

The Road to Emmaus

Vol. 17, No. 8–9 Martyrs' Tide (Aug–Sept) 2010

From the Commemoration of St. Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr, on the 10th of August, until the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels at the end of September, the liturgical year proceeds in the time and tide of the holy martyrs. The Church of the Holy Triune God, the Bride of Christ the Crucified, lives from the preaching and teaching of His Holy Apostles; and she lives in, with and under His Holy Cross. His disciples in every age and every place are given to take up that Cross and follow Him, offering up their bodies and lives as a sacrifice of repentant faith. We fear not those who are able to hurt the body but cannot harm the soul; we rather fear Him who is the Lord of both soul and body, who chastens and heals, who kills and makes alive.

It is a fearsome thing to consider the sufferings and death of those who have gone before us in the name and faith of Christ our Lord. As the enemies of God have called the Lord and Master of this House, “Beelzebub,” so do they mock and malign His servants and disciples. To be a Christian is to be and to live as a marked man or woman, marked by the Name of the Crucified One, and marked by the sign of the Holy Cross upon our hearts, minds and bodies. Indeed, for those who are baptized into Christ Jesus, baptized into His death, there is no part of themselves or their life that is not governed by His Cross.

As St. Paul writes concerning the Holy Apostles, but what is also true for every Christian within his or her own particular stations in life, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:8–11).

Those are the Words of the Epistle that was read for the Feast of St. Bartholomew recently. According to tradition, that holy Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ was flayed alive and then beheaded for his faithful preaching of the Gospel. St. Lawrence was grilled to death upon a giant barbecue grill. St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was beheaded by the whim of King Herod. We may well be shocked at the way these saints of God, these precious holy martyrs, were not only put to death, but tortured and treated with contempt. That is the theology of the Cross, not only in academic speculation, but in the cut and thrust of life and death. Always dying, yet we live.

Not every Christian is finally called upon to suffer bodily martyrdom. We may well give thanks to God for the freedoms we are granted to practice our faith, to hear and receive the Word of the Gospel and the Holy Sacraments of Christ unmolested, to confess the Lord Jesus in our own words and actions, without fear that we shall at any moment be arrested, imprisoned, or put to death for no other reason than the Name of Christ which we bear. Considering those freedoms, and bearing in mind those fellow Christians of ours, past and present, who have persevered in the faith at the cost of their own lives, we must repent of our complacency and lackadaisical neglect of the Gospel. For we are given such a blessed liberty to hear and receive the gifts of Christ, to pray and confess His Word, and yet we take it for granted and often allow it to go by the wayside, as though it did not matter, as though we did not need it! Luther warned, in his own day, that those who neglect and ignore God's Word and the preaching of it will call down upon their heads such a famine of the Word that they shall long to hear it, but shall have nowhere to turn, nowhere to find it anymore.

The preaching of that Word, the sharp two-edged Sword of the Spirit, slices and dices between bone and marrow; it cuts us to the quick, stabs us through the heart and puts us to death, in order to raise us to new life in Christ through repentance and faith in the forgiveness of sins. It is that faithfulness of God in Christ, *for us*, that saves us, as it alone preserved and saved the holy martyrs in every age and place. God grant, therefore, that we should ever die with Him, to rise and live with Him, clothed in the white robes of His perfect righteousness.

EASTER MONDAY, A.D. 2010

Pastor Grobrien's Sermon on the Emmaus Story (St. Luke 24:13–35)

How are Cleopas, Simon, and the other disciples, to go on without Jesus? He has died, and that, no ordinary death, but a disgrace, an evil death. The Lord was not merely in physical agony and shame, but also endured the pain of being everything He wasn't, of being sin, of being alone, of being guilty, and then of being dead. His lifeless Body was wrapped and spiced and put into the ground. His loved ones had to endure the hardships of this life, including the aching loneliness of His passing and the terrible injustice and tragedy they witnessed, without Him. How could they go on?

If they could have, they would have walked away and quit. The wistful and incredulous walk to Emmaus could be seen as a symbol of this surrender. The two walked away from Jerusalem, nearly having lost hope that Jesus was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Perhaps they had hope that Jesus lived, but their hopes fell again when the report contained only folded linens, and not Jesus himself. As if spitefully teased, Cleopas and the other disciple take off for Emmaus—for somewhere other than Jerusalem, tempted again to give it all up.

They did not choose this path of suffering, loneliness, and death. You do not choose it either, but it comes upon you in various ways: your own physical sufferings, the loneliness of lost loved ones, through death or through dissension and a parting of ways. None of you would choose these things. But you are not really ever given that choice. You cannot go back in time. You cannot undo the things you've done or said, and you cannot bring the dead to life. There is no getting around it. You must endure it.

How did they go on? The reason for their near despair is also the basis for their continuance: The Lord was forsaken, but then the debt, and more, was paid. the temple veil was torn. The mercy seat is now exposed and accessible. The Sacrifice is complete, perfect, finished

and offered in heaven perpetually. When He died, when His soul was separated from His Body, His Body, human and divine, went into the ground to wait while His soul, human and divine, went to His Father. He was forsaken no more. With the words of Psalm 22, He confessed His great anguish and sorrow, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” But the Psalm does not end there. He also says, “I will tell of your Name to my brethren. In the midst of the congregation, will I praise you.” He endured Good Friday with Easter clearly in sight. He died with faith, in the confidence that the Lord would raise Him. And, indeed, the Lord did raise him.

All the pain suffered by our Lord’s loved ones was not removed even by this resurrection. But their pain was mitigated, because as bad as it was, it was temporary, and because Jesus rose they were not only free from guilt but also free to love one another. He died and rose not only that they would not die, but also that they would not be alone or forsaken. If He had not died and risen, then there would be no reason even to mourn. Why mourn if all you face is hellfire? You mourn because you have, in fact, tasted that joy which Christ gives to men. You love because He first loved you. Without that love, there would be nothing good in this world, and nothing to lose. Worst of all, there would be nothing to hope for in the next. Their pain was eventually removed, when they also went the way of Jesus, through death and into life.

Are you, then, unaware of the things which happened in Jerusalem in those days? I shall tell you again of the things about Jesus the Nazarene the prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people. There were three wooden poles pierced the earth. Two of them bore no fruit, only rotten men. But the third pole—the third pole!—it bore a fruit so strong as to dissolve Hell’s claim on men. It was not a gallows, an instrument of death. It was a trellis, a brace, a support; creation’s loving arms, it lifted a Vine up from the earth. And the Fruit of that Vine, so sour on the devil’s tongue, borne by that Bloody Trellis, makes glad the hearts of men.

And what of that hole cut in stone where they buried and then guarded Him? It is empty: Jesus lives. And out of death He gives Himself as Living Bread for the souls of men.

The thief is remembered in the Kingdom. He plucked life from the Trellis at his last moment, and from the brink of Hell he entered into paradise, a saint of God. So you too are remembered. You are not forgotten, left alone in your sorrow. You have plucked life from that tree, torn bread from the living loaf that multiplies beyond counting, drunk of the new wine of the kingdom.

Why just talk about these things, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken? Are you tempted to walk away from the celebration, if not today, but in a week or in 49 days, to be consumed again by your daily troubles? Has Easter climaxed, but then suddenly become ordinary again?

Jesus has not finished. For he will reign until all enemies have been put under his feet. Our Lord continues, following you to the ends of the earth. Where do you go to escape the disappointment and loss of hope? Is your Emmaus a place of escape, departure, or despair? Or is your Emmaus here? For the story of Emmaus reminds you that when you try to flee your disappointment, our Lord persists in coming to you. He does not stalk you or overwhelm you with his personality and power. He even covers himself under simple, plain forms, sometimes even preventing you from recognizing him.

The story of Emmaus reminds you that your erstwhile attempts to escape the troubles of this life is no escape at all. To escape from Christ leaves you nothing. But the road of men becomes the road of our Lord. He goes forth to comfort you, so that he is now found in places besides Jerusalem. Flee from Jerusalem, and you have not fled from Jesus. For those events have meaning far beyond the gates of Jerusalem: at Emmaus, Samaria, Antioch, Galatia, Greece, Rome, Germany, and Emmaus. They have meaning because our Lord is no longer restricted to Jerusalem. He is recognized where the Scriptures

are explained, enlivening the heart. He is recognized where there is breaking of bread.

No longer despair! No longer assume the worst about your destiny or be caught up in your doubts. No longer think that the resurrection gets lost in the ordinary. For the resurrection is the new normal. Jesus lives, and he calls you by name, each and every day. He has gone ahead to the Father, but he remains with you in ways that you would not recognize apart from the Spirit. He shares the joy of the Father with you. Your destiny is not a destiny of fate, without choice and out of control. It is true life with the one who is seen in the breaking of bread. He is the Living Bread. He is true manna, Bread from Heaven, Jesus our Savior. Thus eat and drink His Body and His Blood and proclaim His death until He comes.

This joy that you will have in full when you rise again, is already granted to you as a foretaste. For Jesus lives. He is the Victor over death, Champion and Captain of the Saints, the Lover of men. Death has come to its end. The grave has lost its sting. And now is the end of the darkness, the end of our long night. Hell's fury is gone like dew in the morning light. And the shameful, guilty acts are forgiven; the disappointment, loneliness, and despair is forgotten. For Jesus lives and God loves men.

Consecration and Installation of Sandra Rhein as Deaconess:

Sunday the 29th of August is the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. Emmaus will be gathered to celebrate that festival in the Divine Service, beginning at 4:00 p.m. And it will also be on that occasion that Mrs. Sandra Rhein will be consecrated and installed to the Office of Deaconess at Emmaus.

We anticipate that a number of guests will be with us for this festive and joyous event, and there will be a reception following the Service. Please do make plans to attend, if you are able to be with us, or, if you are not able to be join us in person, then attend us with your prayers.

Personal cards and gifts of congratulation to Sandra will certainly be appropriate. However, as a congregation, it has been suggested that designated gifts be gathered for the Kenyan Hymnal Project, in honor of Sandra's consecration and installation. If you would like to contribute in that way, simply place such a gift in the regular offering on the Lord's Day, clearly identified for the Kenyan Hymnal Project.

Dawn Smith Memorial Service (25 September):

Please note that a memorial service for long-time Emmaus member, Dawn Smith, who departed in the faith this past spring, will be held on Saturday the 25th of September, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

First Holy Communion (26 September):

On Sunday the 26th of September, a number of our young catechumens will be receiving their First Holy Communion, as they also continue their catechesis in the Word of God and the chief parts of the Christian faith and life. Please remember all of our catechumens and communicants in your prayers, not only for such an occasion, but for the entirety of their life in Christ.

Parents of children who may be ready to receive their First Holy Communion should please make plans with me by Sunday the 19th.

Catechesis Classes Resuming in September:

With the start of a new academic year, catechesis classes will begin in September for new and returning catechumens. Younger children will meet with Pastor Grobien on Sunday mornings, following time for refreshments after the Divine Service. Those catechesis classes will resume as of Sunday the 19th of September. Older catechumens will be meeting with Pastor Stuckwisch on Wednesday afternoons, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Those classes will resume on the 15th.

It should be clear that catechesis is much broader than simply the weekly classes of formal instruction that meet throughout the academic year. These classes are certainly important, but they are geared toward assisting and supporting the catechesis that happens each and every week in the Divine Service. *That* is the *real* catechesis, which is a vital part of the Christian faith and life for everyone of every age.

Catechumens preparing for the Lutheran Rite of Confirmation—as well as catechumens being prepared for the Holy Communion—are expected to maintain satisfactory effort and progress in three areas: (a.) class attendance, (b.) Catechism memory work, and, most important, (c.) weekly participation in the Divine Service.

As always, I will make every effort to assist individual catechumens who struggle with various difficulties in meeting the expectations. But the bottom line is, catechesis simply does not take place as it should if these several aspects of catechesis are not being engaged. To that end, it is imperative that parents be actively involved in supporting, assisting, and encouraging their children in the Six Chief Parts of the Christian faith and life.

A Basic Catechetical Review for Anyone (Information Classes):

Beginning soon (date to be determined and announced), there will be a basic catechetical review in the place of our usual Bible study on Monday evenings (7:30 p.m.), following the Order of Vespers. This class will cover the ABC's of the Christian faith and life, as well as a general survey of the Church's liturgical life in the means of grace (such as the Church Year, orders of service, rites and ceremonies).

This basic catechetical review is for anyone who may be interested in learning what it means to be a Christian and a member of the Church, and what it means to be a Lutheran and a member of Emmaus, in particular. Friends, neighbors, passing acquaintances, co-workers, students, retirees, children, all are welcome to attend, with no strings or obligations attached. Each class will be about an hour in length.

Air Conditioning for the Emmaus Sanctuary, Nave & Narthex:

Having endured another hot summer at Emmaus, inquiries have been made and quotes received on what it would take to install A/C in the sanctuary, nave and narthex of the church. Surprisingly, it could be done for a relatively modest amount: less than \$8,000 (ready to run). The cost of operation per Service would be approximately \$7.00.

Aside from the obvious factor of comfort and ability to concentrate and stay awake and alert during the Divine Service when it is so hot, and the real health concerns at certain times when the temperature and humidity may be extreme, there is also the fact that many of our own members are discouraged from attending Services in the summer heat, and any number of summer time visitors in the past have never returned for the same reason. I have at various times actually heard Emmaus described as “that church without air conditioning.” I am certain that we would much rather be known for the Gospel instead!

Therefore, those of you who may be interested, willing and able, are invited to designate funds toward the purchase and installation of Air Conditioning in the Emmaus sanctuary, nave and narthex. With a concerted and consistent effort, it is not unreasonable to suppose that we could have this done before the spring and summer of 2011.

Individual Confession & Absolution:

Pastor Grobien will be vested and available in the Emmaus Sanctuary for Individual Confession & Absolution on **Friday, 10 September, from 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.** And I will similarly be available at Emmaus to hear your confession and grant the Holy Absolution of Christ on **Saturday the 2nd of October, from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m.** This means of grace and forgiveness, by the authority of Christ our dear Lord Himself, is freely offered to be freely received in repentant faith by any person who desires to receive it.

Your servant in Christ Jesus, Pastor Stuckwisch

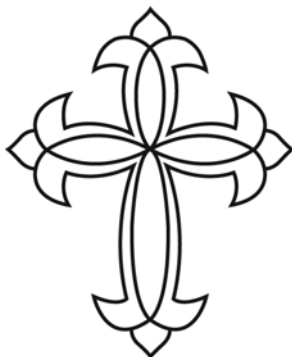
ON THE DEACONESS UNIFORM AND INSIGNIA

A deaconess uniform has helped to identify this office of service since the mid-1800s. In a practical vein, the uniform enables hospital staff and patients to instantly recognize a woman who provides care that is distinctly spiritual and Christian. Within a congregation, visitors and members can easily identify a deaconess by her uniform.

The uniform of the Concordia Deaconess Conference—LCMS consists of a navy blue business suit with a white blouse or a navy blue business dress along with the insignia and cross pin. A gold cross is for consecrated deaconesses. Students wear a light blue insignia.

The particular insignia of the Concordia Deaconess Conference—LCMS centers in the cross because Jesus is the center of the Christian faith and life. The edges of the cross flare out to form Easter lilies, signifying the Resurrection that we proclaim to the four corners of the world. The cross is inscribed with four fish that meet in the center. Fish are used because the first letters of the Greek words for *Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior*, spell the Greek word for fish (ICHTHUS).

With a cross on her shoulder and a cross pin over her heart, the uniform visually reminds a deaconess of her identity and purpose. It reminds her that the Lord has chosen her for service; she has not chosen Him or the work. A uniform also covers her person and helps people to recognize it is really Christ who is caring for them through His Church and the members of His Body.



The often-quoted deaconess motto, “The True Deaconess Spirit,” was written by Rev. Wilhelm Löhe, one of the founding fathers of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Numerous deaconess mother-houses in Germany adopted Löhe’s poem as their motto in the 19th and 20th centuries, and it subsequently gained popularity in America after the immigration of German deaconesses to this country.

THE TRUE DEACONESS SPIRIT

What is my want? I want to serve.

Whom do I want to serve?

The Lord in His wretched ones and His poor.

And what is my reward?

*I serve neither for reward nor thanks
but out of gratitude and love.*

My reward is that I am permitted to serve.

And if I perish in this service?

“If I perish, I perish,” said Queen Esther.

I would perish for Him who gave Himself for me.

But He will not let me perish.

And if I grow old in this service?

*Then shall my heart be renewed as a palm tree.
And the Lord shall satisfy me with grace and mercy.*

*I go my way in peace
casting all my care upon Him.*

REMEMBER OUR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Please remember Pastor Grobien in your prayers as he continues working on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame, along with all our other Notre Dame college student friends, as well as other members and friends of Emmaus who are attending college, university or seminary elsewhere, whether near or far. In praying for them, consider the ways that you may be an answer to their prayers.

In the case of unmarried students going to school here in South Bend, consider inviting them to join your family for a meal, or to spend an afternoon with your family playing games and sharing fun activities.

What more shall I say?

Time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the Prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated — of whom the world was not worthy.

All of these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:32–40)