



Suffering With Jesus by Pastor Glenn Huebel

February brings us into the season of Lent where we spend 40 days following Jesus into the wilderness (First Sunday in Lent) and ultimately to the cross (Good Friday) and the tomb (Holy Saturday). During this somber season we are reminded that we do not just follow the story from afar, but that we Christians are called to suffer **WITH** Jesus, for “if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim 2:12). The cross is not just a symbol of God’s love for us (it is surely that!), but the mark of a Christian life, for Jesus says, “If any man come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me (Matt 16:24). This is no option for the Christian, for he that refuses to suffer with Jesus is counted an enemy of the cross (Phil 3:18). Those who refuse to suffer with Christ are not Christians at all, for “their end is destruction, and their god is their belly” (Phil 3:19). These words come from the pen of St. Paul who knew from day one what was in store for him as a Christian (“I will show him what things he must suffer for my name’s sake” – Acts 9:16).

Why all this suffering? Does God delight in the sufferings of His children? Is this a kind of Divine hazing initiation into the Kingdom?



Lucas Cranach the Elder. 1503.

Of course not! Sufferings are inevitable because of the nature of the circumstances. First, why did Christ have to suffer for us? He suffered because He willingly bore our name before the Holy God; i.e., He became “the sinner.” By taking our name He willingly incurred our debt before God. Paul writes, “God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Bearing the guilt of our sin before God meant receiving our just punishment. “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, each to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6). Jesus willingly took the cup of God’s wrath and drank it in our place (Matt 26:39). We see these sufferings primarily exhibited on the cross on Good Friday, but He suffered our infirmities throughout His walk on earth. It was necessary for Him to die as the sinner so that we could be washed from our sin and declared righteous. This is why Jesus said “I must” go to Jerusalem, be rejected by the Jews, be delivered to the Gentiles, and be crucified. There was no other way to accomplish His saving mission than through the cross.

But why do we suffer with Christ? We inevitably must suffer with Christ because as He bore our Name before God, we bear His Name before the devil and the world. He wore our filthy garments of sin and willingly suffered our death so that we could wear His robe of righteousness and receive His inheritance. We are now sons of God and citizens of heaven. We live in the world, but are not of the world. As we confess Christ in word and deed, the world recognizes that we are strangers and foreigners in the land. The world recognizes that we have a different spirit. In fact, St. Paul goes on to say that we have a different “odor,” the odor of death to the world (2 Cor 2:15-16). As the world hated Christ, so it is inevitable that the world will hate everyone who belongs to Christ. His enemies did not hate Christ because He was a sinner, but because He was righteous. They did not hate Him because He was darkness, but because He was the Light of

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

the world and they loved darkness. So also, the sufferings we bear in Christ's Name are not those we merit because of our sin (Peter says we should not glory in those sufferings), but because of our righteous deeds. When we suffer for doing what is right in His Name, Jesus says we should rejoice with great joy. It is an honorable thing to suffer for Christ's sake. Such sufferings glorify Him.

So it is that Christ suffered because He loved us and willingly bore our sin in His body all the way to the cross. We suffer because we love Christ and declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We love Him because He first loved us. We suffer for Him because He first

suffered for us. It was for the joy set before Him that Jesus endured the cross. It is for the joy set before us that we bear our cross after Jesus and gladly endure such sufferings. The sufferings are the mark of our mutual love.

If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies. They will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing. And let no one think that he shall have peace. He must risk whatever he has upon earth – possessions, honor, house, and estate, wife and

children, body and life. Now, this hurts our flesh and old Adam. The test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assaulted, and to let go whatever is taken from us. (Martin Luther, Large Catechism, 3rd petition of the Lord's Prayer)

Almighty God, Your Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption. Grant us courage to take up our cross daily and follow Him wherever He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Proper 17, Series A)

On Lutheran Schools by Pastor Tom Chryst

We just finished another “**Lutheran Schools Week**” here at Messiah, and in many other LCMS schools around the country. While some of the most visible festivities are the school-spirit crazy costume days, there's much more we could say about the topic.

The LCMS has a history of parochial education from its very founding. Many churches even ensconced in official constitutions the priority of running a day-school. The LCMS, which is maybe the 12th largest church body in America – still runs the 2nd largest system of religious schools, second only to the Roman Catholic system. As a church body, education is “in our DNA”.

Messiah's chief mission focus, apart from Word and Sacrament Ministry, is our school.

Obviously, no church is a church without the essentials of Sunday morning – the preaching and teaching of Christ, and the administration of His sacraments: Holy Baptism, Holy Communion. These are the reasons Messiah exists at all. These are the essentials. Beyond this, every

congregation has great freedom in what other mission activities we might undertake. And so we ask, “*How can we best serve our community and extend the reach of the Gospel beyond our Sunday gatherings?*” And the answer we have chosen together, here at Messiah, is to run our Academy. MLCA has been, and will be for the foreseeable future, our chief endeavor as a congregation (again, second only to the proclamation of the Gospel itself). Our wagons are hitched, church and school. There ought not be an “us and them” divide, but rather a recognition that we're in this together – mutual support and encouragement.



At Messiah, we are also part of the growing movement amongst

Lutheran schools who take a **classical** approach to education. This is more than I can fully explain here, but in short: we teach children using time-tested methods appropriate to each stage of development, and build them not toward a career path but as a well-rounded whole person, steeped in the best of traditions our civilization has received, and eager to apply this strong foundation as men and women of integrity no matter where life takes them.

Many others are catching on!

Perhaps it's part of a reaction to a continued degrading of our culture and society, a sort of “ad fontes”, back-to-the-source counterweight to the craziness of Progressivism. We've recently partnered with a classical homeschool organization (“Classical Conversations”) that shares many of the same ideas, and meets on our campus each Friday. And now, even our own Concordia University system schools are beginning to create formal degree programs aimed at certification of teachers in Classical Lutheran education.

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I myself am a product of Lutheran schools, from pre-school on up. I started at St. James Elementary School in Overlea, Maryland, where I begged my parents to go to preschool not JUST twice a week, but every day! In 7th grade, I began Baltimore Lutheran High School and graduated in 1991. After 4 years at a Lutheran college, Concordia Bronxville (where I met Brenda, who also graduated from there), I then went on to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. So I think I've seen about as much of Lutheran schools from the inside as anyone.

As a pastor, I've also seen Lutheran schools **from the "other side"**. My congregation in Wisconsin ran a Lutheran school with two other congregations. I sent my own children to a classical Lutheran school, and then to a "mainstream" LCMS school at different times. Does Lutheran homeschooling count? We did that too. I've also served on the Board of Directors for the high school in Racine, Wisconsin and taught classes for Concordia Wisconsin Bachelor's degree students at a satellite campus. And now, of course, we've been here and blessed by our own Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy for several years.

I tell you all this not to simply boast of credentials but to show just one example of how **Lutheran schools impact lives**. In my case, it is largely because of LCMS schools that I chose to become a pastor and was trained as such. And it also shows how the work we do through our schools can have effects that reverberate for generations in ways which we may never know. How many lives have been touched through our school? How many children have heard, how many families have been exposed to the love of God in Jesus Christ? And what will the effects of all our work be on this generation and the generations yet to come? The answer is, literally, "God only knows".

Running a school is hard work. There's a (true?) story about a seminary professor who would

always tell his outgoing class of new pastors-to-be, "Gentlemen, if you are called to your first parish and they happen to have a school, give thanks to God. And if you are called to a congregation that does NOT have a school, give thanks to God." It's a tongue-in-cheek admission that church schools bring many blessings, but also many challenges for all involved. It's not easy to run a school. Private, parochial schools are struggling in most places. And the challenges will never go away. We do well to face them honestly, and with kindness. Sometimes tough decisions need to be made, and suffering is involved. We've seen this in our midst, too.

But this ought not discourage us. Like the ministry of Word and Sacrament itself, we are given the privilege to serve but rarely to see the full fruit of our labors. We are simply content to know that **"your labor in the Lord is not in vain"** (1 Cor. 15:58).

Our churches and schools have often benefitted each other in ways tangible and intangible, and we see that in our situation as well. New families join our congregation, quite often, who first get to know us through the school. Some even "church-shop" along with the intention of enrolling children in a solid Lutheran church school. And what a joy and blessing to be able to see the same families at church and school, and consider them your extended family!



But the best part of it all is that we get to share Christ. Along with the "3 R's", or whatever educational content and training we provide, we

always, always share Christ. Our students hear the Gospel daily in ways formal and informal, in chapel and in class and in the hallways. They see Christ modeled in their teachers. They are taught and practice the Christian values of love for neighbor and forgiveness when we fail. They sing and pray and live daily lives in a community of faith that is easy to take for granted, but ought to be appreciated and upheld for the blessing it is. And whether they are with us a short time or for many years, whether they join our church or not, whether they see the great benefits of MLCA now or later or never – nonetheless, they will have heard the good news of Jesus Christ. And that is no small thing.

Friends, I know there's been some anxiety lately about our school and the finances, especially. I don't think anyone who's been paying attention would say we have no challenges. With schools, that's never the case anyway. Nor does anyone seem to have all the answers, at least not easy ones. **But let's stop for a moment to appreciate and count our blessings**, as both a church and school. God has been good to us. His work is being done here. The blessings abound. Let's redouble our efforts to put those blessings to their best use. Let's pray for the ministry of the Word of Christ, and for the children and families we have been called to serve. Think of ways you may lend support to this, our congregation's chief mission activity (besides the very preaching of the Gospel itself). And pray God's blessing as we put our hands together on the plow, and scatter the seeds of Christ as best we can.



Bag Mat-ters matters by Vicki Main

On Thursday, January 18, Ray & I had the pleasure of once again going to the Presbyterian Night Shelter in downtown Fort Worth to deliver sleep mats—22 of them. The chaplain takes them to “The Park” in Fort Worth and distributes them to those in need. This was our third time to deliver mats—we’ve made approximately 60 mats to date. The mats are entirely washable and quickly air dry. They do not mildew and provide warmth and protection from cold and/or wet concrete and the elements. Cost of this project? - time.

The project was originally listed as a ‘community project idea’ from Thrivent that was in one of our Sunday bulletins 3 years ago. With the help of many hands doing various aspects of the project, we have been able to continue on. *Our biggest need is for more crocheters* so we can generate more comfort mats. It’s single crochet only, back and forth, and back and forth. The mats are approximately 3-1/2’ wide and 6’ long. The variety of colors is really quite amazing when worked into a mat. Wal-mart has white, tan and gray; Kroger & Albertson’s tan; Toys R Us orange, blue, purple, green; Dollar General yellow; Kohl’s gray; Sprouts mint green [their organic produce bags] and Cabela’s a dark green just to name a few. I promise you, you’ll never look at a plastic bag the same way ever again!

Although this is a small project compared to the many needs that exist for the homeless, the gratitude for these mats is overwhelming *and* humbling. The chaplain says he could *easily* hand out 300 mats. Who would think mere plastic bags could have an impact to help serve those in need? If you are interested in helping, please feel free to contact me at 940/391-/8593 or at vickinotes@msn.com or just come. Our next Saturday workshop gathering is Saturday, March 10, in the Fellowship Hall. We usually work 9:30am-noon.

Each day the Presbyterian Night Shelter provides free access to safe shelter and 1500 warm meals for 670 single men and woman, 197 women with children, and 64 Veterans.





*Here are some of
the worker-bees
making it all
possible!*

And this is what we do at Bag Mat-ters
on the 2nd Saturday of each month . . .
sort by color, flatten, cut into strips, loop
into balls of plarn, start crocheting . .
.over and over again! The last step is to
braid macramé cord to make a rope to
wrap around the mat to facilitate
carrying.



*When you lie down , you will
not be afraid; when you lie
down your sleep will be
sweet. —Proverbs 3:24*

And these little workers live at my house: meet
Olivia & Luther. They try out all the mats I crochet,
testing for softness and comfort!





Here's some "plarn" [plastic yarn] ready to crochet after having been cut into strips and looped together.



Flatten bag, cut-off bottom, cut into 1-1/2" strips, loop together and you're ready to start crocheting with a size Q crochet hook!



These colored strips are all from newspaper bags!



This is *Harriet Willis*. She has worked at the Shelter for five years and is the head of Volunteer Services and In-Kind Donations. She's been my contact for the 3 years we've been involved in this project.



Our mats ready to go!

Here's what was new this time. . . . to each mat we attached a laminated piece of paper with Proverbs 3:24 on it—*When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*





Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org

The next time you cross paths with **Tina Turley** at church, feel free to say "Howdy," or "Hi y'all" to this native Texan and her husband.

Meet Your Fellow Members by Dawn Holden

Tina became a Messiah member in December 2016, after marrying Brian Turley in May 2016.

The couple lives in Cleburne on acreage that accommodates their numerous animals.

Tina works at Klein Tools as a materials handler in shipping and receiving.

In available free-time — "What free time?" Brian joked — the couple likes to hunt and play with their animals, as well as their grandchildren.

Tina also loves cooking barbecue (her family used to own a barbecue business) as well as baking pies, cakes, and cookies.

She's also skilled at carpentry and plumbing.

Tina said she most appreciates the values of Messiah.

"This one (church), the message that is preached at Messiah is that there is a ray of hope," she said. "It is uplifting and renewing."



EXPERIENCE MLCA - EVENING OPEN HOUSE

www.mlcateexas.org 817.431.5486

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

5:30 - 7:30 p.m. (come & go)