

# Trinity Times

January 2009

## From Pastor Crown

In his inaugural address President Obama summoned this nation to recognize, and then to assume the price and promise of citizenship, acknowledging the profound sacrifice of our forefathers and, with the resolve drawn from their courage, bidding us to set our feet on that same path.

The Lord Jesus Christ has always presented us with a clear view of citizenship, a citizenship created not by the people but by the God of Heaven. Consider your citizenship, your discipleship in His kingdom. Our Lord, without rhetorical pomp, plainly portrays the citizenship of Heaven. This kind of citizenship and discipleship is not attractive. He offers no retreat to comfortable pews, enveloped in blue and yellow beams streaming through stained glass windows; He promises no return to a well-manicured lawn and kept house. Jesus discloses His own citizenship and discipleship – rejection, suffering, and death. Discipleship follows the way of the cross. Rather than a destiny carved by tools of our choosing, discipleship participates in the Lord's own life and the means of the Father's choosing.

So what does the call to take up the cross and be called a citizen of Heaven mean for us? Attend church services more faithfully? Study His Word more often? Increase our offerings? Are those signs of a more dedicated disciple? Maybe. But if we intend to measure our discipleship, we shall always discover that we fall far short. Can you ever give enough of yourself? Vigorous activity may serve many people, yet Jesus warns about emphasizing your public visible activity, the external things of religion that man observes and comments on. When you supposedly deny yourselves in that way, so that other people might see your denial and activity, you have already received your reward from man and you will receive nothing from your Father in heaven.

The citizenship of Heaven has but one sign - the sign of the cross that has marked one for death. This radical citizenship is revealed to us as our lives are threaded between the promises of God and the temporary fleeting pleasures of this world. Our Lord had set before Him the same summons:

opt for the glorious citizenship of the world and serve yourself, or believe the Father's promise, even to Your God-forsaken death on the cross. For our Lord, that was no gaffe on the Father's part; His Son's citizenship, trust in the Father's Word, would be perfected through His obedience and suffering. And therefore with His faithfulness, participation in the heavenly Kingdom has been bestowed upon us through the waters of Holy Baptism.

Even as suffering was the essence of our Lord's life, inasmuch as it proved His faithfulness to the Father, the cross remains an essential part of the Christian life. The cross is not suffering per se, but suffering and rejection, and not rejection for any cause or conviction of our own, but rejection for the sake of our trust in Christ's all sufficient death on the cross. If we refuse to take up our cross and submit to suffering and rejection at the hands of men, we forfeit our fellowship of the cross with Christ.

This cross is laid on every Christian at baptism, for we have been joined in a death like His by Holy Baptism. The first and only call of the cross is to abandon every attachment to this world; the cross manifests the demand of the First Commandment. It may be a death like the first disciples or it may be a death like Luther, who fled the safety of the monastery and entered the world. But in every case we participate in the same kind of death of Christ: to surrender self-glorification, recognition, and honor for ourselves; to practice love as sacrifice and patience and righteousness; to live humbly and not exalt ourselves by the failures of others.

Our Lord had all life. He possessed all things: privilege, power, majesty, honor. All by divine right. Yet voluntarily and deliberately He let it all go. He emptied Himself, inserting Himself into our frustrations, helplessness, and limitations. With His Incarnation and Baptism by John, He fully identified with our condition. He willingly assumed the cross of eternal condemnation so that the cross for us would kill our sinful desires and that by the Father's raising of the faithful Son, we might receive citizenship instead of eternal exile and death. In this way, the cost of our discipleship has already been paid by Jesus.

Our Lord will not permit us to minimize or down play the hardships of discipleship. No special treatment, no exemptions, no guarantees as if we could write our own tickets. How can we be equipped for this discipleship? "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." The resources of the disciples did not qualify them, and our resources will not qualify us. By His grace, by His Word, by His Holy Spirit, by His very body and blood our help comes from the Lord who has been here before.

Does meditating on this kind of citizenship overwhelm you and frighten you? Are you tempted to affirm yourself, put down the cross and follow another path one day a week? Jesus has been there. Are you frustrated in your discipleship, people not understanding and misinterpreting what you say and do? Jesus has been there. Maybe you feel betrayed by someone you counted on. Jesus has been there. Does it feel as if God has turned His back on you? Jesus has been there. Do you fear pain, suffering and death? Jesus has been there.

Christ has known that in His own trust of the Father. He was tempted at every corner: tempted by the devil; tempted in the garden; tempted by His disciples. Yet He did not and would not succumb to altering the divine plan by which God would reconcile the world to Himself. He denied Himself and accepted the Father's will. He relinquished His rights and prerogatives and made Himself the Servant of God's righteousness for our salvation.

Does this kind of discipleship, which is the only kind of discipleship, mean that we cannot enjoy life? That question presumes we are still in charge; better is to seek the perspective of faith, that our lives are funneled through the cross. And not everything shall fit through. Our cars, our vacations, our jobs, our possessions? What will fit? Faith, possessed by the one who has trust only by God's grace, for with Him nothing is impossible.

Will this cancel our life? No. Will this postpone aspects of life? Possibly. Will we have to reappraise everything and subordinate our lives as of less importance? Most definitely yes. Friendship, marriage, earthly vocation. All must be purified through the furnace of the cross so that the dross is removed.

Some leaders gather disciples because of the rewards that drop from their hands as they

prosper. But what about following Jesus? A comprehensive health plan with guaranteed protection against cancer? Job had no such promise. Safe travel? Paul had no rider on his insurance for that. Fidelity to Jesus does not bring those rewards.

The message rings clearly. Deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Me musters no one for a hike through Foothill Park. Only those who follow Him closely know what lies beyond this long and difficult journey. Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it well: "If we assume the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and parting will it demand? To answer the question we shall have to go to Him, for only He knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us to follow Him, knows the journey's end. But we know that it will be on a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy." To follow Christ is to be led to the very best place possible.

## **Coming Soon - Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) Convention**

LOOK! Look for the LWML to meet next June under the banner "Look to the Hills ... God Reigns" — the theme of the 33rd Biennial Lutheran Women's Missionary League Convention in Portland, Oregon, June 25-28, 2009.

It has been 56 years since a national LWML convention has been held in Portland, so you should be booking planes, trains, automobiles (and definitely chartered buses) to attend. It's the opportunity of a lifetime! Begin making plans now, reserve the date and find some travel friends. Visit [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org) for more information.

Watch for further updates in the *Trinity Times*.

## **The Body of Christ**

Steve Winterstein and Sally Treadway happily announce their wedding December 5 at St. Orres

in Mendocino County. They were introduced by Vic and Norma Hesterman at Trinity in January, 2007. Within 10 minutes of their introduction, Steve was playing Rachmaninoff 2 for her on the piano in Room 8: it was all predictable after that! That spring, Steve started accompanying Trinity's choir and has been a tremendous asset to the choir even though he says he doesn't sing. As a child, Steve was the Missouri Synod's youngest organist, playing for Faith Lutheran Church in Philadelphia from the age of 8 until he went off to MIT, where he received all three degrees in math and engineering and played with the university string quartet. Steve privately tutors math and science in the afternoons, and is a consultant to a Norwegian company on (ocean) wave issues. He also teaches and does master classes for Sally's more advanced piano students. They thank the church for the lovely reception on the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete!) and look forward to continuing to be of service to Trinity through music.

### **Lutherans March For Life**

Anyone interested in the March held in Washington DC on January 22 may click on the following link to the Missouri Synod's website to read about it: [www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14677](http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=14677)

### **Thrivent Bake/Craft Sale: A Benefit for Hurricane Victims**

The third annual Thrivent bake/craft sale on Sunday, November 23 featured diverse talents of members of Trinity. A few items one would see while browsing among the tables were pretty stained glass articles by Linda Brown, beautiful hand-made cards from Sue Crown and Rene Jurgens, an artistic baby quilt by Ruth Endsley, photography by Pastor Crown, a dozen jars of assorted jellies by Wes Barton, two cases of homemade wine from Burt Endsley, and several items of Jewelry by Norma Hesterman.

The tables of baked goods were oh, so tempting. it was difficult to choose. Many, many people (too numerous to list, and some anonymous)

generously provided brownies, cookies, cakes, bars, rolls, candies, muffins, breads and pies. Hazel King baked and contributed 10 sweet potato pies! There was one drive-in customer. A woman driving by saw the sign and really wanted a cup of coffee. She chose additional items as well. Todd Lehman contributed the use of his new cash register.

Members were equally generous in purchasing items - resulting in a profit of \$1300. Thrivent added \$700, to make a total of \$2000 available to hurricane victims in Haiti and Texas through LCMS World Relief. We hope Trinity members will begin planning a craft to donate next year. The beneficiary will be determined in early fall. It is a great place to do one's holiday shopping.

### **Christmas Caroling**

Twenty-seven adults and children gathered in the fellowship hall on the afternoon of Saturday, December 13, to prepare to sing of the joy of Christmas to the ill and shut-ins of Trinity. After assembling into three groups they received a few instructions and rehearsed a few carols.

Then, armed with caroling books, names and addresses, maps, water, flashlights, and gifts of poinsettias and homemade cookies for the "carolees," they began their rounds. Each group had six or seven addresses to cover. Each group returned with reports indicating their efforts were very much appreciated. Two people had given them money. One invited them into her home and sang with them - the alto part! Another encouraged a caroler to play her piano. Another cried. At the retirement facilities, some residents joined in the singing and many expressed sincere appreciation.

When the chilly carolers returned to Trinity they enjoyed warm food and fellowship in a pleasantly decorated venue. The arrangements were made, and the supper provided, by the Trinity Thrivent group. The cookies were made by Trinity's youth group.