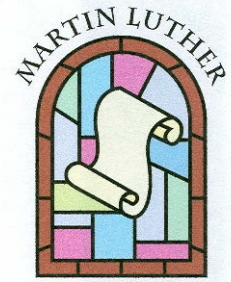


Congregational newsletter



LUTHERAN CHURCH
— Founded 1955 Gegründet —

February 2013

DEVOTION

Dear Fellow Christians !

What is a halo good for? Can we be Christians without a halo? Or should we avoid the halo by all means? I stumbled over this question when I read an article on the internet recently. It was about the new 2-Euro-coins of Slovakia. Slovakia has used the Euro as her currency since 2009. Last year there was some fuss between the Slovakian government and the European Union, and they argued over the halo on the 2-euro-coins.



Let me explain this a little bit more. 2013 is an anniversary year for the Slovak Republic. 1150 years ago, two missionaries arrived in their region, Cyril and Methodius. They translated the Bible into the Slovakian language, by doing this they put into writing – for the first time ever – the Slovakian language, which was most essential for the Slovak culture as they created the glagolitic alphabet.

The Slovakian central bank had designed a 2-Euro-coin which displayed the portraits of Cyril and Methodius. So far so good. But the heads of the saints were surrounded by the halo. And now the European Commission interfered: "A halo is a religious symbol. You are not allowed to use strictly religious symbols on government stuff!"

Well, you know this permanent struggling. Recently a British flight attendant got the permission to wear a necklace with a cross, but a British nurse is still being refused to do so. The answer of the Slovakian central bank was: "This is ridiculous. First of all, Christianity is a huge formative part of our national history. Second these saints are always displayed with the halo, this is the wellknown and well-accepted way here in Slovakia." This struggling between the European Commission and the Slovakian government continued for more than a year, in the end the European Union accepted the Slovakian position.

I am glad about this. It is so ridiculous nowadays, all this fussing about political correctness. But maybe here we can see a deeper problem. Should we avoid the halo? Can we be Christians without a halo? What is a halo good for? I remember a very wellknown conversation which happened between Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a Catholic priest. Bonhoeffer was still young, at the beginning of his theological career. He met a young Catholic priest and they became good friends. Once Bonhoeffer asked his Catholic friend, "What is your intention? Why have you become a priest?" The Catholic friend answered, "I want to become a saint." Hearing this, Bonhoeffer paused, then he responded, "No, that is not my intention. I want to learn to believe."

"I want to learn to believe" - this seems to be the perfect Protestant answer. We will never go over the top. Yes, we believe. Yes, we are Christians. But we will not exaggerate which being a saint would certainly include. A saint, that sounds pretty extravagant and fancy. However, I wonder, our Protestant reservation, is it really rooted in the New Testament? Or could it actually be a somehow modern attitude which says: do not go over the top in religious things! Be a christian for sure, but keep it low key.

Let's take the Lord's Prayer as an example. It starts "Our Father who art in Heaven", and then - what is the first petition? "Hallowed be thy name." The very first petition of the prayer we learned from Jesus is "hallowed - sanctified - be your name". Of course this means, let us keep God's name holy, let us honour and adore the holy God. But are we supposed to do this with our words and thoughts only? With our creed and prayer only? No, Jesus wants us to sanctify God's holy name by our words, and thoughts, and deeds! by our lives!

So Paul, in his First Letter, addresses the Corinthians: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." I remember a marvellous story about what this means. You would find it in 1 Samuel 3. The boy Samuel ministered in the temple under the old priest Eli. One night the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. This happened three times. Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So when the LORD was calling as at the other times, then Samuel said, "Here I am, Lord, Speak, for your servant is listening." "Here I am; you called me." This is what being sanctified is about. Being open for God's word, being willing to follow God's guidance, being eager to do the will of the holy God in our lives.

Isn't that dangerous? To place the holy commandment of a religion above everything else? Isn't that the conviction of so many fanatics and terrorists? That they serve the holy God by disregarding anything else? Any political order which is not founded in strict and perfect divine commandments? Despising human life by killing those who oppose their religious convictions? Disregarding even their own personal needs by sacrificing everything, even doing suicide attacks? Are we supposed to follow this way? I admire the response which was given by churches and other faith communities after 9/11, after this horrible terroristic attack in New York. They affirmed: Every human being is holy in God's eyes. Because we honour the holy God, we honour the holiness of life, the dignity of each human, and of each being which has been formed by the holy creator of the universe.

Let this be our understanding of holiness: Each being which has been created by God is dignified and sanctified and infinitely valued. "Here I am; you called me." Here we are, holy God. You called us to honour and cherish each human as your beloved child, each living being as holy because it originated in your holy ordinance.

That is why I love the halo. It is the gloriol around the creature, it is the light of god surrounding a human being, indicating that the light of love and compassion shines brightly over the life of this being. And I believe, Cyril and Methodius and the many saints are exemplary of what we should become, sanctified in our whole life by this powerful grace of God. Because they are exemplary of what each created being is in the eyes of the holy God: a beloved child, surrounded, supported, guided by the light of God's care.

What is the halo good for? Should we avoid the halo? No, we cannot be christians without a halo. And I am glad that this little 2-Euro-coin, of the little proud nation of Slovakia, will remind us of this eternal truth.

*Blessings for the Lent Season,
your Pastor Alexander Mielke*

Our **Annual Meeting** will be on **February 24, 2013**. Again, it begins after the Joint Service (which starts at 11:00 a.m.). Please participate in this important meeting! And please bring a snack for the short break after the worship.

Unfortunately, we cannot have our Weekend Retreat in Mount Alverno Centre because some who wanted to participate became ill. Therefore I will invite to a Saturday event, for those who usually meet at this retreat as well as for others who are interested in the topic "Great Teachers of the Reformation".

German Lent Devotions start on Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013. As we did in the past, we will gather for this on **Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.**

There will be a **Pulpit Exchange** between our 5 bilingual ELCIC congregations on **February 17, 2013**. Pastor Sebastian Meadows-Helmer from Christ-the-King/Dietrich-Bonhoeffer Church is going to conduct the services in our Martin Luther Church. Congratulations and best wishes for Carey and Sebastian Meadows-Helmer who are so happy after the birth of their daughter Gabrielle Cecilia on January 5th.

The German celebration of the **World Day of Prayer** will be held on Friday, **March 1, 2013, 12:00 a.m., St George Lutheran Church**. This year the liturgy has been prepared by women groups in France.

On Saturday **March 2, 2013** there will the **Swim Party** of the Sunday School, a big fun for kids and families. We will be meeting at 5:00 p.m. at the Norseman Community Pool, 105 Norseman Street, Etobicoke. After the swimming, good tasty pizza will be provided.

We very cordaillay invite to another highlight in our Martin Luther Church, the **Easter Sunrise Service**. For this we gather on the shore of the **Lake Ontario** and celebrate the Easter Message while we can see the sun rising over the silhouette of Toronto, an amazing experience! We will be meeting on **Easter Sunday, March 31, at 6:30 a.m.**, at the last parking lot of Humberbay Park West. After that, we continue to celebrate with a delicious Easter Breakfast in the church. Welcome and enjoy pancake and maple syrup!





In the General Meeting on December 2, 2012, **Pastor Christian Ceconi from Hildesheim** was elected. Probably starting in the middle of August 2013, he will be the new pastor, commissioned by EKD, in our Martin Luther Church. Congratulations and best wishes for him together with his wife Corinna and all the family!

Please mark your calendar:
Sommer Camp 2013
July 27 – August 2, 2013
"A River Runs Through"

Dan Sommerfeld, together with several helpers, organized the cleaning of carpets and the waxing of floors in our church. A big thank-you for this very helpful effort!



Advent 2012 Celebration of our Ladies' Group.

Baptisms

Gabriel Brandon and Juliane Xenia Seidel
on January 6, 2013

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.
Galatians 3:26

Memorial Services

Waldemar Hein, at the age of 79 years
on December 22, 2012

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.
Psalm 119

Hans Kammerbauer, at the age of 83 years
on December 26, 2012

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.
Psalm 121

Elly Rinne, at the age of 92 years
on December 29, 2012, in the Moll Berczy House

I am convinced that neither death will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8

Arnold Budnik, at the age of 82 years
on January 6, 2013

Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much;
and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.
Gospel of Luke 16:10

Christine Froehlich, at the age of 82 years
on January 12, 2013, in the Olivet New Church

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, he restores my soul.
Psalm 23

Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church
2379 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Toronto, ON M8V 1B7
Telephone: 416-251-8293, www.martinluther.ca
Pastor Alexander Mielke, cellphone 416-567-2487
Email: alexander.mielke@rogers.com
Homepage and List Administrator: Mona Frantzke

Watchword for February 2013:

Consider whether the light in you is not darkness. Gospel of Luke 11:35

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
February 3 9:45 Engl. Service 11:00 German Service NO RETREAT IN MT ALVERNO I	4	6:00 p.m. Congregational Choir				
February 10 9:45 Engl. Service 11:00 German Service Both with Holy Communion Pastor Mielke	11	12 P. Mielke in Church Office 9:30 – 12:30 6:00 p.m. Congregational Choir	13 Ash Wednesday 7:00 p.m. German Lent Devotion followed by Ladies' Group	14 6:00 p.m. Board of Directors & Annual Meeting of Day Care	15	16
February 17 Lent 9:45 Engl. Service 11:00 German Service Pastor Meadows-Helmer Pulpit Exchange	18	19 P. Mielke in Church Office 9:30 – 11:00 6:00 p.m. Congregational Choir	20 7:00 p.m. German Lent Devotion	21 6:00 p.m. Confirmation Class	22	23
February 24 Lent 11:00 Joint Service followed by Annual Meeting Pastor Mielke	25	26 P. Mielke in Church Office 9:30 – 12:30 6:00 p.m. Congregational Choir	27 7:00 p.m. German Lent Devotion	28	March 1 12:00 p.m. German World Day of Prayer St George Luth Church	March 2 5:00 p.m. Swim Party in Norseman Pool
March 3 Lent 9:45 Engl. Service 11:00 German Service Pastor Mielke	March 7 7:00 p.m. German Contact Circle in Bonhoeffer Church	March 10 Lent 9:45 Engl. Service 11:00 German Service Both with Holy Communion Pastor Mielke		March 28 Maundy Thursday 7:00 p.m. German Service with Holy Communion Pastor Mielke	March 29 Good Friday 9:45 Engl. Serv. 11:00 Germ.S. Both with Holy Communion Pastor Mielke	March 31 Easter Sunday 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise Serv HumberBayPark West 10:00 am Festive Joint Serv Engl & Germ Pastor Mielke

Sunday School and Open Nursery during both services !