

## A Monthly Message from Pastor Mike and Mandy

Dear Parish Family,

In his treatise, *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*, Luther wrote, “This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.” (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 43. Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1958, p. 24).

The word, pilgrim, comes from the Latin word, *peregrinus*, which means to travel to a foreign land. In English, we use the word peregrination to mean to take a journey. We are on a journey. Christian pilgrims are those who are traveling toward a set goal, a holy consummation and end. We have set out for the kingdom of heaven. As Luther states, “We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way.”

The pilgrimage is possible only because God in His grace sustains us. The road is rough; many dangers lay along the way; and the sun beats down furiously as we hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness like those whom Jesus calls blessed in *The Sermon on the Mount*. But, it is the right road, for it leads to final redemption.

Lent is a time of recollection (a good monastic word). We recall that we are dust and to dust we shall return, words from *Genesis* that sear heart, mind, and soul. We are sinners who “. . . have erred and strayed from thy (God’s) ways like lost sheep” and “. . . have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.” (*Book of Common Prayer*, Confession of Sin, Morning

Prayer). As Benedict counsels us in his *Rule* we must daily hold death before our eyes. Without a proper recollection of our situation which involves the struggle with sin, death, and the power of the devil, we are lost. Without a proper recollection that the Law shows God's wrath against our sin (see *Romans*), we can not repent. (This wrath of God against sin, Luther calls God's alien work). If we do not repent, we have truly lost our way.

But, there is much more. God also forgives the sins of those who are penitent and gives the Holy Spirit and faith to us. (Luther calls this action of God His proper work). It is in the justification of the sinner, grounded in Holy Baptism, that the pilgrimage begins, continues, and ends.

Along the way, we should not despair of God in Christ. As Saint Benedict counsels us, and Luther would agree, we should never lose hope in God's mercy. In the midst of the struggle, Christ through the Spirit (see Regin Prenter, *Creator Spiritus* on Luther's explication of the Holy Spirit's mediation of Jesus Christ within us) is present to give us strength and refreshment so that we may continue on the way. The Lord is the source of faith, hope, and love. He provides the food and drink that prevent starvation and dehydration.

May this Lenten journey be a time when you continue on the way with your sight set for the kingdom of heaven. Keep focused on the goal. Someday, not too long from the present, you shall enter heavenly joy. If it be God's will, we shall celebrate yet another glorious Resurrection of our Lord, Easter Day, before the journey's end.

In Christ,

Pastor Michael Tavella  
Pastor Amanda Grimmer