

Newsletter for February

Dear Friends in Christ:

During the first half of February, we have Sunday morning Gospel texts which launch us into the Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon, Jesus proclaims how different life is in the Kingdom of God from how life is in the domain of the world, the devil, and the sinful flesh. We never enter the Kingdom of God of our own efforts or volition, but those who are drawn by the Holy Spirit into the Kingdom of God are blessed (Feb. 1) and the light of the world and a city set upon a hill (Feb. 8).

At mid month, we have the Transfiguration of our Lord. Before we begin the Lenten journey, the Lord as he is under the aspect of eternity is revealed to Peter, James, and John and through their account, to us. As the great British scholar, Henry Chadwick, put it, "This isn't the first time Moses and Elijah met God on a mountain."

By Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18, we begin our Lenten journey with Christ as he makes his way to the cross. We are enjoined by the Church to focus on what it is about us, in us, and by us that makes it necessary for Christ to pay a debt he does not owe for those who have a debt they cannot pay. Without fully losing sight of the Kingdom of God where all things are as God intends them to be, we discover that the grass is too hard there for us to walk on it barefoot (C.S. Lewis). We are not yet ready for the Kingdom and the Resurrection of the Dead and the life of the world to come. We can only be made worthy and ready by the holy and precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of our Lord (Small Catechism).

Lent came along rather late in the Church's rhythm of life. The lifestyle of repentance which it symbolizes became necessary as we started recognizing and telling the truth about how much we are still in bondage to the world, the devil, and the flesh. What started as forty days of preparation for baptismal candidates in the Western Church gradually became a period of abstinence, penitence, and reflection.

Every Sunday participates in the Sunday of the Resurrection, but in Lent, our Sundays put one foot in the waters of Lenten observance with the texts, music, and colors being most prominent.

Yours in Christ,

John Shepherd McKenzie