

HOLY WEEK
BEHOLD,
THE LAMB OF GOD!



A GIFT TO YOU FROM
MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE



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DEVOTION BOOKLET
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In this Holy Week devotional,
we will follow John the Baptist's imperative:
"Behold, the Lamb of God!"

From Genesis to Revelation,
the Scriptures use the image of a lamb
as a type of Christ and as a metaphor
illustrating how he secured our salvation.

May God the Holy Spirit lead us to see God's Lamb
in prophecy and fulfillment,
and increase our faith in what Jesus has done for us and what he
has promised us.

*Rev. Michael Otterstatter serves Martin Luther College
as vice president for mission advancement.*

*The illustrations in this booklet are stained glass windows
from various churches and cathedrals around the world.
Note that in stained glass and other art forms, Christian artists
have traditionally given believers a halo, a nimbus (resembling a
cloud around the head), or a mandorla (an almond-shaped frame
surrounding the whole body). These symbols signify not that the
believers are sinless or divine, but that they are saints of God,
believers who—like us—have been made holy in Christ.*

PALM SUNDAY

On the Mountain, *the Lamb*

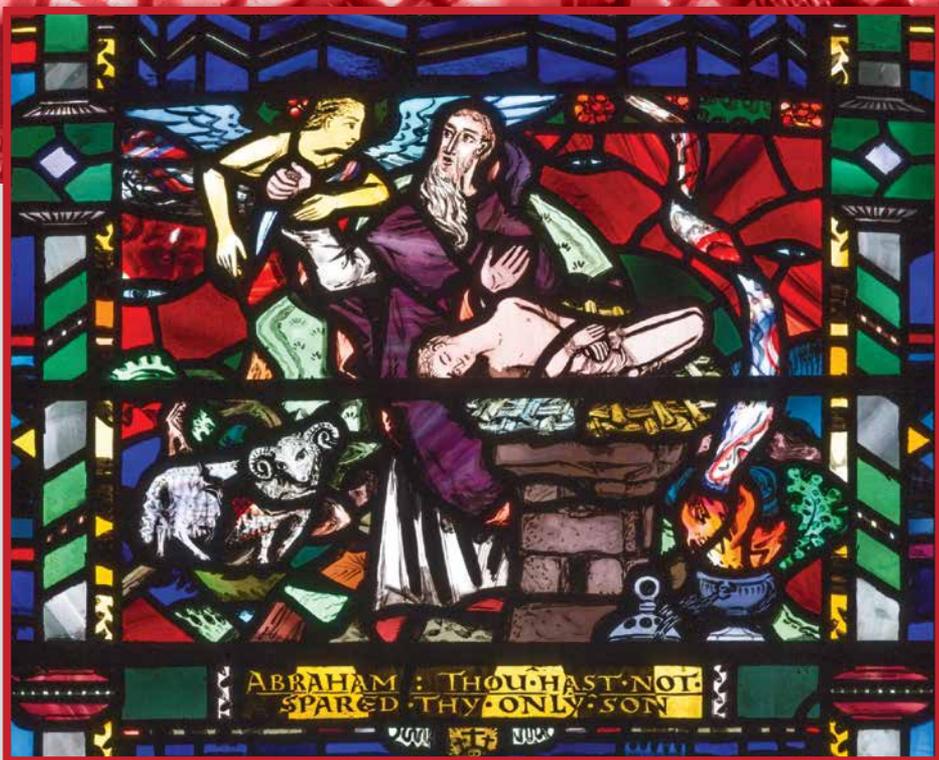
Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." (Genesis 22:13-14)

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins ten days of repentance that culminate in the High Holy Day of Yom Kippur, the great Day of Atonement. Genesis 22 is read during Rosh Hashanah worship; references to the account that Jews call “the Binding of Isaac” appear throughout the liturgy that day.

Palm Sunday begins seven days of repentance that culminate in the High Holy Day of Easter, the great Festival of the Resurrection. As we journey with Jesus through this week, we will pause at key locations that allow us to see him as the Lamb of God. Our first stop, at Mount Moriah, is in Genesis 22. That chapter starts with a simple statement: “Some time later God tested Abraham.”

What a test that was. Abraham and Sarah had waited 25 long years for God to fulfill his promise to give them a son, and finally—when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90, both long past the normal age for having children—as he always does, God kept his word. Isaac was born, and Sarah’s laughter of disbelief (Genesis 18:12-15) was transformed into laughter of joy (Genesis 21:6-7). Isaac has now grown to be a young man, and God challenges Abraham with the ultimate test: he commands him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering.

Abraham passed that test. Knife in hand, he was ready to do what God had commanded, when God intervened and told him not to lay a hand on his son. Not only did God prevent Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, God provided an alternative sacrifice. When Isaac had asked his father, “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham told him, “God himself will provide the lamb.” He did, in the form of a ram whose horns had snagged in a dense tangle of branches. Abraham “took the ram and sacrificed him as a burnt offering instead of his son.”



“Instead of his son.” Ponder those four words. This is the first explicit mention in Scripture of the substitutionary sacrifice of one life for another, but that theme runs throughout the Old Testament and into the New. “The LORD Will Provide,” Abraham called that place. “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided,” God’s people continued to say. Two thousand years later, God provided his Son, who redeemed humanity by sacrificing himself on a cross in a location very near where God had provided the sacrificial ram. Jesus allowed himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, he was silent before his accusers, and his blood atoned for your sins and mine. His sacrifice means that when you die, you will wake up in heaven just as assuredly as the eyes of Christ opened in the tomb on Easter morning.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The hosts of angels in the sky
look down with sad and wond’ring eyes
to see th’approaching Sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow your meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O Christ, your pow’r and reign.
Amen. (CW 132:5)

Dr. Lawrence Olson serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology and as director of the Staff Ministry Program and Congregational Assistant Program.



MONDAY

In Egypt, *the Lamb*

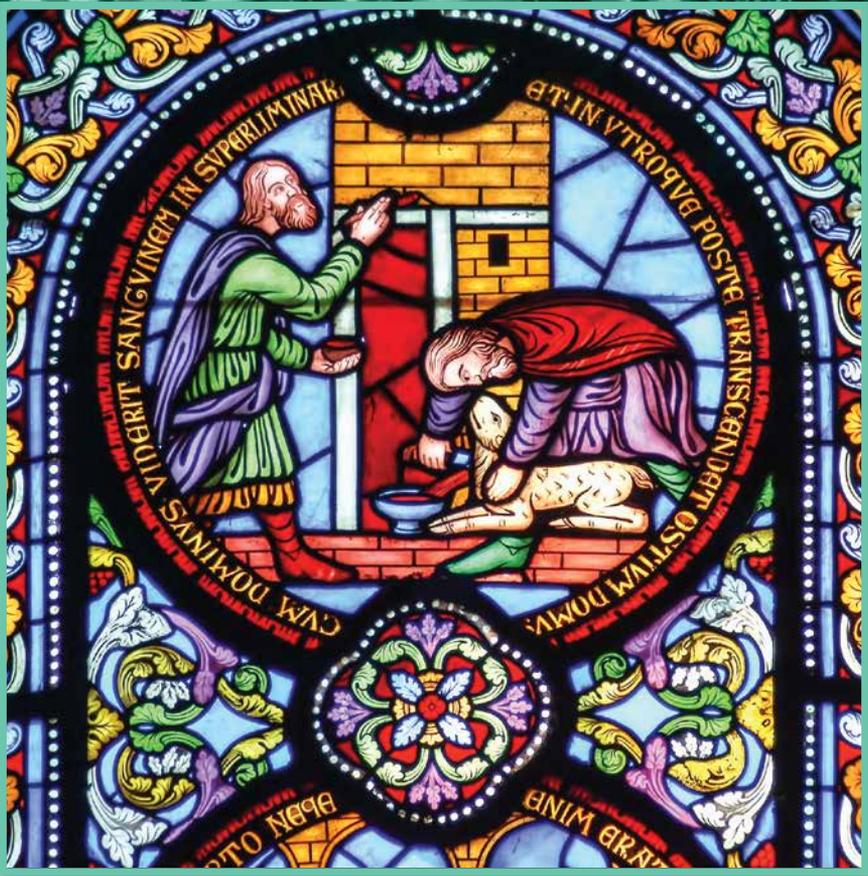
The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. (Exodus 12:5-7)

The tenth, last, and most terrible plague was about to strike Egypt. Egypt's king, the Pharaoh, had been warned. Through Moses God had made clear: every firstborn male, human or animal, in every Egyptian household would soon die. Egypt would echo with "wailing . . . worse than there has ever been or ever will be again," all because Pharaoh would not let God's people go from the slavery in which they had toiled for centuries.

Understand that Egyptians were no more sinful than Israelites. The enslaved descendants of Jacob were sinners too, just as worthy of death. Moreover, few Egyptians had any influence on their stubborn Pharaoh or anything to do with his refusal to release Israel. Yet they would suffer. There was not a person, Egyptian or Israelite, who was not at risk from the angel of death.

But the Israelites would be spared. God directed each household to prepare a meal of an unblemished male lamb or kid (young goat). This meal was an act of worship; the lamb or kid was a sacrifice. Eating it as a community was an expression of their fellowship among themselves and with their God. Most important, they were to daub the doorframes of their houses with blood from the slaughtered animal. This blood would mark their home as Israelite and them as God's people. The angel of death would pass over their household.

They and their children's children's children would always remember and would annually celebrate the event as "Passover." As well they should. It triggered their escape from Egypt and was a pivotal event in God's preserving both his people and his promise of the world's Savior.



In and of itself, there was nothing special about the sacrificial lamb. To be sure, it was to be without flaw, a prime specimen, but it was still just a lamb. What made it special was the promise God attached to the lamb, that he would accept the sacrifice and forgive their sins because of his grace. Moreover, that lamb, and the thousands and thousands of Passover lambs sacrificed across hundreds and hundreds of years, all pointed ahead to Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God, who by his sinless life and death would take away the sins of the world. On the basis of Jesus' future, perfect sacrifice for all, God indeed forgave the sins of his people.

And still does. Our faith rests on the truth that God's Son, the perfect Lamb, paid for our sins on the last true Passover, a very Good Friday. He shed the blood that marks you and me. And death passes over us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, thank you for your precious blood that marks my soul and rescues me from death. Amen.

Rev. Daniel Balge serves Martin Luther College as academic dean for preseminary studies and a professor of Greek.



TUESDAY

Led in Silence, *the Lamb*

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)

The high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

“Are you the Christ, the Son of God?” Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you say.”

“He has spoken blasphemy! He is worthy of death.” Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists.

“Are you the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked. “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

King Herod plied Jesus with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. So Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him and sent him back to Pilate.

Then Pilate said, “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.”

Would you have kept your cool? Would you have responded with silence and grace? With calm and composure? Not me. I would have cursed and sworn and responded with an angry tirade if I had been treated like Jesus was. Threaten me . . . and I’ll threaten you. Cut me off . . . I’ll let you know. Question my authority . . . I’ll put you in your place. So often, in so many ways, I match “sin for sin.” We all are guilty as charged. How desperately we need a sinless substitute—someone to face the trials of life with truth and love.



It wasn't that Jesus said absolutely nothing. He did respond with the truth when asked directly. He explained who he was. But he didn't resist the sham and the shame and the mockery. He didn't lash out. He didn't attempt to defend himself against the gross injustice. Centuries before Jesus endured disgrace in our place, the prophet Isaiah pictured the image of our Savior as a lamb. Quiet obedience and submission characterized Jesus as he was "led to slaughter." The sinless "Lamb of God" was not subject to death. The sacrifice of Jesus had to be unjust. But its purpose was perfection—life for life.

Some years later, an Ethiopian asked the evangelist Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet Isaiah talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture [our devotion verse from Isaiah 53] and told him the good news about Jesus. Indeed, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son!

**A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, our guilt and evil bearing
and, laden with the sins of earth, none else the burden sharing.
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint, to slaughter led without
complaint, that spotless life to offer, bears shame and stripes and
wounds and death, anguish and mockery and says, "Willing all
this I suffer." (CW 100)**

For this I thank and praise you, gracious Savior. Amen.

*Rev. Paul Koelpin serves Martin Luther
College as a professor of history and theology.*



WEDNESDAY

At the Jordan River, *the Lamb*

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Some refer to this day of Holy Week as "Silent Wednesday" because the Gospels do not record any words or activities of Jesus on this day. However, in our verse for today, John the Baptist was anything but silent. Preaching beside the Jordan River, he cries out, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

It is what John saw when he looked at Jesus. Have you ever wondered what Jesus sees when he looks at us? Jesus should look at us and cry out, "Look, the sin of the world that takes away the Lamb of God!"

We ought to run to him, but instead we seek happiness by running from him with the sin in our lives. He ought to run away from us, but instead he chose torture by running into the world to save us.

You see, sin was the one thing that kept us separate from a holy God. Jesus came to take it away by sacrificing himself. It is why John's eyes lit up, and he looked beyond his listeners and pointed directly at Jesus and, with excitement in his voice, cried out, "Look, the Lamb of God!" "The Lamb" that John was referring to was the Passover lamb.

Each year, each family chose a lamb. The lamb had to be perfect. Then God wanted his people to take the lamb into the house for almost a week and treat it like a pet. God wanted the kids to play with the lamb. God wanted the family to come to love their new pet. And then, when it was time, God wanted the father to place his hand on the lamb's head and take his knife and slit the lamb's throat and watch as the white wool turned red. I can only imagine the tears shed, especially by the children of the house.

What was God teaching? He was teaching that my sin and yours require suffering and bleeding and dying. But he was also teaching something else about how he handles sin. Though I sinned, the lamb dies as my substitute. And finally, there is emotion involved here. As



the father slit the throat of that lamb that had become the family pet, everyone would get just a glimpse of the pain God would experience when he would watch his only Son . . . his Lamb . . . bleed out on the cross. It would be the only way to take away our sin.

So, what does Jesus see when he looks at you? He sees the one he loves. And what do you see when you look at Jesus? The Lamb, your Savior. This is One who takes away the sin of the world, even your sin and mine.

Dear Jesus, keep our eyes focused on your love for us this Holy Week. May we always see you as you are, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Amen.

Rev. David Scharf serves Martin Luther College as a professor of theology.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

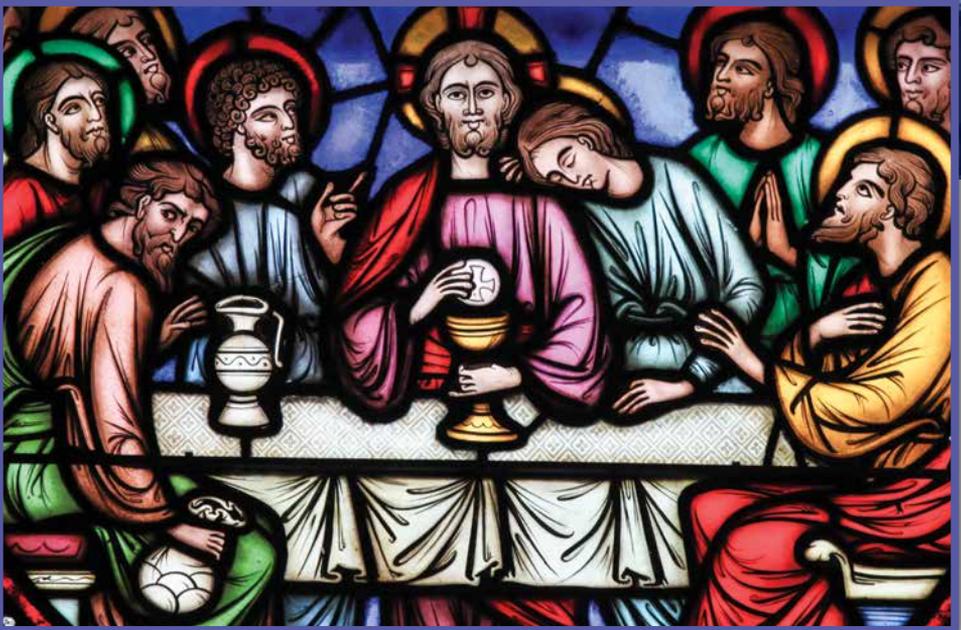
In the Upper Room, *the Lamb*

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (Luke 22:14-15)

Jesus eagerly desired to eat this Passover. What was it about this last meal that Jesus so looked forward to? Scan through Luke 22, and a few things about that meal jump off the page. During the meal, Jesus’ disciples disputed among themselves who was the greatest. At one point, Jesus looked into Peter’s soul and informed his friend he would soon deny the Savior three times. While eating, Jesus dipped his hand into a bowl with a friend and identified him as the betrayer. This Passover meal included internal disputes, future denials, and a betrayer revealed. Doesn’t sound like anything to look forward to, does it? Yet, Jesus eagerly desired to eat this Passover.

Scan through Luke 22 again, and a few more things about that meal jump off the page. During the meal, Jesus took bread, broke it and gave his body to sinful, disputing disciples. He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” At one point, Jesus looked into a cup filled with wine and gave it to his disciples—including Peter, the future denier. Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” While eating, Jesus called out Judas, his betrayer. Although Judas didn’t take the chance, Jesus’ words were an opportunity for repentance. This Passover meal included Jesus’ body for remembrance, Jesus’ blood for forgiveness, and Jesus’ words for repentance. This certainly sounds like something to look forward to. Jesus eagerly desired to eat this Passover.

Do you eagerly desire to eat the Lord’s Supper? Scan through your life, and I’m willing to bet a few things jump off the page. Maybe you haven’t disputed among friends who is the greatest. But does your sinful pride already tell you you’re the best? Maybe you haven’t denied Jesus three times. But has your sinful silence loved to remain mute when faith needed to be defended? Sure, you did not literally hand Jesus over to be crucified. But all sin betrayed Jesus to death on a cross. At the Lord’s Supper, you bring with you disputes,



denial, and betrayal. This doesn't sound like anything to look forward to, does it?

With this being the case, eagerly desire to eat this meal. In it the Savior gives you his body and removes your sinful pride. In it, the Savior pours out his blood and forgives your sinful silence. In it, the Savior calls you to repentance and declares you not guilty for any sinful betrayal left on your ledger. Eagerly desire bringing your disputes, denials, and betrayals to the Lord's Supper, because Jesus eagerly desired removing them.

Dear Lord, through your Son all sin has been removed. Allow us to properly examine our lives as we come to your holy supper. Work in us a desire to come to your table to receive your body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Amen.

Rev. Paul Spaude serves Martin Luther College as a theology instructor and dormitory supervisor.



GOOD FRIDAY

On Calvary, *the Lamb*

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

(1 Corinthians 5:7b)

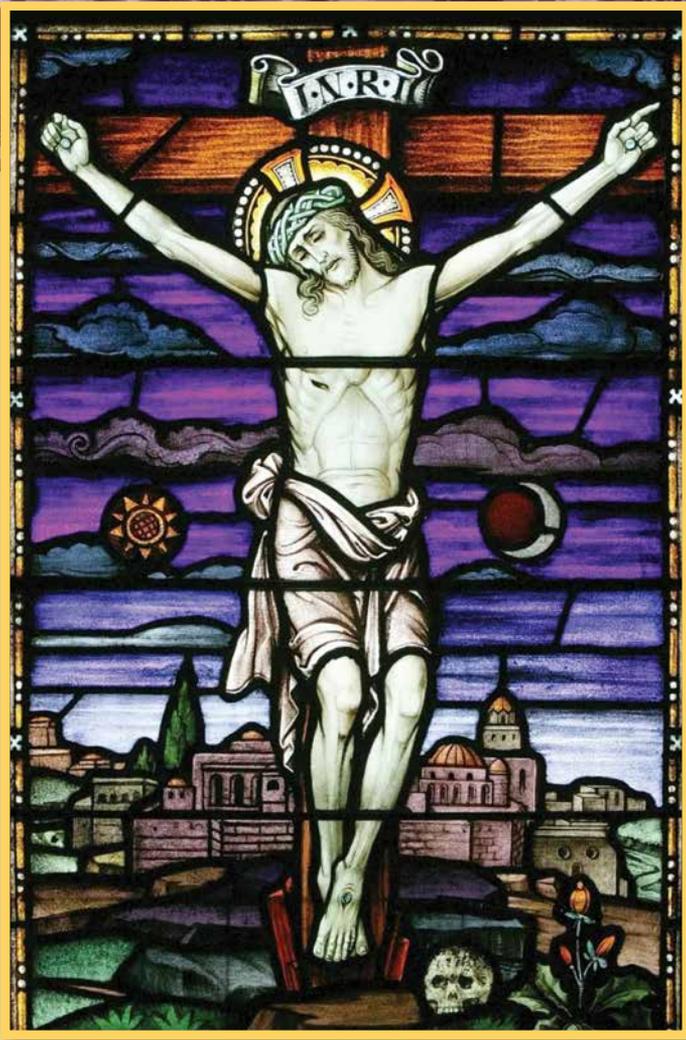
Although the Scriptures don't specifically mention this, one can't help but ponder the strange—or divine!—juxtapositioning of the events of Good Friday. In particular, we know that Jesus hung on the cross that dark afternoon between noon and three, as Matthew's Gospel tells us (27:45), suffering divine judgment on sin.

What was happening elsewhere in Jerusalem? In particular, the temple was busy with activity. It was Passover weekend, and lambs were being sacrificed by priests and household leaders in the Courtyard of Israel by the thousands. To accommodate all the locals and visitors, they came in shifts—at 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 pm, the last being the time of the usual evening sacrifice.

At the very same time all those lambs were being sacrificed in the temple that Good Friday afternoon, the Lamb without blemish, spot, or defect (1 Peter 1:9) was entering the Holy of Holies in heaven and presenting himself as the final sacrifice for the sins of the world. On a small hill not far away from the temple, just outside the city wall, hung the Lamb of God to whom all those thousands of sacrificed lambs pointed, the Lamb to replace all lambs with their impure blood and temporary cure.

Passover in Jesus' day was “family time” for the Israelites, much like our celebration of Christmas. There were reunions. There were gifts. There were hugs and smiles and fine dinners, especially that meal where families recalled God's mercy and goodness in delivering his people from bondage in Egypt. In the end, that was always supposed to be in the most important message and focus of the feast—gracious deliverance.

As Gentiles we may not share in the rich heritage of a festival dating back to the time of Exodus. But there is a heritage we do share with the ancient Israelites and with all people. It is the heritage of being born into the slavery of sin and death, “without God and without hope in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). It is the heritage of a pointless, purposeless life and hopeless future. It is the heritage that is much more than being born disadvantaged or underprivileged; it is the inheritance of the wages of sin—death and separation from a holy God forever.



But “Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us,” St. Paul reminded the Corinthians, and thanks be to God that we are also included in “us”! There on the cross hangs the true Lamb who takes away all our sin, shame, and guilt. There is the One faith looks to for forgiveness, for hope, and for final deliverance. And there is the Lamb whose life and death completely changes our life and death, as we live by faith in the joy of salvation Jesus freely gives.

**My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray,
take all my guilt away,
Oh, let me from this day
be wholly Thine! Amen. (CW 402)**

Dr. Keith Wessel serves Martin Luther College as a professor of Greek, Latin, and philosophy.



SATURDAY

At the Center of the Throne, *the Lamb*

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

(Revelation 5:11-12)

This week has not been a good time to be a lamb:

- Caught in a thicket
- Killed in your prime and your blood splattered on the doorposts
- Thrown out into the wilderness
- Washing away the dirt for everyone, even for those who don't care
- Killed and eaten again and again
- Sacrificed to pay old debts, from horrible felonies to misdemeanors

Behold the Lamb of God, behold what God had and spent for us!

When I look at a large check I have written, I think, "Wow, that cost a huge amount." But then I look at what has been purchased, and I thank God that there was enough in the account to cover the bill. What I have paid, though, is nothing. Behold the Lamb of God—what God has spent for us.

The payment process has been grim and painful. The Son of God has been slaughtered for us. And now we wait for the delivery. This quiet time of Holy Saturday is broken by overwhelming numbers and voices around the throne. Jesus' humiliation has turned to exaltation.

"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousands. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In



a loud voice they were saying: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’” (Revelation 5:11-12)

Behold the Lamb that God spent, and behold what he has purchased: “Power and wealth”—not the kind limited to things and time and greed or ambition, but the power that creates new universes out of nothing, that creates a saint eternal out of this dirty clay. “Wisdom and strength” that are not bound by reason, the latest theory or diet. “Honor, glory, and praise” that do not come from popular consent or individual agendas, but are sung by a choir of 100 million angels. Did you notice that the millions sing with one “voice”? Finally for this ripped and torn world there will be genuine unity—the one truth of the Lamb, grace beyond all doubt and differences. This is heaven. All this the Lamb has and gives to all who believe in him.

Thank you, God, that you emptied your account to pay for all this. And now we wait for the delivery. This is where we are in Holy Week, between the sacrifice of Good Friday and the empty tomb on Easter. We are amazed at what God has paid and waiting for the delivery of the final gifts. How will we wait for that morning? With the Lamb at the center of the throne, where he has been given all that is truly good and lasting. With the Lamb at the center of our throne, the focus of our lives and devotion.

Dear Lord, help us to add our voice to the millions of angels—confident of your power and delighting in your wisdom and strength. Amen.

Rev. Brian Dose serves Martin Luther College as a professor of English.



EASTER SUNDAY

On Mount Zion, *the Lamb*

Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1)

At first, the scene doesn't fit our notions of a victory celebration. No flags, no fireworks, no tickertape parade. But make no mistake. John presents to us a scene of total victory. Eternal victory—and perfect peace and forever hope. The victor stands with those he rescued.

Casual observers might not comprehend the brutality of the warfare now ended nor the power required to conquer. After all, they'd never equate victory with a lamb, a creature known for fleece, not fangs.

Yet 30 times in his inspired Revelation, John mentions the Lamb. The Lamb is the main character. Not the dragon. Not the beast of the sea. Not the beast of the earth. The Lamb.

John knows the Lamb well. In his gospel, he reveals that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Here, in his Revelation, he depicts the epic war fought by the Lamb. It was and remains a heinous conflict with no quarter given. Satan, the forces of hell, and the hellish allies of a wicked world seek to destroy the Lamb and his flock. Yet, again and again, with vivid imagery, the Spirit reminds us that Christ and his Church are victorious. It's not even close. The Lamb wins.

We are stunned as we comprehend the sight: the Lamb standing, victorious, on Mount Zion. So weak, so helpless. Indeed, looking as if it had been slain. But now alive! His death was not a defeat. His death brought an irreversible victory. His death crushed Satan and all demons. His death emasculated the fury of a wicked world and hardened unbelievers. His death is the only ransom for your soul and mine. The Lamb lives, proof positive of his triumph on our behalf.

We are safe with the Lamb. Safe from the Father's fury over our sin. Safe from the torment of a guilty conscience. Safe from the serpent's attacks. Safe from the sting of death. Now, in Jesus, death is but a doorway into glory.

So, together with all the elect of God, we stand with the Lamb and share the triumph. We stand having his Father's name and his own name, the Name at which every knee will bow, written on our foreheads. We stand with the great multitude that no one could



count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

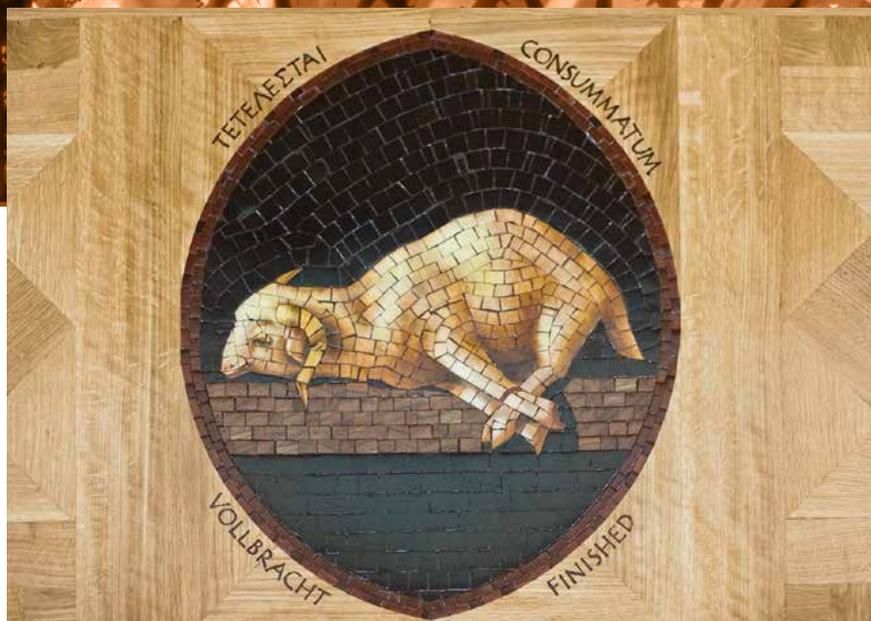
This Lamb comes to you and me without fanfare, but in the power of the Spirit through the means of grace. He comes and does not frighten. Indeed, the Spirit brings us close, and gives us hands of faith to lift this Lamb to our hearts. He lives. We live.

O Christ, the victorious Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

O Christ, the victorious Lamb of God, grant us your peace. Amen.

*Rev. Mark Zarling serves
Martin Luther College as president.*





THE LAMB OF GOD AT CHAPEL OF THE CHRIST

The Lamb of God figures prominently in the Martin Luther College Chapel of the Christ, where our students worship twice every day.

In a wood mosaic on the altar mensa, or tabletop, is the Lamb, “looking as if it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6).

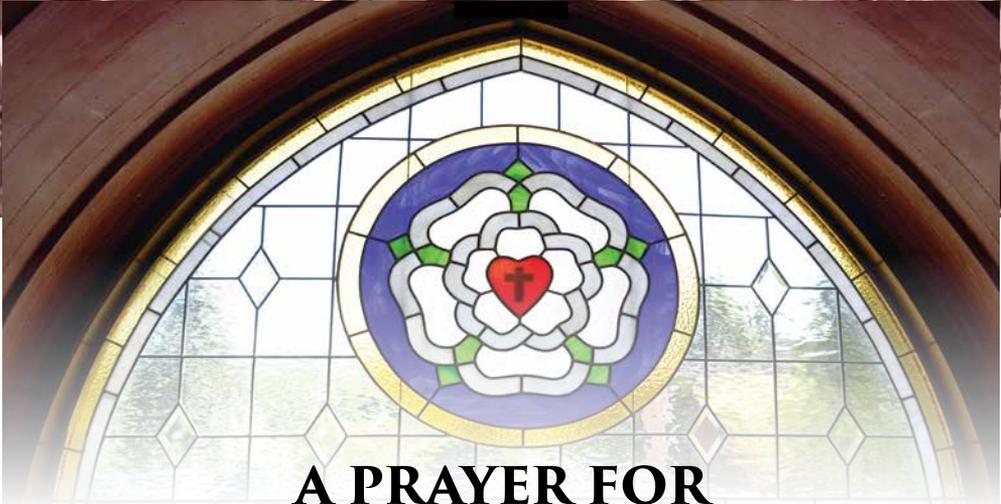
The lamb is framed by a mandorla, an almond shape created by two intersecting circles, recalling our Lord’s two natures—divine and human.

Around the outside of the mandorla is the word “Finished” in four languages closely associated with the history of the confessional Lutheran church: Greek, Latin, German, and English.

On the four corners of the mensa, those same four languages proclaim, “Look, the Lamb of God.”







A PRAYER FOR MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE AND ALL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Lord Christ, you are truly *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*. Through your blood, we are saved.

Through your death, we have life.

Thank you for the Christian schools that proclaim this victory—
our grade schools, high schools, colleges, and seminary—
where education consists of so much more than
classrooms and sports, budgets and buildings,
where your Word of Truth is shared in every class on every day.

Bless our teachers, that they may be powerful instruments
of your grace as they touch hearts with the gospel.
Give them joy and strength and contentment in their ministries.

We especially thank you for Martin Luther College,
whose mission is to train more and more gospel servants who are
eager to *go and make disciples of all nations*.

Continue to keep this college in your love and care,
that the gospel be clearly taught and that you, Lord Jesus,
be clearly seen in every classroom, dorm room, and event.

Grant your rich grace upon the professors and staff,
empowering them for their ministries
and molding them into models of ministry
for the next generation.

And please lead the hearts of many more young people to consider
the amazing adventure of being a public servant of the gospel.

May all our lives be a song of praise to you, O Lamb of God:
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
to receive power and riches and wisdom,
and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

Amen.





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