

Reconciliation: Rest, Renewal, Resurrection

Lessons from the Commemoration of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. —John 12:1-3

On the eve of my summer holidays, our calendar of commemorations reminds me of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Evelyn Underhill once wrote: "To give our Lord perfect service, Mary and Martha must combine...Thousands of devoted men and women today believe that the really good part is to keep busy, and give themselves no time to take what is offered to those who abide quietly with Christ...The result of this can only be a maiming of their human nature, exhaustion, loss of depth and vision." Mary and Lazarus are important: their model of renewal, rest, and resurrection keeps us from "developing a lopsided Christianity; so concentrated on service, and on this world's obligations, as to forget the needs of constant willed and quiet contact with that other world, wherefrom the sanctions of service and the power in which to do it proceed." (from *Festivals and Commemorations*, by Philip H. Pfatteicher, p. 310). Being given time to "holiday" is such a gift that brings us closer to the meaning of "holy day."

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus come to the Lutheran calendar of commemorations from Biblical times. Olaf, King of Norway has been added to their day from the eleventh century, the time when Norway was turning to Christ. His spirituality combined all three elements of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He served as king with skill and determination, but began each long day by attending the morning prayer service in the church. After he was killed in battle (July 29, 1030 C.E.), according to legend "a fine spring arose on the sand flat where the body of King Olaf had been interred, and people obtained relief from their ailments" (p 315). First a chapel, then a church, then a cathedral were built on the spot. Now the sacred water of serving Christ, once walled in and safeguarded is available for all at the font and altar, and the fragrance of loving Christ spreads in civil life through the Laws of St. Olaf, and in the power of the resurrection of Christ we see visions of reconciliation. This "holy day" makes a good beginning for "holidays."

God bless!

Pastor Ron will be away from August 2 through August 22, celebrating with family and friends, reading and resting. Sunday services continue at 10:30 with guest preachers. For emergency pastoral care please contact Kaylyn Scrivens in the office (09:00-16:00) at 306-653-2442 or zion.office@sasktel.net. After hours please call Pastor Hugh Farmer at 306-221-9484.