

# TABLE TALK

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...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



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## Lent 2017



If this were Advent, you would have seen reminders of it everywhere - "*Jesus is the reason for the season.*" Because the celebration of Christmas, as a remembrance of Christ's birth, has become entangled with the secular celebration, many people need constant reminders to refocus on Him and not on gifts or food, our loved ones or ourselves.

But this is Lent, and Lent is for true believers. There is no secular equivalent for Lent and no secular distraction for Lent. It is a time of reflection and preparation. In recent times, many Christians observing Lent have elected to "give up" something as part of their personal holy preparation. Too often, it seems this *sacrifice* has been done in public and has resulted in giving others an opportunity to scrutinize or even admire our religious self-control. When this happens, it's time to remind everyone that this isn't about me, and I'm not doing this for you. Even in Lent, "*Jesus is the reason for the season.*"

Jesus is never out of season.

Winter, spring, summer, or fall, we need Him! Whether it's warm and spring flowers are blooming or the cold winter winds are blowing, we need Him. When it's hot and humid and when the trees are shedding their leaves, we need Him. Every day and through every season, we need Jesus' grace and mercy - His forgiveness and His sacrificial gift of salvation. Jesus is the reason for EVERY season!

Tim Young Eagle, Executive Director

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## TRADITION

- the reason we believe as we believe, the way we do as we do -

by Rev. Ralph Spears

*Tradition:* was the song of Teyve the milk man of “*Fiddler On The Roof*” fame who explained the great background of his culture and substance of his active Faith as TRADITION!

This poor peasant, Teyve dreamed about what he could do if he were a rich man. Why, he could debate the finer points of the Torah, the Law with the great Rabbis of the ages; or even afford to build a house for his family with two staircases – one only going up and another only going down. Scholem Asch the great Yiddish (Jewish) story teller alluded to the supreme importance of the Torah to the Faith of Israel as we would value the importance of an intimate knowledge of the Gospel. According to Teyve it was all based on the “Good Book”. Even those 'stairs' would separate those who had become 'pure' through the seasonal rite of purification, from those who had not yet been purified. Balancing all of these life traditions was as tricky as a Fiddler teetering on a steep roof as he played. Hence the curious title of Asch's quaint story, later a Broadway Musical hit, set in Russia during the program's of the early Twentieth century (which saw the violent displacement of many orthodox Jewish peasants.)

With the approach of Lent, we are reminded of Christian Tradition as well with our own hymns and chants playing softly in the background. Jewish tradition included the commentary on the Torah by the enlightened rabbis from age to age so collected, called the Mishna, a book now thicker than the Hebrew Bible, while ours is the commentary of the Early and Late Church Fathers as successors to the Apostles on the Gospels and Epistles with historical notes included,

As time has passed traditions have been established and solidified within

the great Tradition of the Christian Church. This Tradition connects us with all those Saints who have come marching in, arrayed in robes made white from the blood of the Lamb.

But to get there we, like they, pass through “great tribulation” identifying with “Our Lord”, the “Lamb of God” who is the “Way the Truth and the Life,” thereby “saving us from our Sin and our sins” and becoming established as the “Great Light”, the Light of the world!”

By the way, in the last two sentences we have borrowed from Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, Revelation, a song and several hymns. That is TRADITION !

Those Saints who are in the parade (please check out the *Te Deum Laudamus* 4th Cent. And also the 4th Century hymn “*Thee We Adore, Eternal Lord.*”) just behind the Apostles along with the prophets and disciples, are a living Mishna; men and women of every age who endured shame, torture and death as Our Lord mentioned (Matt. 5). In fact many such are known only to God along with the many others who are listed in *The Book of Martyrs* including far too many recently beheaded by ISIS. Here we find at the very end of John's Gospel (chap. 21 ) that Jesus in some detail, tells Peter how he (Peter) would meet his end; which strengthened him when his time came in Rome some three decades later. (By Church tradition Peter was crucified upside down on Vatican hill.)

Some of the would be church fathers followed their own inventions rather than basic traditions which had been in line with the witness of the Apostles. These were instead, counted as heretics. This often had to do with the nature of Jesus Christ who was both human and divine as the Gospels clearly portrayed Him. [The right minded Faithful true to the Creeds easily made correction.] The

Apostles' Creed, a mere 105 words, provided an easy 'eye chart' for correct and orthodox reference. And if you were concerned about the substance of which the Father and the Son are made as they were in the 4th Century, then the Nicene Creed was just the ticket for you. The Nicene doubled the number of words of the Apostles Creed with a bit more description but not really that much more substance in 327 A.D at the Council of Nicea.

When we read the History of the Church during, for instance, the 4th through the 7th centuries, it is a wonder amid the contentious battles and heresies, that the beloved Church of Jesus Christ survived. Probably because it was the Church of Jesus Christ.

To digress a bit more, the Apostles, that is the twelve (thirteen or fourteen depending on whether you include Paul and James the Just, brother of Jesus and perhaps even Luke) did not 'write' the Apostles' Creed but they knew first hand all parts of it to be Gospel. In fact they had bet their lives on it by shedding their blood for each part of it, in Jerusalem and in many nations on the compass points with Jerusalem as the center.

Martin Luther, in his sermon for Trinity Sunday, 1535, said it well;

*This confession of faith we did not make or invent, neither did the fathers of the church before us. But as a bee gathers honey from many a beautiful and delicious flower, so this creed has been collected in commendable brevity from the books of the beloved prophets and apostles, that is, from the entire Holy Scriptures, for children and plain Christians. It is, therefore, justly called the Apostles' Creed; for it is so arranged that for brevity and clarity it could not have been composed better or more acceptably. From times of old it has continued in the church as either a composition of the apostles themselves or at least a compilation drawn from their writings and sermons by their best disciples.*

By the time of the Council of Nicea, thriving Churches were already manned by the fifth to seventh generation by Bishops and pastors who had contended with strong critics and non-believers succeeding the original Apostles whose very bones lay beneath the altars of those venerated sites.

As the 'one chaptered' Epistle of Jude (circa 75 to 80 A.D.) said, all Christians were invited to "contend for The Faith which was once and for all delivered to the Saints". So saying, Jude identified as the brother of James (the one who by tradition was in turn brother to Jesus) briefly but vigorously went back to Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, to demonstrate how that contention continues through the great figure heads of the Old Testament to his time, and continuing on even to our day, with the evil opposition. Our Tradition is a living active history of 'contention' that is 'worth it' and important as Jude reminds. He even mentions the curious observation that Archangel Michael contended with the devil over the body of Moses defeating him with the judgement "The Lord rebuke you!", certainly a tradition apparently well known then that we know now only through this passage from Jude.

This is but one witness to the importance of many traditions found within Tradition! Each small tidbit then is like small flecks of gold to be remembered and cherished, and cross referenced where possible.

[There was one 20th cent. theologian/philosopher who speculated that man's encounter with the Infinite founded the culture which (culture) then was largely responsible for formulating its religion. [ See Tillich, *The Theology of Culture*]

Here might we digress further with the story from an ancient Scottish Cathedral where there was a tradition of bowing before a back wall upon leaving the worship site. No one remembered why until during a modern renovation that wall was carefully cleaned and there was discovered a remarkable likeness of the face of Jesus. That face bore a close

resemblance to the face on the Shroud of Turin. Since it was thought that cathedral church had been founded by medieval knights who had a secret connection with the Shroud, and had been persecuted therefore, they had likely white washed it over during days of severe persecution. But the tradition of reverencing the wall had continued.

We are in touch with a tradition however, which is much older than that and just as remarkable! That tradition is traceable all of the way back through the ages and centuries to the Liturgy of St. James of Jerusalem in the early 4th Century (perhaps even back to the late 2nd Century A.D). Yes, it is the Liturgy which became the Liturgy of the Roman Church later revised back to more of the original form by Martin Luther and used in both Latin and German as the Lutheran Liturgy. (They had thrown in an extra Kyrie or two along with other spare parts liturgically which were unnecessary, even for reasons rather humorous as it played out through the early middle ages.) By the way the Liturgy of St. James is still in use by the Syrian Orthodox Church.

As we celebrate our historic liturgy as endorsed by our LMS - it is bound together by Psalmic fragments and usually at least one complete three-thousand year old Psalm, the tried and true liturgical formula of Collect, Introit, Kyrie and Gloria etc. mentioned previously in use for the past two thousand years. We have our Gospel, the source and foundation stone of hymns and anthems, and wonder how Worship can take place without this marvelous line up. Often when our people come back from visiting other churches on vacation which do not use any manner of the hallowed formula, they comment that it did "not seem as though we had even been in church!"

Now why is this? Tradition! The best of Tradition. The collective wisdom and practice of many centuries that has substance and life. Because it has life, it speaks to us and conveys reality and strength. The historic lit-

urgy moves gracefully and logically to the Lessons appointed for the day and then the Gospel, the acts of Christ, the central point of Worship. Next comes the Sermon, often following an appropriate hymn on that theme, the speaking to the ministry of Jesus and His Apostles and His interaction with people as portrayed by the Gospel for that day.

The Church Year Calendar binds it all together in a organized manner with the seasons oriented around the pre-seasons of The Nativity and The Resurrection of Our Lord. It all makes sense and holds together in a rhythm giving purpose.

By tradition Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness following His baptism just before his tempting, so we have the 40 day Lenten preparation of penitence before the coming of Resurrection Day (although fewer days of preparation had been practiced in previous centuries). Likewise the early witness of the Biblical Prophets to the promise of the coming of the Son of God sometimes seems hardly enough to prepare for Christmas which was some 2,500 years after Moses made mention of his successor to come.

The Church Year is simply amazing! After years of observation, the Church year seems to explain the nuanced events throughout the calendar year in a manner most interesting. It seems to define (or be defined) by the rhythm. Christmas, of course, is the most obvious. There is a palpable magic on that Eve even to hardened adult observers. Holy week is close behind, especially Good Friday afternoon and the minor events of the day, and then, of course, Easter Sunday! In the Cincinnati slums there was a 'rider of the rails' who invariably showed up on Epiphany at First Lutheran Church. He could not understand why the Pastor called him Caspar which was fitting, and 'old' Caspar didn't seem to have a reason to show up on Epiphany - but he did. He would sneak in and Pastor would find him sleeping on a pew.

And then, on the Good Friday af-  
(*Tradition* - concluded on page 11)

## Observing Lent, and Repentance

by Rev. John Erickson

Lent is an annual time (forty weekdays) of fasting, moderation, and self-denial preceding Easter. The days of Lent commemorate our Lord's time of fasting in the wilderness.

There are those who believe that by giving up something for this season is a way whereby they might attain God's blessing. Others understand the season as a time for special reflection and preparation before the celebration of one of the most important events in the life of our Lord, i.e., His resurrection from the dead. Paul speaks clearly on this, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15:13-14 esv).

The latter has been my understanding of Lent. For one thing nothing we can do (i.e., fasting, giving up this or that, spending more time in prayer, spending more time reading the Bible or devotionals) can in any way earn us God's blessing [grace is the free gift of God to us (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 2:8)]. But there is much to be gained by reflection on what God had done and continues to do for us in Christ Jesus, and on how we might grow in our relationship with Him, in love for Him, in obedience to His will, and in how we might live [as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16)] as His people in this world.

Central to all this, is repentance. I have been guilty of it, and I do not believe that I am alone in this, that repentance is far to often thought of only in terms of a as a turning from this or that particular sin or habit that I have become aware of as not God pleasing. Some put it this way, "Repentance is the guilt you feel when you do something wrong - and the steps you take to make up for it, like a sincere apology." Most would think,

if it is genuine, that it should include feelings of sadness, or sorrow, or regret, over that which one has come to understand as wrong. I found this definition for repentance. "Deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like." And it should involve a decision to try to avoid that particular sin and to "determine to be a better person by carefully following the rules of one's faith."

Repentance is important. It is central to the Christian faith, i.e., to salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. When John the Baptist came on the scene to make way for the coming of the long promised Messiah, he announced, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Then when Jesus himself began His ministry He also called for repentance, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Later, when during his ministry Jesus sent out the twelve disciples on their own preaching mission, we read how "they went out and proclaimed that people should repent" (Mark 6:12).

Jesus spoke of the importance of repentance. "I tell you... unless you repent, you will all... perish" (Luke 13:3). In Acts 17:30, Paul explains to the people in Athens, that "now [God] commands all people everywhere to repent." Peter in his great Pentecost sermon explained to his hearers, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). In chapter 3 of Acts, Peter urged the people, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord..." (v. 19).

But what is it to repent? The commentator Albert Barnes addresses the issue in his commentary on Matthew

3, verse 2. "Repentance implies sorrow for past offences, (2 Cor. 7:10) a deep sense of the evil of sin as committed against God, (Ps. 51:4) and a full purpose to turn from transgression and to lead a holy life. A true penitent has sorrow for sin, not only because it is ruinous to his soul, but chiefly because it is an offence against God, and is that abominable thing which He hates, Jer 44:4. It is produced by seeing the great danger and misery to which it exposes us; by seeing the justness and holiness of God, (Job 42:6) and by seeing that our sins have been committed against Christ, and were the cause of his death, Zech. 12:10; Luke 22:61,62."

But there is more. In Matthew 3:8 and 9, we find John the Baptist exhorting the people that their repentance is to be of a type that bears fruit. Barnes continues, "That is, the proper fruits of reformation, the proper evidence that you are sincere. Do not bring your cunning and dissimulation to this work; carry not your hypocrisy into your professed repentance; but evince your sincerity by forsaking sins, and thus give evidence that this crowding to Jordan is not some act of dissimulation." The Baptist goes on to inform his hearers that when it comes to a right relationship with God... more is required than that they are of the bloodline of their father Abraham.

John and Jesus both called people to repent. Why? Because "the kingdom of God is at hand." And How? By "believing in the gospel." This requires a radical change of direction in one's life. Not a mere reform in one area of one's life (as significant as that might be), but a radical and complete change. The focus of one's life was primarily concerning the things of this world, and now, making a radical change of direction, one's primary concern must be on things of the kingdom of God. One's life was governed by the philosophies and principles of this world, and now

making a radical change, one's life focus is on the gospel of the kingdom of God and on a new life in Christ Jesus.

And this radical change is such that it will, of necessity, bear fruit in that person's life; fruit that is visible. One of the best examples of this radical change resulting in the bearing of fruit is that of Zacchaeus (see Luke 19:1ff). Another is that of Paul from persecutor of the church to one of its main proponents.

We might consider also the expert in the law who questioned Jesus as to what he must do to enter eternal life. After informing Jesus how he loved God and neighbor, Jesus told him to actually *do so*, and he would live. The actual bearing the fruit of love was a necessary proof of love, not just lip service to it.

As we reflect on our relationship with our Lord, on all He has made possible for us by means of His life, death, and resurrection, let us also reflect on all that is included in our Lord's call for repentance. Our 'following' of our Lord must needs be more than mere lip service. It must be more than that I was born into a Christian family; that I am a church member, or even a regular church member; that I attend a Bible study; I don't curse or swear; I don't cheat; I'm a good person. Things like this are works - but salvation is not of works.

Rather we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). And if we have truly repented of sin and our past, and turned to the gospel with a desire to live our life to the glory of God (remember, "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Cor. 5:17), then that individual having been made new... will of necessity... bear fruit.

To us, works and fruit may look the same. But they are quite different. *Fruit*, what James calls *works*, follows faith and proves faith's genuineness (see James 2:14ff).

## Do Not Be Afraid; He Has Risen!

by Rev. Dennis G. Schlossin

*But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. Lo, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. (Matthew 28:5-8)*

In the far north where the night of winter is six months long, the people wait anxiously for the sun to again appear over the horizon. It is said that when the night of winter is almost spent, they put on their best clothes and climb to the highest elevation to wait for the light of the sun. And when the first shaft of light appears, they clap their hands and sing and shout to each other, "The sun is coming to us again!" They rejoice that the long night of winter is conquered by the rising sun.

Every year on Easter Sunday, we Christians stand, as it were, upon the mountain top, and from the hearts and lips of millions from the humid heat of the equator to the frozen regions of the Arctic comes the joyous song: "Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia!"

The night of Good Friday is ended—the tomb in Joseph's garden is empty — the darkness of death is conquered. The living Christ says to us, "I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore!"

It is said that Christianity is the only religion in the world whose hymnbooks are filled with hymns of praise and joy. We come to our house of worship with joy. Why? Because we have all met with good fortune, and because we have experienced no sorrows or trials? The answer is, "NO!" We rejoice because we have a risen and living Lord who conquered those old enemies of sin, death, and the devil for us, and who conquers our fears and sorrows by His promises and His love.

We have a Savior whose lifeless body was laid into a tomb, but death was not able to hold Him. An angel from glory proclaimed this Gospel to those women who came to the tomb early on Easter morning. Our theme will be his words: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN!

Sorrow and fear filled the hearts of those women who had come to finish anointing the body of Jesus. Why shouldn't they be sorrowful? The Master was dead. Why shouldn't they be fearful? He who had been the center of all their hopes had been defeated. Death had claimed Him. They had entertained such high hopes that He would establish the great kingdom of the Messiah, but all their hopes died with Him when He was laid into the tomb. What was there to hope for now?

Of course, they would remember Him. Time could never erase from their memory those happy days when He had walked among the people — teaching in matchless parables — healing the afflicted — befriending the friendless — and loving His own to the end. Yes, they would remember Him as the people had remembered Abraham and Moses.

But joy had fled from their hearts. They were sorrowful because they had sustained a great loss. That's why we weep at the graves of loved ones. We have sustained a loss, and there is an aching void in the heart.

And they were afraid. They feared the world in which they lived — a world where goodness and

kindness and love had been crucified — a world where their very religious leaders had crushed truth to the ground, and practiced lying, hypocrisy, hatred, and murder — a world where it seemed that love had been conquered by hate — a world where it seemed that might had triumphed over right.

So these women were sorrowful and fearful as they went to the tomb. But God met their need. He sent an angel to proclaim the incredible fact that death had been swallowed up in victory. The angel did not try to reason the matter out with these women — he merely proclaimed the fact.



"DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay."

They looked, and the tomb was empty. They heard this tremendous fact with their ears, but it was so great that they were startled. The angel said, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead." It still seemed almost too good and too incredible to be true, but they believed, and we read: "They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples."

It was not a difficult and burden-

some errand on which the angel sent them. It's easy to tell good news. It's easy to speak when the heart is filled with joy. Then we can hardly wait to share the good news with others.

So it was that these women who had come with such a heavy burden upon their hearts could not but speak of what they had seen and heard when the burden was lifted. The greatest fact ever revealed to this world by a gracious God had been revealed to these women. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, had died for our sin, but rose again for our justification.

DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! This is the Easter Gospel we proclaim these twenty centuries later. This is the Gospel which can triumph over our tears and our fears if we believe it.

One thing is certain, and that is this — if Christ had remained in the tomb, we would not be here today. There would be no Christian church in the world today. There would never have been a Gospel of redemption from sin and death to proclaim to a perishing world.

Then no matter how great Jesus would have been in His day, we would not now be worshipping Him. If you would remember the world's immortals, you might walk through Westminster Abbey in London. You might think of the great kings and queens who ruled, and of the great men and women of letters. You might read books they have written. But in Westminster Abbey, you are walking in the chambers of death. They are all dust and ashes.

You might go to a church in Vienna where on the basement floor are 138 caskets, every one containing the dust of death. There is Franz Joseph, who ruled Austria for 68 years. There is Maria Theresa, and there at one time was the remains of Napoleon's only son. There is the casket of Francis Ferdinand, whose assassination triggered World War I.

There was a time when the names



of these men brought a chill of fear into the hearts of millions. People cringed before them. But ultimately death claimed them, and laid them into the dust. They are remembered but they are not worshipped. They are remembered, but they are not feared. At best, they were only mortal men and women — just dust and ashes and they will not rise from their graves to put their heels upon the necks of others to oppress them.

Not so with our Christ. DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! We have a living Lord. But He is not a tyrant, before whom we cringe in fear. He is our Savior who redeemed us, and who loves us.

The churches we build are not monuments to a great man who once lived, but then was claimed forever by death. Our churches are temples where we assemble to worship a living Savior, and to hear His words of eternal life. This Jesus is not immortalized by brick and mortar. He lives in the hearts of those who believe in Him, and His love flows through them to needy sinners.

"TIME" magazine once had a picture of the Lutheran bishop Otto Dibelius on the cover. Beside his picture, there loomed in the background a large cross. At the foot of the cross lay the broken fragments of the swastika — the emblem of Hitler's brutal ruthless power.

Behind the cross was red octopus, threatening to remove the cross from its central place in human history. But the cross still stands, in spite of Hitler, and neither has the hammer and sickle destroyed it. In fact, this emblem of atheism and horrible persecution of Christians has been in retreat and is very shaky.

Bishop Dibelius said: "Christ has not made life easy for me. On the contrary, it would have been more comfortable many times to be without Him than to be with Him. He exacts a great deal when He says, 'Take up your cross and follow

Me.'" Bishop Dibelius was one to know. He did not spend time in a Nazi concentration camp because he remembered that there had once been a Jew who had been crucified and buried. He endured hardships because this Jew had risen from the dead, and is the living Lord of heaven and earth. Those who live for Christ live for Him because they believe that He who died for their sins did really rise from the dead.

The swastika is broken. The hammer and sickle are breaking up. All earthly kingdoms do, sooner or later, because of the destructive power of sin within. But the cross of Christ will endure through all ages. As the angel said before His birth: "Of His kingdom there will be no end."

The little gods of Russia — Lenin and Stalin — are dead. The millions who marched past their coffins knew they were dead, and they knew that these rulers would not rise again in power to crush others under their heel. They had their little day, and returned to dust.

But Jesus, who gave His life on the cross on Good Friday, rose again on Easter. The kingdom He founded still lives in the hearts of millions, for it is a spiritual kingdom, built on love — not on worldly power and oppression. In all nations, believing hearts rejoice in the words of the Easter angel: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN!

The women went to the tomb, seeking a dead body to anoint. They did not find it. We came this Easter morning, seeking a living Lord. We do find Him. He is here, for He said, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Lo, I am with you always, to the close the age."

When Moses died, Scripture tells us that God buried him, and no one ever found his grave. When Jacob died in Egypt, his sons carried his body back and buried it in the Promised Land. When David died, they buried his body in a tomb in Jerusa-

lem.

These men left their imprint on history, but no one seeks out their tombs to worship there. Their bodies have returned to the dust.

But God did not permit His Holy One to see corruption, as the Psalmist had foretold. He raised His son from the dead. That's why it's Easter in the world today. That's why our hearts are glad. We have a living Savior, and we believe the words of the heavenly messenger God sent that morning: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN!

It is not Easter because of any fashion parade. Fashions continue to change, but ours is a changeless and timeless joy because our living Savior is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

There should be no sorrow so deep and no night so dark that it can ever conquer our Easter joy. Death has been swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the faith that overcomes our fears. DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN!

Job in the midst of life's sorrows and pains — and in the face of friends who accused him of hypocrisy — could make his appeal to a living Lord and say, "But I know that my Redeemer lives!" Shall we who stood beneath the cross and went to the empty tomb say less? Can't we say in greater triumph: "I know that my Redeemer lives; what comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my everlasting Head"?

How we need to hear again the words of the angel: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! Our generation is one of many fears, because it is a generation of little faith. Even theologians have questioned the atonement of the cross and the resurrection of Christ.

Someone said that the nations have their patron saints. The saint of the English is "St. George" — the saint of the Irish is "St. Patrick" — but the saint of many Americans is "St. Vitus." They tremble and quake. Why? Because they have no assurance of forgiveness and eternal life.

There are dangers, certainly — dangers to body and to soul — but the angel said: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! We need to hear Jesus say to us, "Fear not; I have overcome the world."

So many say — or at least feel — "I'm afraid of life. It is so full of uncertainties, and no one knows what tomorrow may bring. I feel so alone." They need the Easter assurance: DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN. Jesus would say to every person on earth: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God — believe also in Me."

There are those who feel: "I'm afraid of my sin — that it will find me out. There are stains and ugly blemishes in my past, and I cannot wash them away." Don't we have a living Savior who atoned for all sin who says to the penitent believer, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you"?

There is the fear of death, and death certainly will come — sooner or later. But we need not be terrified of it. There is One who has gone on ahead of us — who walked through the dark valley of the shadow of death — and He says to us: "DO NOT BE AFRAID; I HAVE RISEN. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Because I live, you will live also." As He was raised from the dead on Easter, so we and our loved ones who sleep in Him will be raised from the dead at the last day.

DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN! It is only our living and loving Lord who can give us victory over our fears. But we need to believe in Him and in His promises.

It is upon the living Christ that the church is built, and the powers of

death shall not prevail against it. Neither the bribe of hush money that was given to the guards at the tomb by the chief priests, nor even the power of the mighty Roman Empire with its bloody persecutions, could extinguish the light of this Easter faith.

And no power in this world of technology and science today can triumph over the Christian faith. We have that mighty living Lord who can and will save to the uttermost all who trust in Him.

We can go forth from this house

of worship and face life squarely and courageously. Didn't the angel say, "DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN?" He is the mighty Savior who is greater than anything we might have to face in life — the One who overcame sin, death, and the devil for us — the One with all authority in heaven and on earth — the One who loves us with everlasting love. Is it any wonder the angel would say also to us this morning: "DO NOT BE AFRAID; HE HAS RISEN!"?

Amen.

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*(Tradition - conclusion from page 4)*

ternoon observation 'hours', strangers would show up precisely when there was not a volunteer to cover that half hour. It 'happened' several times at Christ The King Lutheran Church in New Jersey.

Why is it that we do the things that we do? Because when we understand our Worship, that it is purposeful, therefore meaningful and live, we can do no other. There is the meaning built right into the event and we are touched and changed by its Grace, the living presence of God. On the other hand without the meaningful structure, without the history, without the Tradition, it satisfies only for the moment

An old pastor once said to me as I served an internship, that I would find that the Church year would become a living tradition of reference to measure life by. Indeed I have found this to be true over and again.

The greatest Tradition for Lutherans, is by far the Augsburg Confession within the body of Lutheran Confessions. Written largely by Philip Melancthon based on Luther's writings it was presented to Emperor Charles V at Augsburg for whom it was prepared on June 25th 1530 (a date arguably more important than October 31, 1517) for approval, but it was subsequently approved also by the other Emperors so that it spoke for (nearly) the whole body Luth-

eran. It was then boldly signed by them as that which they "believed, taught, and confessed".

Covering nearly thirty-five pages, the Confession was composed of eighteen sections plus a Conclusion. (Later an even longer Apology was added by the Reformers.)

These sections covered basic Biblical Christian teachings especially the first twelve of them while the remaining five sections dealt primarily with non-Biblical but relevant items such as the marriage of priests, the Mass, and Monastic vows.

Most of these are found also in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, the main teaching tool of the Lutheran Church. The Small Catechism has remained unchanged through many translations while the Roman catechism has been changed many times. Of course we are familiar with the subjects of the Trinity, the Sacraments, the Second Coming, Sin, the Church and free will.

We say that this is the best and most complete explication of Christianity and the Church. Explication is a word that means, at the same time, explanation and presentation. Tradition. Living tradition. Glorious tradition.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels". It guide us, directs us and comes to us, as Grace "by which we live, move and have our being!"

Table Talk  
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The LMS-USA is Lutheran Church body describing itself as *Biblical, Confessional, Evangelical, Liturgical and Congregational*. It is a 'Forum' in which there is an on going discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike. The LMS-USA meets annually for a Theological Conference and this publication, besides carrying news of the Ministerium and Synod, functions also as a vehicle for this continuing dialogue.

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