood. And there in His and by His word, Jesus peace, presence, and promise is with you as you gather in His name. Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord and call upon His holy name! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Gracious Lord, we give thanks that in Holy Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. Grant that we who are baptized into Your holy name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, would continue to live in the faith into which we have been called, and boldly confess Your name; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday - the First Week of Pentecost

JUNE 3, 2023

Today's Reading: Introit for Holy Trinity Ps. 16:8; antiphon: Liturgical Text

Daily Lectionary: Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27, Luke 24:1-27

Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided unity; let us give glory to Him because He has shown us mercy. Liturgical Text

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. I don't know about you, but I enjoy a good mystery. Solving a riddle. Reading Sherlock Holmes. Watching Scooby Doo, Shaggy, and the gang unmask another dastardly villain.

Tomorrow on Trinity Sunday we celebrate one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith, the Holy Trinity.

Tomorrow we join the Scriptures in celebrating not so much an event, like Jesus' birth at Christmas or His resurrection at Easter, but God's revelation of himself. That God is Three in One and One in Three. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. A singular plurality and a plural singularity.

Tomorrow we celebrate not a when, but a who. Today we rejoice in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. That...We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.

Tomorrow is Trinity Sunday, and there's a mystery afoot. Ultimately, however, this mystery of the Holy Trinity isn't a riddle to unpack, a puzzle to solve, or even a question we can fully answer, much less understand. Rather, the Holy Trinity is revealed in Scripture that we believe, teach, and confess.

As we give thanks and praise the Holy Trinity, we also give thanks and praise that the God who is beyond our understanding reveals himself in words we can hear and understand. The uncreated God comes to us by means of his creation revealing his saving love in simple words, plain water, ordinary bread and wine. The incomprehensible God becomes comprehensible for us as he accomplishes the most incomprehensible, yet gracious act of all, as he goes to the cross to die for you.

Yes, indeed, we confess a great mystery in the Holy Trinity. But it is a gracious mystery from our good and gracious Lord. Blessed be the Holy Trinity and the undivided unity; let us give glory to Him because He has shown us mercy. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, You have given us grace to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity by the confession of a true faith and to worship the Unity in the power of the Divine Majesty. Keep us steadfast in this faith and defend us from all adversities; for You, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Trinity Sunday)



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