

April
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*I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy,
to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,
holy and pleasing to God—
this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Romans 12:1 NIV

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we bask in the afterglow of Easter, it is easy to let our attention wander from the heart of the Christian faith: the Good News of the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the tree of the cross and His empty tomb. Our distractions are many: things on our minds and tasks we want to get done. But by the grace of God we must ever return to the cross and empty tomb for our strength and comfort. The old sinful Adam in each of us would like nothing better than to cause us to look at our own works or experiences for our hope. Our redemption is not based on either one. Our faith in the the work of God done through Christ Jesus, our Lord, is the basis for our redemption.

We must ever be vigilant so that we do not succumb to the temptation to base our faith on our own holiness or righteousness. The moment we focus on ourselves, we become useless to God and a nuisance to other believers. It is only by faith in Jesus that we can please God in any way, because we have "put on Christ" in our baptism, and we continue to do so through Holy Communion and our reception of His Word of forgiveness offered to us in the Scriptures. By the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts through these means of grace, we are enabled to do what is good and pleasing in the sight of God. We do indeed become "living sacrifices" as St. Paul wrote. As such, we are so much better than all the slaughtered animals offered up in the Old Testament, for they merely pointed to Jesus Christ and His one great atoning sacrifice which would be sufficient for all people and all time. And now that He has risen from the dead and lives forever, we too may live new lives filled with hope and joy in the knowledge that God has rescued us from the power of sin, death, and the devil and we too shall rise. We know too that He hears our prayers and gladly receives our worship.

God will continue to give us His good gifts this Easter season and throughout the year. May His Spirit enable us to offer ourselves to His service, in this life, and in the life to come.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

