

Devotions – May 8-14, 2016
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Sunday, May 8, 2016

Text: Isaiah 66: 13

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

First, a shout out and huge THANK YOU to all the moms out there on this Mothers' Day 2016. We love you and all that you do and have done for us.

Then, a note about Julian of Norwich (a woman, sometimes called Juliana), renewer of the church, whom we commemorate on May 8th. A Benedictine nun, she lived in a very small cell attached to the Carrow Priory in Norwich in England. The cell had three windows. One looked in on the sanctuary, giving her access to hearing the mass and receiving communion. One was for light from the outside, also a means of giving counsel to those who came to see her. The third window was for contact with her helper and provider of meals.

On May 8, 1393, she experienced 15 vivid visions, and one more the next day, all expressing God's motherly love and protection. Later, in the early 1400's, she wrote about these visions in Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love, the first book in English by a woman to be published in Europe.

One of her memorable quotations is: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Look in the ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship) for a prayer on p. 87 and the hymn "Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth", #735, both attributed to Julian of Norwich. (See Wednesday's Daily Devotion this week for more on #735.)

Let Us Pray: *We praise you, Lord, for expressions of love that we see in our mothers, and in people like Julian of Norwich who wrote that love was the meaning of religious experience. Amen.*



Monday, May 9, 2016

Text: Romans 12: 2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Today we commemorate another renewer of the church, Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who lived from 1700 to 1760 in an aristocratic Lutheran family in Germany. He was greatly influenced by his pietistic grandmother, and in time moved away from what he considered the overly intellectual Lutheran practices.

He allowed a group of Moravians to settle on a portion of his land. From this group came many world-wide Moravian missions, and von Zinzendorf assisted in supporting these missions.

He is also remembered for writing hymns that displayed his pietistic faith. One of these is ELW #624, "Jesus, Still Lead On". (See Thursday entry for more on #624.)

Let Us Pray: *Help us, Lord, to appreciate the struggles of those whose strong faith causes them to ask difficult questions, and still maintain unwavering faith in a loving and forgiving God. Amen.*



Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Text: I Peter 1:4-5

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals, yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

One week from today, the Board of Directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) will be completing their three days of meeting. My husband John is currently on the LSTC Board, and I have been on it in the past. Twice a year we travel to Chicago, in November and in May, for the Board meetings.

In the spring, the meeting always begins on Sunday, after Commencement Exercises in the afternoon. Commencement is a glorious affair, full of pomp and circumstance and colorful academic robes, momentous speaking and music of all kinds, from magnificent organ to choirs accompanied by flute and conga drums.

Some of the graduates are headed for more study, or for jobs on teaching faculties or administrative posts in the ELCA and elsewhere. But most of those receiving diplomas will be on their way to positions as parish pastors. These are the people who will lead our congregations, preach to us and care for us in our many needs.

They have learned so much at seminary. And there is so much more for them to learn! Let us be mindful that as much as we are in their care, we are also there to care for them, to support and sustain them in their new lives as ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Let Us Pray: *Praise to the Lord for these newly anointed pastors! May they be strong in the faith, and filled with energy and compassion for the people of God. Amen.*



Wednesday, May 11, 2016

Text: I John 3: 1

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

Picking up from Sunday's devotion, let's consider the hymn inspired by Julian of Norwich, ELW #735 "Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth" whose hymn tune is, appropriately, NORWICH. It was written by Jean Janzen and first published in 1992.

The three verses of the hymn emphasize the loving aspects of God, translated to the Trinity. The verses begin thusly: 1. Mothering God, you gave me birth . . . 2. Mothering Christ, you took my form . . . and 3. Mothering Spirit, nurt'ring one . . .

Janzen, born in 1933, was a teacher, a medical secretary and a poet whose poems appear in her book *Tasting the Dust* (2000). She also wrote the words to ELW #399, "O Holy Spirit, Root of Life", inspired by Hildegard of Bingen.

The music for "Mothering God..." is from Carolyn Jennings (b. 1936), music faculty member at St Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota from 1960 to 2002. She wrote it at the request of the editors of *With One Voice*.

Let Us Pray: *Lord Jesus, just as we want and need to be respected and cherished, help us to respect and cherish all the others in our lives. Amen.*



Thursday, May 12, 2016

Text: Proverbs 3: 5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Nicolaus von Zinzendorf wrote the words to the hymn ELW #624, "Jesus, Still Lead On". This four-verse hymn from 1721 is a distillation of two hymns, one with 11 verses and one with 15 verses. The hymn emphasizes obedience and trust, basic tenets of the pietistic faith which he embraced.

Von Zinzendorf wrote many, many hymns, once publishing a hymn book containing 999 of them. Hymns were often part of his sermons as he worked and preached in the Moravian colonies and congregations which he helped to found in Germany, Holland, Scotland and the West Indies. He visited Pennsylvania with the same hope, but was not successful.

Adam Drese (1620 - 1701) wrote the music for "Jesus, Still Lead On". He was director of music for Duke Wilholm IV at Weimar. He was left searching for a new position when the Duke died. He ended his career in Arnstadt, as Kappelmeister for the Count of Schwarzburg. The hymn uses only 6 notes of the scale. The hymn tune, SEELENBRÄUTIGAM, means "soul's bridegroom".

Let Us Pray: *Jesus, be our guide. As we sing in this hymn, ". . . heavenly leader, still direct us, still support, console, protect us, till we safely stand in the promised land." Amen.*



Friday, May 13, 2016

Text: Matthew 28: 19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

It's the first day of the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly! The above text is a key text for this year's Assembly. Hundreds of people will gather to look back on the year, to deal with questions and policies here and now, and to elect people to carry on the work of the Lord, making disciples of all nations, in the year or years to come.

Many people have been preparing for these two days, with hundreds of hours of time put in on writing and organizing and sorting and recruiting and rehearsing and planning all manner of ballot positions and delegate packets and activities and discussion opportunities and times for worship.

And speaking of worship, it is always so uplifting to participate in a BIG glorious worship service, such as we have at Synod Assembly.

Hat's off to these hard workers! To all those on the Synod Assembly Planning Committee, to the local folks, to the Synod Office staffers, and to Bishop Tom Skrenes and to Assistant to the Bishop Katherine Finegan, we give you our hearty thanks!

Let Us Pray: *We pray for your guidance, Lord, in all that happens at this year's gathering of the Northern Great Lakes Synod in Marquette. Amen.*



Saturday, May 14, 2016

Text: Acts 1: 21-23

Peter is speaking: *"So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us - one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.*

On this second day of the 2016 Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly, we commemorate the disciple who replaced Judas among the twelve, namely the apostle Matthias.

He was chosen by casting of lots. It is thought that this involved writing the names of the people in question on tablets, putting these tablets in an urn, shaking the urn and the tablet that emerged was the chosen one. The person not chosen was Joseph Justus.

Matthias had traveled with the original twelve apostles from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Upon officially joining the group, he was called to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

Let Us Pray: *We, too, are called to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and to the small and the mighty works of redemption by grace in our lives. Be with us, as you were with Matthias, as we live out our faith. Amen*

