**Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church LC-MS**

Monthly Newsletter --- April 2023

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“THE ROCK and THE SWORD”

“Built upon the Rock of Christ and wielding the

Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.”

**From the Pastor:**

**Under the Cross**

I’m reading a book right now called “The Theology of the Cross: Reflections on His Cross and Ours.” The author of the book is Rev. Daniel Deutschlander, a retired Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran pastor. I find that the older I get, the more I enjoy reading which once came so difficult to me. I haven’t yet completed the book at the publishing of this article, but I hope to do so in the coming week. What particularly strikes me thus far is Deutschlander’s emphasis that not all things, i.e., calamities, death, struggles, poverty, persecution and so on are crosses for the Christian, though they most certainly can be such. These things are common to all men. You see, there must be self-denial in order for any of these things to be the Christian’s cross in this life.

This makes so much sense as sinful human nature would much rather play the victim. “This cross has befallen me; woe is me”, says the sinful heart. But if that’s all there is, then what purpose does the cross serve other than to make men despair? This we know:  God tempts no one, and provides the way of escape for all temptations of man. The cross which God sends to his dear children to bear is a cross because it requires us to deny ourselves to follow Jesus. Here is the passage from Matthew 16:

**Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?**

Many people want to follow Jesus, but want to do so without “denying themselves.” Many want the glory promised to the saints who believe in the Son and the One who sent Him, but don’t want the suffering part and the life shaped by the cross. But the cruciform life can in no way be lived without this important work of the new and regenerate man. He who wishes to bear the cross and follow Christ in his life, must deny himself. For the Christian, this means that there is a definite break from satisfying what one’s mind and body would like to have if it goes against faith and the Word of God. Calamities, death, struggle, poverty, and persecution can all be crosses for the Christian to bear so long as they bring about this important work of the Spirit.

Here are a few examples.

*There is a massive tornado that rips through our hometown and destroys much of what we own and our daily lives.*

What isn’t the cross?-The damage caused by the tornado. This is common to all our neighbors and friends who also suffered the same disaster

What is the cross?Surely there will arise a doubt over God’s love for us and our families, especially if death has occurred. God promised in Luke 12 that man was more valuable than the sparrows and the grass of the field, but yet here we must suffer. Therefore, our hearts must remember that God will never leave us nor forsake us. As it is written in Hebrews 13:5, we must be content with what we have or do not have. God knows all our needs, only seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added.

*A dearly-loved person dies in the family.*

What isn’t the cross? Death has come. It is appointed for man once to die and once to be judged. This is common for the believer and unbeliever alike.

What is the cross? The cross may be different to each. If the deceased was a Christian, we may think his death was ill-timed, or that he died too young, or that he didn’t deserve to die because of how good he was in life. There is a need to deny our own selves and our own counsel and see that the counsel of God and His purpose is far greater than our own.

We may also at this time consider our own death and mortality, and count death as a greater triumph than the resurrection of Christ from the dead and so grieve as those who have no hope. This, too, would prove a necessary cross to bear to deny ourselves these poor thoughts.  And in such a fight, we must trust that as surely as Christ has risen from the dead so, too, shall the one who died in the faith.

For the unbeliever who has died apart from Christ in the faith, we may think that God is unfair and not merciful since such a person would not have heard the Gospel and received faith. Once again, we must yield and bite our tongues, for God has granted every day here on earth as a day to hear His Word and live in His promises, but yet men are far too stiff-necked and hardened to hear.

*Father, mother, brother, and sister are all denying the faith which we confess.*

What isn’t the cross? -That we do not see eye to eye with our family. All families on earth have such trials.

Jesus said, in this world, we will have trouble. Of course, this also applies to the faithful who may not always be spared this from even within our own households.

What is the cross?  Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” Matthew 10:37-39

What is it that we must deny in ourselves? It is the greater love for father, mother, sister and brother over the love of God and His Word. We must still honor the members of our own households, especially our fathers and our mothers, but at the same time we cannot deny the God who saved us and the truth which sets us free. Therefore, the time may come for us to choose between the two, and though the heart longs to have family and friends on this earth, the family which God gives is far greater.

*Suffering isn’t the cross.* The cross to bear is the temptation to turn away from the Lord and Faith. *Sickness and death aren’t the cross*. It’s the temptation to believe that God isn’t faithful to His promises of mercy and deliverance. *Persecution isn’t the cross.* The cross is bearing the temptation to remain quiet in order to make it all go away.

Rev. Deutschlander, is right. All the pain, grief, and sorrow that we often feel from many calamities, death, and struggles in this world are only crosses for us Christians if we deny the very part of ourselves that wishes to live in sin or support those who do. Suffering, persecution, and sicknesses can all be shared by the general world; but what makes them the cross for the Christian is the denial of the self to doubt the mercy of God and His faithfulness toward us, and turn away from Him to serve the self and its pleasures while there is yet time before death. The crosses which take after the cross of our Savior deny the desires of the heart to escape the world unscathed by lovelessness, thanklessness, hatred, and abuse. Remember, gladly, that we are blessed when others revile us. The time for cross bearing is while we yet live here on earth awaiting the final consummation of the Church. Then shall come the time when we shall wear the crown of glory and the time for cross bearing shall end.

In Christ,

Pastor Deal

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**Mark Your Calendars**

* The next **Church Council meeting** will take place Monday, May 15th at 7 pm. This differs from what was announced in January.

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**VICAR ASSIGNED**

**Zachary Wessel, a seminarian** from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, has been assigned to All Saints Lutheran Church, Slippery Rock. Vicar Wessel will work under the supervision of Pastor Deal.



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**Mother’s**

**Day**

**Is**

**May 14th!**

**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE**

Blue: Pledged as of 04.23.2023 $184,320 (92.16%)

Orange: Remaining

$15,680 (7.84%)

Total Contributions

as of 04.23.2023:

$166,982 (83.49%)

Previous: $164,906 (82.45%)

New: $2,076 (1.04%)

Remaining: $33,018 (16.51%)

*Amounts used are based on*

*weekly deposits reported.*

It’s not too late to submit a Capital Campaign pledge card! Pledge cards are available on the table outside Pastor’s office. If circumstances have changed and you need to update your pledge card, please see Jonathan Baisch. Updated pledges help our Trustees plan more effectively and efficiently.

**TRUSTEES’ UPDATE**

In April, *Anything Masonry* completed its work repairing and sealing the stone work on the exterior of the building. The exterior masonry was then sprayed to remove dirt and grime on the walls which had accumulated over the years. This latter project was done “in house”.

The Trustees met in April and agreed to forward the following items to Church Council: 1) Quotes for the replacements of the stage door and the exit door on the north side of the Fellowship Hall; and 2) replacement of the stove in the Fellowship Hall kitchen.

Additionally, the electric to the sign in the courtyard has been repaired and boiler inspection has been scheduled for May 11th. The Trustees are currently in the process of gathering quotes for air conditioning.

As always, please feel free to speak with a Trustee with any concerns or place a note in Mike Flaugher’s library mailbox.

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**CELEBRATING IN MAY!**

**Birthdays:**

Arlene Sutton 5 - 14

Anna Mae Daris 5 - 15

Catherine Carr 5 – 21

Ralph Dorman 5 - 21

Joe Chlpka 5 - 21

Kati Laird 5 – 31



**Anniversaries:**

Lennie & Kim Revale 5 – 16

Michael & Kati Laird 5 - 21

\*If birthdays or anniversaries have been omitted, please let the church office know. Thank You!

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**ATTENTION AUDITORS!** A **Monthly Audit** will take place following worship, Sunday, May 21st in the library. If unable to attend, please phone Bev Chlpka at 724-962-4806.

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**REMINDER:** Please let the church office know of any changes to your address, phone, cell phone or your e-mail address!

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**LIKE & FOLLOW our Church’s Facebook page (Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church)!**

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**Thank You for Serving in May:**

**Elder:** Jonathan Baisch; **Ushers:** Matt Berent, Mark Gabriel, Michael Laird, and Jerome Thomas; **Altarware:** prior~Diane Riefstahl & Marie Flaugher (05.14); after~Evelyn Baisch & Arlene Sutton.

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**Church Office Hours** Please note that the Secretary’s office will be closed the week of May 8th.

Monday and Thursday office hours, the first & third weeks of the month, will be 8:30-5 (closed from 10-11 am Thursdays for Bible Study); other weeks will otherwise be Monday and Thursday from 8:30-4:30.

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**We were chosen!** By directing designated Choice Dollars through Thrivent Choice, eligible Thrivent members choose where Thrivent Financial for Lutherans distributes some of its charitable outreach grant dollars among thousands of participating Lutheran nonprofit organizations and congregations.

**Many thanks** to Thrivent Financial members **Kati Laird** and **Traudi Sulek** who recently directed Choice dollars to our church!

***Please keep the following***

***in your prayers:***

Millie Elavsky

1209 Maple Dr.

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724-342-0345

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Nancy Robertson

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Betty Ann Wolf

7777 Arthur St., SC

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Ed & Millie Zachar

1320 Old Forge Rd.

Niles, OH 44446

330-652-9316

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Submissions for the June issue of **“The Rock and the Sword”** newsletter are due to the secretary’s office Monday, May 22nd at noon. This includes meeting dates and times for the church calendar.

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**FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY**

The second Sunday of each month has been designated as “Stock the Food Pantry Sunday”. Your financial contributions will be greatly appreciated! Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and placed in the offering plate. Please be sure to indicate your envelope number and designate the donation to the Food Pantry.

**ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM**

**– College of the Ozarks**

*Submitted by Pastor Baisch*

Since taking office in 2021, President Biden has spared no effort on inserting radical gender ideology into federal policy. Under the guise of The Fair Housing Act, the administration has issued a mandate forcing colleges and universities to open their dorms, bathrooms, and showers to members of the opposite sex or face heavy fines of up to six figures, punitive damages, and attorneys’ fees.

College of the Ozarks, a private Christian college in SW Missouri has stood up to this unconstitutional edict that encroaches on girls’/women’s privacy and violates religious liberty. Three lower court judges said the college is not even allowed to request a court order to protect its students from this illegal mandate.

ADF attorneys have asked the US Supreme Court to hear the college’s case. The college believes that human sexuality is a gift from God, and that a person’s sex is God-given and objective. In particular, the college has male and female dorms, separated by the sex of the students.

The federal government’s directive applies to ALL colleges where any student can apply – even private, religious schools like College of the Ozarks, and even if they receive little or no federal funding.

ADF Senior Counsel Julie Marie Blake stated, “The government cannot strip a private, faith-based institution of its constitutionally protected freedoms just because it disagrees with [its] views about biological sex and women’s privacy. By redefining ‘sex’ in federal law to include gender identity, President Biden has grossly overreached his authority.”

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**OUR 2nd QUARTER MISSION:**

***Support of a Concordia,***

***Fort Wayne Seminarian***

Our annual second quarter local mission is support of a Concordia, Fort Wayne seminarian.

Monies which are collected during this time will be sent to a randomly-assigned seminarian. These monies may be used in any way needed (books, tuition, living expenses, etc.). It is hoped that this gift will bring some joy and relief into the life of one dedicated to the study of His word in preparation for the ministry.

Donations may be placed in a pew envelope and put in the offering plate. Please be certain to specify 2nd Quarter Local Mission and note your name and envelope number.

Thank you for helping to brighten the day of a servant of God!

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ALTAR GUILD NEWS

The next **Altar Guild** meeting will be May 20th at 1 pm. The May hostess is Kati Laird.

**New members are always welcome!!!!**

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**REMINDER:**

If you do not have an email account or do not receive emails from the church, but wish to be notified of significant information concerning your fellow church members (such as births or deaths), please put a note in the Secretary’s mail slot asking to receive a phone call. Every attempt will be made to phone you within 24 hours of an email being sent out.

**Bible Memory Verses for April**

**For Adults:**

April 2: *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27*

April 9: *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*

*John 11:25-26a*

April 16: *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” John 20:22-23*

April 23: *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12*

April 30: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

**For Children:**

April 2: *Christ says: “For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.” John 17:19*

April 9: *I am the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1:18*

April 16: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3*

April 23: *I am the Good Shepherd…My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life.*

*John 10:11, 27-28*

April 30: *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

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**Coffee Fellowship is May 7th!**

Join us following worship, Sunday, May 7th for **Coffee Fellowship.** This month’s sponsor is Linda Tomko.

If you would like to be a 2023 Fellowship sponsor, please sign the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. Sponsors are asked to bring 2-3 dozen donuts/muffins/treats along with 1-quart juice to the Fellowship Hall kitchen prior to worship. Set-up, clean-up, and the making of coffee will be done for you.

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If you would like someone’s name to be added to or deleted from our prayer list, please put a written note in the secretary’s mail slot by the office door.

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**Women’s Bible Study to Meet on First and Third Thursdays**

At the April Women’s Bible Study, those in attendance requested a change in the meeting time to twice a month (first and third Thursdays) from 10 – 11 am. beginning in May.

Join us in the Fellowship Hall May 4th as we delved further into the book of Philippians. Our last session focused primarily on the history of St. Paul’s journeys. We only began to read and discuss Philippians 1, so don’t worry about being far behind! Come join and learn with us!

**Appreciating the “*Traditional”* Divine Service**

*Submitted by Pastor Baisch*

Have you ever really thought about WHY we worship as we do? Well, let me endeavor to provide you with some “insights” on our Divine Worship liturgies. One way to do so is to see the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on display in the order of service.

The major events in the life of Christ are hinted at, or explicitly mentioned in the classic order of service. As we begin our worship we do so in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, reminding us that we are baptized into Christ when His name was placed upon us in our own baptism. When we enter into the presence of God in worship, we rightly plead for mercy in our Confession and in the Kyrie. God’s answer to us is Christ, and the forgiveness spoken over us. Traditionally, Christians have sung the song the angels sang at Christmas when announcing the Savior’s birth, the Gloria in Excelsis, or Glory to God in the highest, after pleading “Lord, have mercy!” With this reminder of Jesus’ birth, we begin the story of Christ.

Soon, thereafter, we wave our palm branches and sing the Palm Sunday “Hosanna” and “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!” We cry the Good Friday prayer, “Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world”, and with our resurrected Lord eat His feast, as did the Emmaus disciples. We then receive our Lord’s blessing, He Who has reassured us that His peace will always be with us, before we enter the same challenging (and maybe a bit “crazy”) world as did the disciples. We do so after receiving Jesus’ blessing as He ascended into heaven, and when they received the assuring word from the angel, “This same Jesus will come again in like manner as you have seen Him go.”

Now . . . doesn’t that change your perspective on the Divine Service just a bit?

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Remember thefollowing in prayer…

**~The Hurting and Healing:** *The family and friends of Barry Nelson, who passed away April 25, 2023; also, Amy, Gerald Arthur, Ellen BaronCA, Lois BortnerCA, John Burdette, Bev & Joe Chlpka, Kathleen Coughenour, Kim, Anna Mae Daris, Susan Davies, Tim Dudash, Millie Elavsky, Joseph Fleet, Judith & Eddy Furey, Tim Haenftling, Austin Hamilton, Joan, Darla Krajci, Barbara Kreske, Donna Kennedy, Jess Lavoie, Joanne Lozier, Paul LucasCA, Sandy Marshall, Frank NiemeyerCA, Linda Parkany, Juanita Rentschler, Richard ReuningCA, Nancy RobertsonCA, Marty Scott, Kara, Fred Tonty, Angela WeserCA, and Ruth Wolf.*

**~The Homebound:**  *Rudy & Jean Tomko, Betty Wolf, and Ed & Millie Zachar.*

**~Serving in the Military:**  *Curtis Sinewe and Joshua Solyan.*

**~Community & World Needs:**  *Those suffering from or affected by the coronavirus; those suffering due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; those suffering from loss and dislocation because weather disasters; those suffering from addiction and their families; Local, State, and National Government Leaders; safety for all Police Officers, Firefighters, & First Responders; the unemployed; our Second Quarter Local Mission: The Support of a Concordia, Fort Wayne Seminarian.*

*\*CA represents cancer.*

**In Sympathy**

Sincere sympathy goes out to the family and friends of Barry Nelson, who passed away suddenly April 25th. Barry was a man of strong, genuine faith. He was a family man who loved serving his Lord. This church and congregation benefitted greatly from this love.

Barry served as a Sunday School teacher, usher, Elder, and Church Council member. He sang in the choir, assisted with services, volunteered for Community Day activities, visited shut-ins, and worked diligently with our Food Pantry. He was willing to assume leadership roles, but was also one of the first to fill in where others needed him. He did all this without the desire for recognition; he did all this out of love for his church and his Savior.

Barry truly was a “people person”. He was ready with a firm handshake or a hug. He truly cared about his fellow man. May he rest in peace in the arms of his Lord.

Barry’s obituary, as provided by the McGonigle Funeral Home and Crematory, follows:

*Barry C. Nelson, 67, of Pymatuning Twp., passed away suddenly on Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at the Emergency Room of UPMC Horizon Hospital, Greenville.*

*Mr. Nelson was born on March 17, 1956, in Sharon, a son of C.W. “Bill” and Margie (Markell) Nelson. He was a 1974 graduate of Sharpsville High School and attended Penn State Shenango Campus. After two years, Barry transferred to Main Campus, where he earned his bachelor’s degree and eventually his master’s degree. He was a proud alumnus and fan of Penn State Nittany Lion football and wrestling.*

*Barry began his career in the Mercer County Cooperative Extension and retired in 2015 as a social studies teacher at Commodore Perry High School, Hadley, PA. He was an extremely dedicated educator and cared deeply about his students and colleagues.  Following his teaching career, he served as the President of the Pennsylvania Association of School Retirees. Additionally, he was a longtime school board member of the Reynolds School District.*

*Barry was a man of strong faith, and an active member of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sharon, where he was an elder, sang in the choir, and was the head of the church food pantry.*

*He enjoyed working out and is often remembered for his strong handshake.  He also enjoyed engaging in conversation with everyone he came across, if only just to try and brighten their day.  He was a devoted husband, who cared deeply about his wife, Christine.  His children were a central part of his life and his love for them showed in everything that he did.*

*He is survived by his wife, the former Christine Krajci, whom he married on July 6, 1985; a son, Bill Nelson and his fiancée Desarae Makis, Cortland, OH; a daughter, Brittany Forbis (Ian), Zelienople, PA; two step-grandchildren, Maxwell and Lilian Forbis; and a sister, Susan Davies (Larry), Okeechobee, FL.*

*Barry was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, David Nelson.*

*The family suggests memorial contributions be directed to Sts. Peter and Paul Food Pantry, 699 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA 16146.*

**In Sympathy**

Sincere sympathy is extended to the friends and family of Viola Sakony who passed away March 25th. Viola had been a life-long member of this congregation, was an integral member of the Altar Guild, and served this church in many capacities. For many years, Viola took upon herself the task of wishing her church family members “happy birthday” by sending cards on behalf of the congregation. Weekly, she would launder and press the purificators (communion cloths) which were used and return them to the church the following week in pristine condition. Although not one to keep her opinions to herself, Viola could be counted on to pitch in and help out even if she was not initially in agreement with the plan. She was a believer in “the greater good” and was quick to express her thanks and appreciation to those others who served this congregation.

She will be greatly missed.

May those who mourn Viola’s passing find comfort in the knowledge that she now is at rest from her labors and basking in the presence of our Lord.

Viola’s obituary, originally published in the *Sharon Herald* follows:

*Viola Sakony, 93, of Sharon, passed away Saturday, March 25, 2023, at Hospice of the Valley in Poland, Ohio, after an extended illness.*

*Born Dec. 19, 1929, in Sharon, Viola was the daughter of Thelma (Davis) Swartzbeck and Albert Swartzbeck.*

*Viola graduated from Sharon High School and worked as a salesperson for Valley View Discount Department Store for 40 years.*

*She was a member of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, where she greatly enjoyed being a member of the Altar Guild.*

*She also enjoyed cooking, baking, and spending time with her family.*

*Viola is survived by a son, John Sakony, and his wife, Melissa Benovitch, of West Mifflin, Pa.; a sister, Louanne Jordan of Arizona; and a grandson, Colin Sakony of West Mifflin.*

*Viola was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, John Sakony, whom she married Oct. 27, 1951, and who passed away Oct. 18, 1998; a sister, Caroline Swartzbeck; and two brothers, Edward and Wesley Swartzbeck.*

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***Reflections***

*~by Diane Riefstahl*

One of the most fascinating classes I took in college was a course on architecture. (Granted, I was studying overseas and classes involved field trips to samples of the styles being studied.) What I most took away from the course was the fact that architecture is a reflection of the times and the people living at those times. It is a “living history”. I dismayed at the fact that Americans seemed focused on tearing down buildings and erecting new, rather than preserving history by maintaining structures.

That same summer while I was taking this course, my home church was being razed to the ground and a new church built in its place. Gone were the pews where my grandparents and late father had sat. No more was the beautiful altar before which I had been baptized and recited Bible verses each Christmas Eve. Sure, some pieces of the former church were incorporated into the new, but it wasn’t the same.

Since the first day I visited this church, I was impressed with the physical linking of the former church building with the new. In itself, it is a tangible salute to those who preceded us and who worked so hard to keep this congregation alive (even through some very tough times).

I am equally proud of the fact that, today, we are striving to preserve our building, inside and out, to make certain it stands as a testament to our tenacity to keep this church and this congregation going (yes, again, through some challenging times).

I encourage you to read the following article which was published in the April 2023 issue of *Ad Fontes*, a publication by Luther Classical College. In it, I hope you find confirmation that the financial sacrifices we are making to preserve this building are worthy.

**DOES ARCHITECTURE MATTER?**

By A. D. Lewis *A. D. Lewis is a friend of Luther Classical College with a passion for architecture.*

Is it any wonder why Paris and Rome are the most visited cities in the world? Climate and cuisine may play a small part in the decision to visit, but they are insignificant factors compared to the attraction of architecture. People flock to Paris and Rome, in massive numbers, because those places feature the most beautiful architecture on the face of the Earth. The tight concentration of exquisite structures, mile after mile of them, whether they are churches (which assumes the first order of beauty), castles, shops, apartment blocks and private homes, testify to a long-abiding and delicate concern for beautiful design, that gave glory to God and satisfaction to the people who occupied them. Down to the door-knockers, everything is intricately conceived and skillfully executed in places like Vienna or Budapest.

In Christendom, there was the desire, as well as the deliberate capability, to make even the common features of a building uncommonly lovely. It is only natural for people, whether they live there or not, to feel at home in these places, because it is all so welcoming. The proportions are at human scale, tailored for those who would use them. Even though down the centuries, styles changed from Classical to Gothic to neo-Classical to Art Nouveau, you could discern in each of the styles a profound respect for God and Man, the beings for whom the structures were built.

The one constant in all of these great architectural trends, until we hit modernism, is beauty. Like Pontius Pilate, one could scoff: “Quid est pulchritudo“ or “what is beauty?“ This essay will not convince those who reject the notion that real objective standards of beauty exist. But they do exist, and our era is the first that would dispute this. It is worth arguing, however, with those who think design is a matter of indifference, that it doesn’t matter what a building looks like. It is axiomatic that architecture is a language, which is why, in part, we speak of architectures having a vocabulary. What do buildings say, and what ideas do those statements assume?

Once the church catholic had the freedom to build (that is, after it had emerged from the catacombs at the behest of Emperor Constantine), it had to decide what its houses of worship should look like. What those structures looked like was the Bible, the text upon which Christianity was built. According to Roland Recht, professor of art history at the University of Strasburg, in his book *Believing and Seeing: The Art of Gothic Cathedrals*, the Church sought to construct a Bible in stone. These edifices (rightly and later wrongly), both framed basic theologies while telling Bible stories.

Later, after the Reformation, churches would more intentionally become a catechism in stone, where the Six Chief Parts were printed, as it were, in the building materials and subsequently on the hearts of worshipers (see the excellent April 2013 issue of the *Lutheran Witness* dedicated to this topic).

What did the traditional architecture of Western Civilization assume about man? First and foremost, it assumes that men have souls, and that we have a need for transcendence. In that way, traditional church architecture is functional or utilitarian, but in the most sublime of ways. Its churches bear witness, when done according to traditional standards, to the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We shelter beneath its wings and received the very Bread of Life at its altars.

This need not apply only to ecclesiastical buildings. Secular buildings can be built and have been built in a way that recognizes that the occupants have souls, dignity, and a higher purpose. Vaulted ceilings, spaces filled with natural light, elegant symmetrical geometries; a sense of permanence and stability. If those buildings have an educational function, this is even more important. Thus, our schools should be sure to reference Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome by incorporating columns, cornices, pilasters, porticos, tympana, among other devices, into their structures.

It’s important to state what buildings look like whose designers and architects discount or reject the existence of the soul. *Circumspice*. Just look about you. Due to the influence of the Bauhaus-men like Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, as well as French modernist Le Corbusier (who wanted to demolish Paris and replace it with sky-scrapers), featureless glass and steel boxes now abound. It can be difficult to distinguish between an office complex, a school or an Amazon fulfillment center. Sadly, designers of many Christian schools and churches routinely fall for the Bauhaus zeitgeist, and unwittingly allow architects to create buildings that have nothing to do with Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome.

Famous British parliamentarian and aesthetical theorist Edmund Burke once said that “to make us love our country, our country should be lovely.“ The same applies to our architecture. To make us love our buildings, our buildings should be lovely. Reasserting the same design principles that went into building the great cities of Christendom would help achieve this. The first step is acknowledging that architecture does speak a language, a language that can inform faith and morals. When it speaks, it should speak the most enlightened forms of language in order to communicate the good, the true, the beautiful, and thereby help make mankind, better, more truthful, and lovely.

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