



ELCA World Hunger's
40 DAYS
of Giving
2017

A daily devotional resource with reflections on ELCA World Hunger

FOREWORD

As we gather on Ash Wednesday to begin the season of Lent, we pray:

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism that we may walk with and provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and, above all, that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (ELW, p. 254)

ELCA World Hunger is our church's response to hunger and poverty around the world and in our own communities. Formed in relationship, confident in God's abundance and promise and supported by your generosity, ELCA World Hunger creatively and courageously works toward a just world where all are fed.

This 40 Days of Giving resource connects our Lenten call to serve the neighbor and our 2017 commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, focusing on Martin Luther's vision for justice. It provides seven foundational stories of the faith for your reflection: from Jesus' temptation in the wilderness to his glorious resurrection, and in between, the familiar yet challenging stories of Jesus' encounters with men and women with questions and concerns like ours. These stories are supported by writings of Luther, selected hymn verses, poignant reflections, the Word of God in scripture, art and prayers for each week.

God bless your Lenten journey as you provide, pray, fast and find your treasure in Christ.

Wednesday, March 1, 2017

ASH WEDNESDAY

"God's reign intersects earthly life, transforming us and how we view the systems of this world. ... Economic life is intended to be a means through which God's purposes for humankind and creation are to be served. When this does not occur, as a church we cannot remain silent because of who and whose we are."

- ELCA, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All:
A Social Statement on Economic Life"

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Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

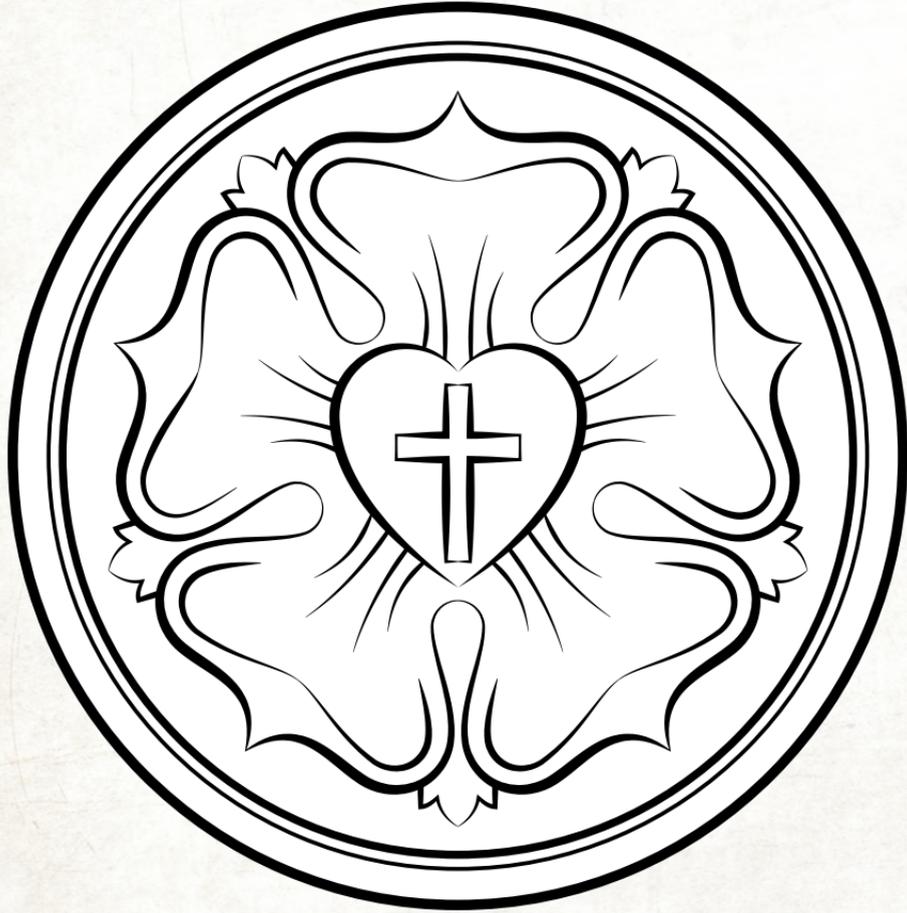
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

-Isaiah 58:6-9

Friday, March 3, 2017



Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, hunger be sated, and thirst be slaked; and that, with hope in your promise, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

adapted from ELW, p. 79

Sunday, March 5, 2017

Matthew 4:1-11 • The temptation of Jesus

Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 40 days and 40 nights in preparation and was famished. The devil came and tempted Jesus to use his power: to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger, to leap from the pinnacle of the temple to test God's saving grace, to worship the devil to gain all the realms of the world. Instead, Jesus banished the devil with faithfulness and Scripture: One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God; do not put the Lord your God to the test; worship the Lord your God, serve God alone.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

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Give us today our *daily bread*. What is this?

God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

What then does “daily bread” mean?

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, The Small Catechism, 1529

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

By your hand you feed your people, food of angels, heaven's bread.
For these gifts we did not labor, by your grace we have been fed.

Send us now with faith and courage to the hungry, lost, bereaved.
In our living and our dying, we become what we receive:

Christ's own body, blessed and broke, cup o'erflowing, life outpoured,
given as a living token of your world redeemed, restored.

ELW 469 By Your Hand You Feed Your People

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Wednesday, March 8, 2017

"By means of bread Jesus united matters of flesh and matters of spirit. Jesus fed both hungry multitudes and the hunger of the heart. Jesus demonstrated both the dawning of the kingdom as he sat at the table with sinners and instituted the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. For Jesus there was no division between body and spirit. What Jesus has brought together, however, we have rent asunder. How do we reunite body and spirit as we come together to eat bread in Jesus' name?"

– Craig Nesson, "Give Us This Day"

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Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us.

– 2 Corinthians 9:7-8, 11

Friday, March 10, 2017



Saturday, March 11, 2017

God of power and might, in the face of the temptations of the world, your strong word feeds us, upholds us, and frees us to worship only you. Nourish us with your strong word every day, so that being filled and inspired, we will work to share your abundance with all the world.

Amen.

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Sunday, March 12, 2017

John 3:1-17 • Nicodemus visits Jesus

Nicodemus had heard of Jesus' signs: turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana, cleansing the tables at the temple in Jerusalem, speaking of the temple's destruction, and promising to raise it up in three days.

As a Pharisee and leader of the Jewish people, Nicodemus brings his doubts and questions to Jesus at night: How can these things be?

There in the darkness, Jesus engages Nicodemus in conversation about the foundations of the faith: being born of water and Spirit, things earthly and things heavenly, Jesus on the cross giving eternal life. Their conversation includes the favorite verse of so many, "For God so loved the world ... "

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Monday, March 13, 2017

"Thus every human being on earth has two persons: one person for himself, with obligations to no one except God; and in addition, a secular person, according to which he has obligations to other people."

– Martin Luther, "Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount," 1532

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Tuesday, March 14, 2017

Once we were people afraid, lost in the night.
Then by your cross we were saved;
dead became living, life from your giving.

We are the presence of God; this is our call;
now to become bread and wine,
food for the hungry, life for the weary;
for to live with the Lord, we must die with the Lord.

ELW 500 Now We Remain

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"The primary setting in which Israel experienced and celebrated justice was her worship. Worship in Israel was not a setting preoccupied with the other world, or with sacrifices only, which is a distorted picture. No, justice and the advancement of justice and the proclamation of justice was the very function of worship. ... Worship in Israel ... had in its center the experience of the gift of God's justice and the proclamation of justice for the world and for Israel."

– Rolf Knierim in "Beyond Guilt" by George Johnson

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. ... Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

– Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11

Friday, March 17, 2017



Saturday, March 18, 2017

God of light and life, you meet us in the darkness of our worries and fears, providing hope for this life and the next. Send the wind of your Holy Spirit to blow through us. Lift the Son over the cares and concerns of our days. Empower us to live each day for the sake of the world God loves.

Amen.

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Sunday, March 19, 2017

John 4:5-42 • Jesus and the woman of Samaria

Jesus travels through Samaria, a place most Jewish people would've avoided, and stopping at a well at mid-day, a time most Jewish people would've avoided, meets a woman. By nationality, gender and marital status, she is an outsider to society and to many, a person of low worth. We are not even told her name.

Yet Jesus spends quite some time with her. They speak of the water at the well and of living water, of the truth of her life and the truth of worshiping God in spirit and truth. She bares her soul to him, and he reveals his identity to her.

This interaction is so extraordinary that it sends the woman forth saying, "Come and see," and many Samaritans believe.

"God says, 'I do not choose to come to you in my majesty and in the company of angels but in the guise of a poor beggar asking for bread. ... I want you to know that I am the one who is suffering hunger and thirst.'"

- Martin Luther, sermon on the Gospel of St. John, 1540

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, we are trav'lers on the road;
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.

ELW 659 Will You Let Me Be Your Servant

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"The 'truth' announced by the gospel is a historical fact: the fact that the kingdom has arrived, the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. And if the kingdom consists in justice being done to all the poor of the earth, then this face is the most commanding and urgent imperative imaginable. There is not the slightest difference between love of neighbor and New Testament faith – provided we take this love of neighbor with unreserved seriousness."

– José Porfirio Miranda, "Being and the Messiah"

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

– Micah 6:6-8

Friday, March 24, 2017



Saturday, March 25, 2017

God of abundance, you provide living water in holy baptism that we might have the fullness of your grace and mercy. Grant that we, your church, might provide clean, safe water for all living in need – for families, livestock and crops – that none may hunger or thirst.

Amen.

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Sunday, March 26, 2017

John 9:1-41 • A man born blind receives sight

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. In those times, illness and disability were sometimes attributed to sin. Jesus proclaimed instead that the man was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him, saying, "I am the light of the world." Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud on the man's eyes, sending him to wash and to be healed.

This transforming miracle is confusing, perhaps even threatening, for many. Preceding and following it are nearly 40 verses detailing the controversy. The nameless man, who previously had to beg for a living, is at the center of a near mob of disciples, Pharisees, Judeans, even his own parents, divided, afraid, blaming. Still, he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Jesus.

"[St. Paul] lays down this rule for a Christian life, that we should devote all our works to the welfare of others [such that] I will give myself, as a sort of Christ, to my neighbor, as Christ has given himself to me; and will do nothing in this life, except what I see is needful, advantageous, and wholesome for my neighbor, since by faith I abound in all good things in Christ."

– Martin Luther, "Freedom of a Christian," 1520

Praise the One who breaks the darkness with a liberating light;
praise the One who frees the pris'ners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the gospel, healing ev'ry dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands with the very bread of peace.

Praise the One who blessed the children with a strong yet gentle word;
praise the One who drove out demons with a piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water to the desert's burning sand;
from this well comes living water quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

ELW 843 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

"A shoemaker, a smith, a farmer, each has their occupation and work; and yet, at the same time, all are eligible to act as priests and bishops. Every one of them in their occupation or handicraft ought to benefit and serve every other in such a way that the various trades are all directed to the best advantage of the community, and promote the well-being of body and soul, just as all organs of the body serve each other. "

– Martin Luther, "An Appeal to the Ruling Class," 1520

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

– Galatians 5:6, 13-14

Friday, March 31, 2017



Robbin Zsenhew Stewart 2016

Saturday, April 1, 2017

God of healing, with the dust of the earth you open our eyes and transform our faith. Stretch out your healing hand. Turn our blindness into sight that we might live with our hands open – open to receive your abundance and open to share with neighbors near and far.

Amen.

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Sunday, April 2, 2017

John 11:1-45 • Jesus raises Lazarus to life

Lazarus of Bethany, beloved by Jesus, brother to Mary and Martha, was ill. Jesus did not immediately respond to the summons to come, nor did he listen to the disciples' pleas to stay in safety. Jesus spoke of Lazarus' illness and death as "for God's glory" and "so that you may believe."

Foreshadowing the cross and empty tomb, Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

Weeping, Jesus ordered the stone removed, prayed for the sake of the crowd, and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" When the dead man came out of the tomb, Jesus said to the Judeans, "Unbind him, and let him go."

"[A] Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor."

- Martin Luther, "Freedom of a Christian," 1520

God invites all the poor and hungry to the banquet of justice and good where the harvest will not be hoarded so that no one will lack for food. Let us go now to the banquet, to the feast of the universe. The table's set and a place is waiting; come ev'ryone with your gifts to share.

Dios invita a todos los pobres a esta mesa común por la fe, donde no hay acaparadores y a nadie le falta el conqué. Vamos todos al banquete, a la mesa de la creación; cada cual con su taburete; tiene un puesto y una misión.

ELW 523 Let Us Go Now to the Banquet (*Vamos todos al banquete*)

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

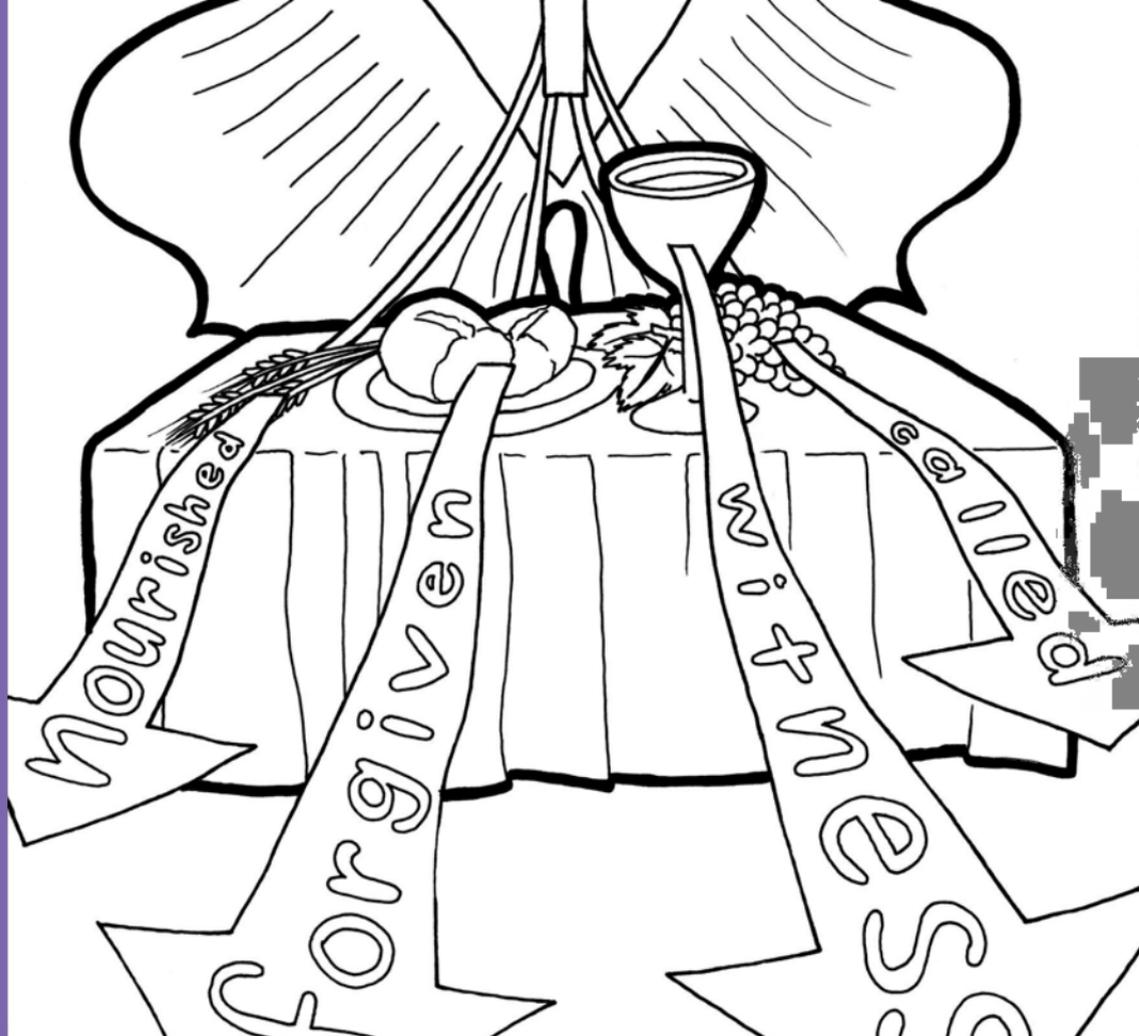
As we are created by God in and for community, so does the grace of God create among God's people a community united by the cross of Christ. The cross subverts all worldly notions of merit, power and success. It is a powerful revelation of God's solidarity with suffering humanity that upends and unsettles our presumptions. It is in and through the crucified Christ that we as Lutherans understand God and our witness to the world, for "true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ. ... It does one no good to recognize God in divine glory and majesty, unless one recognizes God in the humility and shame of the cross." (Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," 1518)

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For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship God day and night within God's temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

– Revelation 7:15-17

Friday, April 7, 2017



Saturday, April 8, 2017

God of new life, you show your glory to all who believe. When we weep in the face of sin and death, you weep with us and call out, "Take away the stone" and "Come out!" As you invite us into new life in you, help us live that new life working toward a world of justice where all are fed.

Amen.

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Sunday, April 9, 2017

Matthew 26:14-27:66 • Sunday of the Passion

The story is at first so familiar: Judas bargaining with the chief priests; the disciples preparing for the Passover meal; Jesus taking his place with the twelve, saying, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me;" Jesus sharing his body and his blood; Peter assuring Jesus he will not deny him; Jesus praying in the garden.

And then so very disturbing: the betrayal, the swords, the desertion, the spitting and striking, the courtyard and cock crow, the accusing of Jesus and releasing of Barabbus, the crown of thorns and cross, the darkness and sour wine, Jesus' loud cry and last breath, the curtain of the temple and the centurion, the clean cloth and new tomb.

And at last, at least for today: the sealed stone.

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"If you find yourself in a work by which you accomplish something good for God, or the holy, or yourself, but not for your neighbor alone, then you should know that that work is not a good work. For each one ought to live, speak, act, hear, suffer, and die in love and service for another, even for one's enemies ... so that one's hand, mouth, eye, foot, heart and desire is for others; these are Christian works, good in nature."

– Martin Luther, sermon on the First Sunday in Advent, 1522

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

Great God, in Christ, you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right, or claim,
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

ELW 358 Great God, Your Love Has Called Us

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Wednesday, April 12, 2017

"Jesus goes to his death with clarity and confidence, faithful to God to the end and treating his death as an expression of service to his friends. Paraphrasing Micah 6:8, we can say that Jesus saw with clarity right to the end what God demands of every human being: 'you must go on doing justice and loving tenderly.' He also saw with clarity that we must continue 'humbly' walking with God in history."

– Jon Sobrino, "Jesus the Liberator: A Historical Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth"

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Thursday, April 13, 2017

MAUNDY THURSDAY

"Here your heart must go out in love and learn that [Holy Communion] is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. ... For the sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that he is made one with all others."

– Martin Luther, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods," 1519

Friday, April 14, 2017

GOOD FRIDAY

"If we cannot look to the church to decry poverty, neither can we look to it to witness to Christ. Christ is not in that church. Christ is in the streets. The crucifixion of Christ is not only two thousand years ago; it is every day. It is the thorn and scandal of racism, of violence, of hunger, of homophobia, of patriarchy as these mutilate and murder souls who were created to be kingdoms where Christ could dwell."

– Wendy Farley, "Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation"

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Saturday, April 15, 2017

Holy God, on this holy night, in your holy light, we see the story of our life in you: The earth is your perfect creation; we are saved in the ark during the flood; we are granted a reprieve from sacrifice; we escape the enemy army; we are enlivened by spring rains; we are instructed by Woman Wisdom; we are given a new heart; our bones are brought back to life; we enjoy a homeland; swallowed by the fish, we do not drown but are coughed up on dry ground; we wear party clothes; thrown into a furnace, we emerge untouched by the fire; we are risen with Christ, and although we do mistake Christ for the gardener, he appears to us and enlivens our faith. Send us forth, holy God, to be your light in the world.

Amen.

(Images from Sundays and Seasons, p. 154, Images in the Readings)

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Sunday, April 16, 2017

EASTER SUNDAY

Matthew 28:1-10 • Resurrection of our Lord

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

The appearance of the angel was like lightning, and its clothing white as snow. For fear of the angel the guards shook and became as if dead. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

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SOURCES

Art for March 10 and March 24 courtesy of Mary Button

Art for March 31 and April 7 courtesy of Robbin Isenhour

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