

# ***The Road to Emmaus***

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The Feast Day of the Holy Cross (14 Sept) occurs—appropriately enough—in the middle of the Holy Martyrs’ Tide, that period of Sundays after Pentecost when we remember those of the Christian Church who carried the Cross of Christ even unto death in His Name.

Though most of us will never be called upon to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel, we too must find our life, and our salvation, solely in the Cross of Christ. While the historical origins of Holy Cross Day are a bit convoluted and suspect, the day itself is a good reminder of the fact that the Glory of Christ and His Church is found in the humility and weakness of self-sacrificing love. Thus, we are not ashamed of the Cross, but as St Paul writes in First Corinthians:

“We preach Christ Crucified—a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks; but to those who are called to faith in Christ, He and His Cross are the power and wisdom of God. Wherefore we have chosen to know nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified.”

Indeed, it is the Cross of Christ that we received in Holy Baptism, in which we were united with Christ in His Cross and Resurrection and anointed by His Holy Spirit as the children of His Father. And now we live the daily significance of this Baptism into Christ by taking up His Cross and finding our life in His Cross, crucifying our old Adam by contrition, repentance, and confession, and rising to new life in Christ by His gracious forgiveness and His Word of Holy Absolution.

Thus do we live as “spiritual martyrs” and as witnesses of Christ in the world; so that others see in us the Gospel of forgiveness in His Cross. For we are willing, for the joy that is set before us, to endure the Cross, thereby to sit with Christ Jesus in His glorious Kingdom.

## LIVING WITH A CRUCIFIED GOD

The Sermon Text is the Word of our Lord concerning His approaching Cross and Passion, as recorded in the Gospel appointed for the Fourth Sunday in Martyrs' Tide (St Matt 16:21-28). In the Name + of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The beautiful confession of Christ by Saint Peter (St. Matt 16:13–20) has marked a turning point in the life and ministry of our Lord. We hear that immediately in the opening words of this Holy Gospel: “From that time, Jesus began to show *His Disciples*. . . .” His public ministry to the crowds, whether of Jews or Gentiles, has more or less ended. From this point onward, He will focus His attention primarily on the little band of disciples who follow after Him. Even more than that, His focus will be on the Cross that waits before Him, as He makes a bee-line for Jerusalem: a bee-line toward suffering and death.

That suffering and death is precisely *what* our Lord begins to show His Disciples. Having heard their confession from the lips of Simon Peter, that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus begins to explain what it means for Him to be the Christ (the Messiah). Simply put, it means the Cross: He *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed, and only then be raised again to life.

All of this has already been implied in our Lord's description of Himself as “the Son of Man.” To be the “Son of Man,” as prophesied in the Old Testament, means first of all that He must suffer and die in the place of all people. Only as the One Who suffers righteously for the sake of others would He become the Savior and Champion of all mankind—the triumphant Conqueror of sin, death, and the power of the devil. In short, there would be no Easter without Good Friday.

On the surface, all of this might seem pretty straightforward. We've heard the story so many times that much of the impact is lost. We already know how the story ends, and you know what they say about 20/20 hindsight. It's all so neat and tidy in our minds: our Lord dies on the Cross, and then He rises again — Thank you, Jesus, Amen.

If we stop and think about it, though, perhaps we can understand why Peter and the other disciples did not see things quite so cut and dried. Here before them stood the Son of the Living God, the Lord and Ruler of the universe, by Whom all things were made. Here was the One Who is Himself the Way, the Truth, and the *Life*. Here is the Christ, the promised Messiah; the Anointed One, Who is the Prophet, Priest, and King of Israel. But now, what's that He says: "I must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, and be killed. . . ." *God must die!*

Talk about a contradiction! No wonder the disciples were confused. And we ought to be set back in our seats, as well, when we consider that the Almighty and Eternal Son of God would *suffer, bleed, and die* for us. There's nothing "neat and tidy" about the Gospel. The Cross was the cruelest of executions; an instrument of torture and agonizing death; a curse and a shame on the one who died. And yet, the One Who would hang upon the Cross for our salvation was not some common thief or wrongdoer, but the innocent Lamb of God, our compassionate Savior, the Maker and Redeemer of us all.

What we must understand, though — what Peter had to learn through bitter experience — is even more confusing than a Crucified God. Because the truth and reality of our Holy Triune God is this: Nowhere is He revealed to us more clearly and precisely than on the Cross, in the suffering and death of the incarnate Son.

Doctor Martin Luther, as he came to a greater understanding of Holy Scripture and the Gospel, often liked to make a distinction between two kinds of theology (two ways of thinking about God): On the one hand is a "theology of glory," which is how the world and sinful human reason approach faith and religion; on the other hand is a "theology of the cross," which is how the Word of God teaches us to think and believe. In this Holy Gospel, we learn with St. Peter this same distinction, and this same "theology of the cross," not from Dr. Luther now, but from Christ our Lord Himself. It is the most difficult thing we shall ever learn, and far and away the most important.

The thing is that Peter was here operating with a “theology of glory.” That is to say, he was looking for and he wanted a popular, successful Christ — and a popular, successful Church. Sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? And yet, what Peter immediately discovered in the Lord’s response — “Get behind Me, Satan!” — is that God has a different measure of “success,” and He isn’t much interested in popularity. In fact, Christ was so *unpopular* that *the* religious leaders of His own people would have Him killed. They all thought they knew what they were doing: Peter, the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law. But they didn’t have a clue; not even Peter at this point.

What ought to make us especially uncomfortable is the realization that our own thoughts and inclinations run very much in line with Peter’s. We, too, tend toward a “theology of glory.” Which means, according to the Lord Himself, that we do not have in mind the things of God, but of men; and what is worse, we, too, are *satanic* in our opposition to the purpose and Will of God (the way of the Cross).

When Jesus reveals what He “*must*” undergo in Jerusalem, the Greek word translated “must” carries a great deal of force. It designates a divine necessity or duty; which is to say that it expresses the good and gracious Will of God. Therefore, it was the Will of God the Father that His Son should go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the religious authorities, and be crucified under Pontius Pilate.

Make no mistake, it would not be easy or enjoyable for Jesus — not by any means! But His Will was one with His Father’s (as He prays in the Garden, and as He has taught us to pray: “Thy Will be done!”).

Jesus *must* go to Jerusalem and die. It was for this purpose that He had come, taking on our frail flesh and blood, living our life with all its heartache and struggles — in order to suffer and die in our place. That was God’s plan for our salvation, from before the foundation of the world, promised and revealed through the Prophets, and perfectly fulfilled by Christ our Lord. It is the Cornerstone of the Church.

But what about Saint Peter, then, who received the glorious promise of Christ, that he would be a Rock foundation for the Church? For that same Peter, the Rock, was acting as a “stumbling block” for Christ: an obstacle on His way to the Cross. To be sure, he had the best of intentions; he loved his Lord, and he did not want Him to suffer and die. His warning was sincere, *but*, unfortunately, it was sincerely wrong. His noble cause was out of place, because he was thinking of Jesus by human standards and with human concerns.

So it was that Peter took it on himself to *rebuke* Jesus! He “lectured” his Lord on what was and was not appropriate for the Christ. The disciple dared to place himself above the Master.

No matter how good his motivations might have been, Peter was clearly out of line to question and contradict the Will of God. But we all do much the same on a regular basis. Like Peter, we imagine that we know what’s best, and we’re quite certain that it isn’t a Cross or suffering. So it is that our prayers become lectures and rebukes, as we dictate to our Lord what should and should not happen.

For example, one of the most common questions that people ask is, why it is that God allows even Christians to suffer. A better question would be, why is it that even Christians have to ask? We rightly confess (according to God’s Word) that we are poor, miserable sinners, who *deserve* nothing but temporal and eternal punishment. But do we actually take the painful truth of that confession to heart?

By right, we don’t deserve a single breath. Every breath is purely by the grace of God, along with every other blessing in our lives, every day. And yet, when we suffer some loss or hardship, we blame God: we get angry with Him, we argue and bargain with Him, or we simply reject Him. In spite of the fact that we *deserve* far worse, and God has in fact showered us with any number of undeserved blessings: the sunshine, the rainfall, daily bread, just to name a few in this life, to say nothing of the perfect life He promises and grants to us in Christ.

And lest we think that God has no mercy and compassion on our suffering, as though He really didn't care, consider that life which Christ has won for us. Of all people, Jesus alone (the perfect Son of the Living God) did *not* deserve punishment of any kind. The holy, righteous, sinless Son of God Almighty was blameless before His Father in all things. And yet, for us poor sinners, the Son of God suffered agony that we cannot even begin to imagine.

You take all the suffering, pain, and death of all times and places — all the misery that sinful men and women throughout the ages have brought upon themselves — and all that crushing load was placed upon Christ as He went to the Cross for us. Don't imagine for a minute that He does not care or cannot understand your pain; He understands more deeply than you could ever possibly imagine.

Of course, we suffer not only as sinners living in a sinful world, but also as *Christians*, bearing the Cross of Christ. As Saint Paul writes, we ought to rejoice in this, that *we are counted worthy* to share the suffering of Christ. For as we suffer here and now with Him, we know that we shall also live with Him forever.

Regrettably, how hard it often is to bear the grief and pain that come our way as we live under the Cross — especially when we suffer for the sake of Christ, because we are Christians; that just seems unfair. But it seems unfair, and it's hard to bear, because we poor sinners keep falling back on a “theology of glory.”

Like Saint Peter, our thoughts and our way of looking at life are often topsy-turvy from the perspective of God. We figure that He shouldn't have to suffer — and, more to the point, neither should we. But of course, Christ our Lord did suffer — *for us*. That is how it had to be, for Him to save us from our sin and self-inflicted death. And just as He has suffered for us, so also are we called to take up His Cross and follow Him: through suffering, and even through death, if necessary, as we press on from this world to the next.

In our Lord's rebuke of Peter ("Get *behind* Me, Satan!") and in His description of discipleship ("Whoever wishes to come *after* Me . . ."), He uses the same Greek word in both cases — for "behind" and then for "after." Therefore, what Jesus says to Peter (and to us), is not so much, "get out of My face and leave Me alone," but rather, "get back in line and *follow Me.*" Don't take your cues and your lead from the devil, the world, or even your own flesh, but only from Christ. And no matter how foolish, or weak, or painful, or unpopular, or boring His way might seem — don't question it, but follow Him.

This is the call to discipleship. And what that means, in the fullest sense of the word, is that we learn how to *live* — and how to *die* — from the example of our Crucified God, Jesus Christ.

True Christian discipleship is not a program, nor a gimmick; it is a way of living our entire life, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year. It means bearing the Cross — not only patiently, but joyfully and confidently — in faith that we carry the Cross of Christ Himself.

As disciples of the Crucified God, all that we are and everything we do is shaped and patterned after His Cross. We live, as it were, a crucified life, believing that as we have died with Christ in our Baptism (and as we die with Him through daily repentance), so also shall we live with Him forever. That is the paradoxical heart of Christianity: in death is life. "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Christ will find it."

As Christians, our entire lives, our bodies and souls and all that we have, are offered to God as a "living sacrifice." That is what it means to be a Christian. And yet, as we look in the mirror and consider our life according to the Word of God, what do we find?

In fact, none of us are the faithful disciples we should be. None of us follow Jesus in the way of the Cross as we are called to do. It's one

thing to say when everything's coming up roses, and a different story when life is crashing down around your ears. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. If even the great Apostle Peter could go from a beautiful confession to a satanic temptation, then we should not be too surprised to find such inconsistency and failings in ourselves.

That's no excuse, but an indication of our need for the very Cross we try to avoid — not a Cross that we must carry for ourselves, but a Cross that God's own Son has carried for us; a Cross that shed the Blood of God for the propitiation of all our sins, and for the sins of the world; a Cross that stands forever between the righteous wrath of God and our pathetic unfaithfulness, shielding us with the Body of Christ; a Cross that was granted to us freely as a gift, by the mercy and grace of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, in our Holy Baptism.

Maybe you were too young at the time to remember now, but you've heard the words that were spoken to you then (at your Baptism): "Receive the sign of the holy cross, upon your forehead and your heart, to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the Crucified."

You belong to a Crucified God. He makes no sense to the world, and neither do you as a Christian. But you live your entire life in the shelter of His Cross, in the shelter of His outstretched arms. He carried the Cross for you once, and He continues to carry it with you even now, until at last He will come again to carry you and me and all His children "out of this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven."

In His dear Name, and for His sake, Amen.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, the Communion of His Holy Spirit will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.

## **On My Recent Pastoral Visit to Indonesia:**

From the tail end of July through the beginning of August, I made a pastoral visit to the Lutheran mission in Jakarta, Indonesia, where Pastor Grobien and I had the privilege of serving two years ago.

I arrived in Jakarta on a Thursday evening (July the 28th), and spent the next couple of days recovering from jet lag and acclimating to the eleven-hour time difference. My work began in earnest on Sunday, the 31st of July, following the Divine Service that morning.

As compared to my previous trip to Jakarta, I was not preaching or administering the Service in this case, but was hearing and receiving the gifts of the Gospel, myself, and observing Pastor Ery's conduct of the Divine Service, in order to mentor and assist him in whatever ways would be helpful. Pastor Ery was one of two men that Pastor Grobien and I mentored in 2009, who has since been ordained to the Office of the Holy Ministry and serves as the pastor of the church.

On that first Sunday afternoon, we spent several hours discussing catechesis from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. I talked to Pastor Ery about the goals of catechesis, about the preparations and approach that a pastor takes in going about it, and about the ways in which those things can be applied and put into practice within the particular situation and circumstances of the church in Jakarta.

Before we ended our time together on Sunday evening, Pastor Ery shared with me some of his pastoral, personal, and practical burdens, concerns and frustrations, which he bears and carries in his life under the cross. Knowing that he has been on his own as the only pastor of the church, I was anxious to serve him as a brother pastor, and as a father in Christ, while I had the chance. It is so important for a pastor also to have such care, not only as a Christian himself, but for the sake of his office and the work that he is called to do in the name and stead of Christ. How can a pastor give what he himself does not

receive? Therefore, along with my careful listening, I offered my pastoral counsel and advice to Pastor Ery, as well as the opportunity for Confession and Absolution, and these were surely among the most important things that I was able to do with my time in Jakarta.

Our Monday was a very long, very full and busy day. We began the morning with conversation on the conduct and administration of the Divine Service. Aside from a few points, there was not a lot that we needed to address, other than some basic advice, suggestions, and really a matter of “fine tuning.” It was actually quite gratifying to observe Pastor Ery now doing those things that Pastor Grobien and I were training him to do two years ago. I clarified a few specifics for him, answered some questions that he had for me, and otherwise encouraged him in the good work that he has been doing.

Following a lunch-time outing that included a visit to *Obor* — the Roman Catholic church supply store that I so enjoyed the last time I was in Jakarta — Pastor Ery and I spent several hours discussing the management of a pastor’s schedule, the planning of his days, his use of time, and his work throughout the week. In this conversation, obviously we did not concern ourselves only with general principles, but with the particular needs and challenges of the local mission, and with Pastor Ery’s personal circumstances and practical concerns.

Finally, on Monday evening, we made a pastoral visit to Tumpak and his wife, Erfina, and their nine-month-old son, Wisdom. Tumpak is the other man that Pastor Grobien and I mentored two years ago, but there have been some difficulties involved in his relationship with the church, and I was very hopeful of a chance to meet with him in person. We actually visited for several hours, and I believe that it was a helpful and healing conversation in many respects. I would simply ask you to remember Tumpak and his family in your prayers, that the Lord would deal with them in mercy and accomplish His gracious purposes for them, as also for all of His people in Jakarta.

On Tuesday, Pastor Ery and I focused on hymnody and its place in the Divine Service. We talked especially about the Hymn of the Day, which has been such a significant Lutheran contribution to the liturgical life of the Church. It really stands with the Readings of Holy Scripture, the Psalms and the Collect of the Day, as being among the appointed “Propers” for each particular Sunday and Festival. This was a good review for Pastor Ery, and it should assist him in selecting hymns for the Divine Service each week. I worked together with him in completing that task for the coming weekend.

We spent much of our time together on Wednesday in practical discussions of the Lutheran mission in Indonesia, including aspects of the church’s polity and governance, as well as the pastor’s relationships with his own family and friends, within the congregation, and within the community. In particular, we addressed and wrestled with the question of how a pastor should balance his responsibilities to the church with the needs of his family.

On Thursday, we discussed and “workshopped” the pastor’s weekly preparations for preaching and for the Divine Service. I was able to work with Pastor Ery in preparing for a festival Divine Service that we celebrated on Friday evening, and for the upcoming Lord’s Day, as well. To those ends, we talked through the appointed Readings, the Psalmody, hymns and prayers for each Divine Service, and then visited at length about the preaching of the Gospel in each context.

We celebrated the Feast of the Transfiguration on Friday evening, as planned, but also received the news that Pastor Ery’s father-in-law had blacked out and was unconscious for several hours that afternoon. He has emphysema and was not getting enough oxygen. That was rather scary for the family, of course, but thankfully he seemed to be doing better in the days that followed. Pastor Ery and I visited him on Sunday afternoon, which he appreciated, and by then he was already much improved from the low point on Friday evening.

On our second Monday together (August the 8th), we spent the entire morning, as well as our lunchtime conversation, and into the early afternoon, talking through Pastor Ery's initial preparations for the upcoming Sunday. I reviewed with him the process, while also walking through it with him. That also gave us a touchstone for discussing points related to the conduct of the Divine Service, including such things as the chanting of the collects and the proper preface. From those points we moved to a discussion of catechesis, First Communion, and confirmation. This is an area where Pastor Ery has been somewhat unsure of himself, so it was especially helpful for him to talk through the process of catechesis. We also engaged in conversation of church discipline and the pastoral practice of confession and absolution. As you can begin to imagine, it was a day of vigorous discussion and lots of careful consideration.

In the afternoon, we turned our attention to more practical matters, and I worked with Pastor Ery on how to develop and consider a family budget. That was a fruitful discussion, as well, though not the easiest or most pleasant task, especially in a situation fraught with financial challenges. I pray that my assistance, also in that area, will prove beneficial to Pastor Ery and his family.

Darin Storkson, the LCMS mission supervisor in Jakarta, returned from his time in the United States on that Monday evening. Despite the fact that he had just traveled half-way around the world, he spent several hours visiting with Pastor Ery and me, before we finally called it a night around 9:00 p.m. By then, we were all exhausted!

Darin and I spent all day on Tuesday discussing my work and efforts over the previous couple of weeks. We began our conversation over breakfast, continued throughout the morning and through lunch, all afternoon and through dinner. Then Pastor Ery arrived, and the three of us met together for another several hours in the evening. It was a long day, to be sure, but I was very glad for the chance to visit with Darin—not only to “talk shop,” but to enjoy catching up with him.

It was on Wednesday, the 11th of August, that I began my homeward journey from Jakarta to South Bend. I was confident of your prayers and intercessions on my behalf, as throughout my time away, and was very grateful for them. I enjoyed my time in Indonesia, and was so grateful for the opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ on the other side of the globe. Thank you for your loving support and encouragement of that endeavor. Now I am pleased to be home again with my dear wife and children, and to be “home” once more with my “Emmaus family,” as we are gathered together in the Divine Service, for the Word of God and prayer, in the blessing of Christ our Lord. To Him be all the glory, honor, worship and praise, now and forever.

### **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 Deaconess Rhein on Sunday mornings, following time for refreshments after the Divine Service. Those catechesis classes will resume as of Sunday the 11th of September. Older catechumens will be meeting with Pastor Stuckwisch on Wednesday afternoons, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Those classes will resume already on the 7th.

Of course, 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.

### **New Bible Study opportunities also beginning in September:**

- *Our Sunday morning Family Bible Class is wrapping up the story of King Solomon, concluding a study of Old Testament Bible stories that began with Joshua a number of years ago. Right now we are looking at Solomon's construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, but once that is completed, at some point mid-September, we'll be going back to Exodus and Leviticus to study the Lord's instructions for the Tabernacle and its furnishings, the Priesthood and its vestments, and the whole liturgical life of Israel. The focus will not be on narratives or stories, therefore, but on the Old Testament means of grace, on the people and places, the rites and ceremonies, the sacrifices and meals, the prayers and songs of worship, all of it pointing to Christ Jesus.*

The Sunday morning class will still be open to families, to parents and children, youth and adults, and all are welcome. The nursery is available for the youngest children (up to the age of three), under the supervision of volunteers from the Emmaus Youth. *In addition, there will also be the following new opportunity for the young people:*

- *This year Pastor Grobien will be teaching a new catechesis class on Sunday mornings for those who have moved on from the younger catechesis class. It will not replace Wednesday afternoon catechesis, but will supplement that regular class and treat some topics at a more advanced level. Those catechumens who have not been confirmed will still normally be expected to attend Wednesday's class.*

Pastor Grobien's new Sunday class is loosely aimed at young people age 10-18, and these youth are expected to attend regularly (either this new class, or the regular Sunday morning class). However, this age range is not strict, and anyone interested is welcome to attend, especially those who may be a little younger or older.

The new class will be covering topics of the catechism at a more advanced level, studying what the Scriptures teach of the Holy Trinity, Creation, the Law, Christ's Person and work, the Church, justification, sanctification, and the last things. The class will also cover practical and applied topics, such as worship and prayer, work and vocation, marriage and family, good works, money management, higher education, and other topics that the class chooses.

The younger catechesis class (for children roughly age 3-9) will still meet on Sunday mornings, now with Deaconess Rhein, to learn the catechism and basic Bible stories. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Pastor Grobien or Pastor Stuckwisch.

- *Bible Class on Monday evenings, following Vespers, will also be taking up a new study after Labor Day.* Over the summer months, we've taken a more open, free-flowing, "ask the pastor" approach to that class, which has made for some interesting discussions. As we enter upon a new "academic year," however, we'll be taking up the Apology of the Augsburg Confession for study on Monday evenings. This is one of the defining documents of Lutheranism, and of course it is important and significant for that reason, historically. But even more to the point, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession is one of the richest and fullest statements and explanations of the Christian faith and life, and it still serves the Church beautifully in that regard. The class will consider the historical context, especially where that is necessary to an understanding of the confession, but the focus will be on the actual text and theological content of the Apology.

## **Vacation with LaRena to Chicago and Michigan City:**

With thanks to the dear people of Emmaus, my wife LaRena and I will be taking a nice little vacation to Chicago and Michigan City in the middle of September. This was a gift that we received from the congregation on the occasion of my 15th anniversary of ordination, and we are looking forward to enjoying our time away together.

On Wednesday the 14th of September, we'll be taking a two-hour "Spirit of Chicago Lunch Cruise" along the lakefront in Chicago. Then we'll be spending the night at the Creekwood Inn in Michigan City, a bed and breakfast in a "lush woodland setting," we are told.

LaRena and I are grateful for the gift, and for the loving support of our Emmaus Family over the past fifteen years. Thank you.

## **Dedication of New Altar Linens (18 September):**

Another gift in celebration of my 15th ordination anniversary was purchased for the congregation by the Emmaus Youth, that is, two full sets of new Altar linens for the Holy Communion. These were ordered in June and had arrived by the beginning of August, but we have been waiting for an opportune time to dedicate the new linens for use in the Divine Service. We are planning to do so, and to use this gift for the first time, on Sunday the 18th of September.

## **Individual Confession and Absolution in September:**

**In September**, I will be vested and available in the sanctuary for any and all who may wish to come for Individual Confession and Holy Absolution on **Saturday the 3rd** (from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m.).

In addition, Pastor Grobien will likewise be available for Confession and Absolution on **Friday the 23rd of September** (4:30—5:30 p.m.).

This means of grace and forgiveness, instituted by Christ our dear Lord Himself, is freely offered to be freely received in repentant faith. It is neither commanded nor required, but given as a free gift of God in the Name of Jesus. If you have questions concerning the Christian practice of Confession & Absolution, you are encouraged to review the Fifth Chief Part of the Catechism and to speak with me or Pastor Grobien at any time, whether in Bible class or privately. Of course, all confessions are held in the strictest confidence.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,  
Pastor Stuckwisch

## **EMMAUS FAMILY FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY**

All are invited to a congregational potluck and gathering on Sunday, September the 25th. We are planning several activities for the day:

- 1. Open House.** Our church building has seen lots of reorganizing and remodeling over the past year. Take a look at how each room is now being used and enjoy the fresh new colors and designs.
- 2. Potluck dinner.** Drinks will be provided. Please bring a dish to share, and your own table service.
- 3. Higher Things Report.** The Emmaus Youth who attended the Higher Things Conference in July will be giving a brief presentation as a thank you for your support.

Please join us — **Sunday, September 25!**

## **BACCALAUREATE FOR 2012 GRADUATES: PLANNING AHEAD FOR NEXT SPRING**

Rather than waiting until the end of the academic year, or even into the summer months, we'd like to be thinking and planning ahead for a Baccalaureate Service in honor of 2012 graduates.

If you or your loved ones at Emmaus will be graduating from high school, college, university or seminary in 2012, please share that info with Pastor Stuckwisch — preferably in writing, for the sake of his memory! — between now and Christmas, if at all possible. Life has a way of speeding up and rapidly passing by once we move from Christmas and Epiphany into Lent and Easter, and then, before we know it, the academic year is ending, summer plans are being made, and scheduling a Baccalaureate at a time that works well for one and all becomes something of a challenge. So, please let Pastor know of graduation expectations between now and Christmas, if you are able.

In the meantime, let us remember the students and teachers of our Emmaus family in our prayers and intercessions — and, not only in our prayers, but also with our words and with our active friendship. We pray likewise for our homeschooling families, for Resurrection Lutheran Academy, and for our LCMS colleges and seminaries.

## **CARING FOR THE LORD'S ALTAR AT EMMAUS**

Those who would be interested in learning how to care for the Altar linens and paraments, as well as for the candles and the vessels of the Holy Communion — whether youth or adults, both women and men — please speak with Pastor Stuckwisch or Pastor Grobien about assisting in these areas. We are hoping to provide some training along these lines, and to establish a schedule and routine for this care.

*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. (Heb 11:32–40)*

