

Dear Friends in Christ:

As we move deeper into the Easter Season the mood changes from the wonderful good news that Jesus is Risen, to the implications and changed reality that that news brings to the Church.

At the end of April we have good Shepherd Sunday.

On the 5th Sunday of Easter, we then have one of the great promise texts of the new testament: "I go to prepare a place for you..."

On the 6th Sunday of Easter we have a precursor to Pentecost in the promise of the Holy Spirit's being sent, and then the promise "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." This is from the 14th chapter of John as well.

We then have Ascension on Thursday, May 14 at 7pm. There we have the promise given by the angels at the beginning of Acts that the Lord will return to us in the same manner in which the disciples saw him leave.

The Seventh Sunday of Easter comes to us as a prayer and a commandment and a promise. Jesus prays in John 17 that the Church may be one as he and the Father are one.

Then comes Pentecost. We celebrate Pentecost on May 24. It is a celebration of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This is wonderfully described by Martin Luther in his explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

We end the month with Holy Trinity Sunday on May 31. Here the movement is not in us but in the history of God. The most complete proper name for God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Implicit in this proper name is the identifying description of God in light of the Resurrection event. The Father raises the Son from the dead by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This is the name into which we are baptized and it is the name to which we look for all good and to which we flee in time of trouble (Luther again).

I hope to see you early and often in May.

Yours in Christ, John Shepherd McKenzie