



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happily, we are leaving the cold of winter and entering into Spring! God's creation begins stirring again and we feel naturally rejuvenated. May this season of change also cause inner stirrings to our ongoing spiritual development.

Serving our Bridegroom the Lord Jesus is truly the greatest privilege we are permitted in this life. We are inspired to this out of an inner calling stimulated by the Holy Spirit. He gives us an awareness of God's greatness and His goodness which then compels us, out of thankfulness, to honor and serve Him with our life's actions, words, and lifestyle. This calling is much more than volunteering because it is never completed nor fully achieved; nor is it limited to a prescribed time period. Rather, it constitutes a lifetime quest for ways to serve Christ by serving others in our families, congregations, and communities. This dynamic opens for us a joy that transcends anything this world can offer, as it results in finding our Father's good pleasure and blessing. The true reward is not on this earth, but will be the opportunity to be with the Lord forever.

Come, dear ones, I encourage you to continue your journey of discovery to find your God given gifts using the tools provided by your rectors so that we all may engage them in the Lord's service. I cannot imagine anyone belonging to the Bride of Christ who did not learn to serve Him in some way during their life. This must be a prerequisite because in serving, we grow and our nature changes to become more and more like Him.

United with all the apostles, I wish for us all a wonderful season of renewal as well as moving experiences during this Passion Week and Eastertide celebration. May the inauguration of the new "young lions of faith" into our congregations at Confirmation cause much excitement and joy.

With love,

Leonard R. Kolb

Palm Sunday to Pentecost

We are quickly approaching the Easter season. Much as we celebrate an entire season of advent preceding Christmas, so we can celebrate Passion Week, the period of time that stretches from Palm Sunday through Easter, and then Eastertide, the time period beyond to Pentecost. Within this 6 week period we find the most extraordinary and impactful events within God's plan to offer salvation to mankind: Events that should not be confined to the pages of the Bible but must come alive within us and be experienced anew within our congregations in a most contemporary and relevant manner.

We also are witnesses within this season to another extraordinary and life changing event. Our young adults experience the wonderful transformation of their Confirmation and make one of the most impactful and far reaching decisions of their lives. But I would suggest that we can be more than witnesses. Perhaps this is an opportunity for all of us to be a strong and positive influence within the lives of our young people as our Chief Apostle advised us on New Year's Day.

So my dear brothers and sisters, as we approach Passion Week, let me ask you to do three things:

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EASTER SUNDAY | VICTORY

Jesus overcomes death and is raised from the dead. He talks to Mary at the tomb and appears to the disciples.
(Luke 24: 1-9)

SUNDAY

REST

The women and disciples returned home and rested as they observed the Sabbath.
(Luke 23:52 - 24:1)

SATURDAY

GOOD FRIDAY | THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Jesus is tried and condemned. Peter denies Him three times. Jesus is scourged and beaten, mocked, made to carry His cross and then crucified between two thieves. He dies and is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
(Matthew 27: 3-10, 51-56, Mark 14: 43-65, 15: 16-17, Luke 22: 66-71, Luke 23, John 18: 12-27, 19: 31-42)

FRIDAY

THE LAST SUPPER | A NEW COVENANT

Jesus washes His disciples feet and eats the Passover meal with them. He blesses bread and wine as His flesh and shares it with His disciples, instituting the sacrament of Holy Communion. Jesus and the disciples then go to Gethsemane to pray, where He is arrested.
(John 13: 1-30, Mark 14, 22-26, John 17)

THURSDAY

BETRAYAL

Judas bargains with the Jewish rulers to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.
(Luke 22: 3-6, Matthew 26: 6-16)

WEDNESDAY

TEACHING

Jesus teaches in the temple and is challenged by the Pharisees. Mary anoints Jesus at Bethany. He also traveled to and preached on the Mount of Olives.
(Luke 20: 1-8, Matthew 25, 25, Mark 13, John 12: 2-8)

TUESDAY

CLEANSING

Jesus cleanses the temple in Jerusalem, chasing away the moneychangers and vendors.
(Mark 11: 15-19)

MONDAY

PALM SUNDAY | PRAISE

Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem and is greeted by the people with Hosannas!
(Mark 11: 1-11)

SUNDAY

• Firstly, let us intentionally and purposefully grow deeper in our personal understanding of this season; the mystery of God's love for us, the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice and victory, the power of the Holy Spirit, the wonder of our redemption and ultimately the hope for Christ's return.

• Secondly, please make this season come alive today in a joyous and worshipful celebration within each congregation.

• Lastly, create a warm and on-going relationship with the newly confirmed young Christians in your congregation.

Enlivening the Gospel

We find varying accounts of this time period from the different perspectives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as well as the first two chapters of the Acts. Beyond the well known portrayal of Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter, let us dig deeper to enhance our understanding of the nuances of God's plan for our salvation and to gain insights that will help us in our life of faith today.

For instance, within the accounts of the Last Supper we can find much illumination. We see how Christ dealt with disappointment (the knowledge of Peter's denial) and betrayal (Judas). We find His description of the costs, the requirements and the rewards of dis-

* Portrayed above is a conventional timeline of events. Some publications may contradict what is depicted above.

ipleship. We learn how to serve one another in humility by His washing of the disciple's feet. Christ reveals the coming of the Comforter and the knowledge that He and His Father will love those who keep His commandments and will make their home with them. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35). We are also disciples of Christ.

Are our congregations characterized by love one for another and thus a testimony that we follow and serve Him?

At numerous junctures, we see how the perfect Son of God struggled continuously with the weakness of His human form. We can learn much from His intense life of prayer. At many points He reconfirmed His decision and calling to make the supreme sacrifice that we might find salvation from our sins and a victory over death and separation from our Heavenly Father.

Do we consider the magnitude of His sacrifice and our redemption every day? This is cause for endless worship.

Between the despair and grief of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Sunday lies a Saturday of much uncertainty for the disciples. Those that stayed near the Lord during their time of anxiety and fear experienced the wonders of His resurrection; even Thomas's doubts could be patiently assuaged.

Everyone experiences moments of disappointment and anxiety; but do

we stay near the Lord during times of tribulation and stress?

How useful and comforting for us today! We can continue to deepen our understanding by delving into the wonders of Ascension Day and Pentecost in the same manner.

Celebrate within our congregations

It will be to our greater joy and spiritual development if we also share these moments of discovery with each other within our congregations. Here are some suggestions:

Please consider the introduction of a Passion Week worship evening. This is an informal gathering dedicated to music, Bible readings and personal reflection and experience. It is designed to heighten our understanding and share our feelings of love and appreciation toward our Heavenly Father and His Son. Samples of worship evening format and content may be found on the Minister Companion and the Music Companion websites.

Also, please consider the use of Easter banners, preprinted song bulletins and invitation cards. They are available for order from the Minister Companion website as well.

Lastly, please utilize the Devotional. It contains weekly thoughts taken from the words of our Chief Apostle and has been organized according to the Christian calendar.

Confirmation

Our confirmands are approaching a unique, spiritual mile stone very similar to the caterpillar's transformation to a butterfly. These are our children who we love dearly! They are now

emerging from the safe chrysalis of their adolescence within the shelter of the congregation and are stretching their wings of faith. Is it not a joy to celebrate the unique and beautiful colors of their wings and support them as they take flight?

How can we make this memorable for them? Again, here are a few suggestions:

Confirmation services have been scheduled throughout the Eastertide season so that friends and relatives may travel easily and attend all the congregational celebrations for these young people. This would not be possible if every confirmation was held on Palm Sunday or Easter.

Build a friendship: Perhaps there is a young person in your congregation with whom you have not formed a relationship. It's not too late to start! To make an investment of love and friendship is a positive act of strength and good courage that may have life-long, if not eternal effects on a young soul.

I wish you a joyous and enlightened journey through Passion week and the Eastertide season. -LRK