

Life Thoughts in the Church Year/One Year Lectionary – Lutherans For Life

Advent I – “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6b). What comforting truth for hearts troubled with sin’s guilt that keeps resurfacing. Sometimes a past sin can be so haunting that we do not always feel forgiven, or we cannot forgive ourselves. The sin of abortion is a prime example. But our righteousness does not depend upon us or our feelings. Our righteousness is Christ! *Prayer: O Lord our Righteousness, may my comfort and hope be anchored in You and not my feelings. Amen.*

Advent II – No matter what sufferings we carry or how weary we become, Jesus provides hope-filled news about His second coming. Christ has won the victory, and when He returns death and evil will be vanquished. We will be “leaping like calves from the stall” (Malachi 4:1-3). “[S]traighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28). Some things are worth waiting for—even amid suffering!

Advent III – “Speak tenderly” in Isaiah 40:1-2 is literally “speak to the heart.” More than nice-sounding words, all of the Good News encapsulated in the first and second coming of Jesus speaks powerfully to those with struggling and burdened hearts. The life issues give us opportunity to speak this Good News to matters of the heart, especially those considered “controversial” and “divisive.” *Prayer: Thank You for touching our hearts with the Good News! Help us share it with all who deal with matters of the heart. Amen.*

Advent IV/Christmas Eve – Jesus brought God delicately amidst sinners, as humble in crucifixion as He was helpless in conception. Yet this estate did not hinder but, in fact, heralded the full realm and reign of God for us. And thereby He reaffirmed the worth of even the feeblest human beings. God’s gift of life arrives all the better for the plain packaging He habitually hides it behind. *Prayer: Lamb of God, make it so that our taking hold of You leads us to cradle Your little ones as well. Amen.*

Christmas I/New Year’s Eve – A peaceful departure (Luke 2:29) may not always mean the absence of pain and suffering. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is seeing the presence of our Savior accomplishing His will according to His timetable. *Prayer: In our last hour, dear Savior, help us see You and be at peace. Amen.*

Epiphany I/Baptism of Our Lord – John’s baptism convicted every human being – “Jerusalem and all Judea” (Matthew 3:5-6). No physical incapacities excused anyone. Jesus’ baptism consecrates every human being. God, in giving His Son, identifies with us at our weakest and embraces us at our worst. Even when we don’t resemble anything our Maker intended, He doesn’t call us “unwanted” or “better off dead.” Instead He declares, “This is my beloved [child], with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). In this newness of life, Christians can also welcome the least among us. *Lord, construct Your kingdom of little ones like us. Amen.*

Epiphany II – Perhaps we could raise the level of respect and honor for marriage if we focused less on what it isn’t and more upon what it is, and teach, as Paul, that “it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32b). *Lord, help us see marriage as a picture of Your sacrificial and loving relationship to Your Church. Amen.*

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Epiphany III

The Gospel (Romans 1:16) brought struggle to St. Paul, but God's grace also gave him unconditional worth and purpose. He could not help but rejoice to proclaim and perform it. Sometimes declaring the sanctity of human life sets us at odds with popular opinion and even our own loved ones. Yet we need not be ashamed. Indeed, we may be most excited to speak and share it, for Jesus makes us and every neighbor a precious treasure from fertilization to forever. *Heavenly Father, fill us to overflowing with the courage and compassion of Your creating, redeeming, and calling. Amen.*

Epiphany IV

The whole creation groans (Romans 8:22) because of sin's brokenness. Every life involves suffering, especially as last days draw near and bodies begin to fail. Still such circumstances have significance—our Lord describes them as the labor of childbirth. Jesus redeems our weaknesses to bear witness of a better life by His power that sustains us in our pain (Romans 8:18). Injuries, infections, and impairments only affect us as far as He permits (Matthew 8:26), and elderly and terminal lives matter eternally! *Almighty Maker, comfort us with community in You even as our flesh crumbles. Amen.*

Epiphany V

Abraham and God thought Lot's household worth having though they resided in Sodom (Genesis 18:23-32). Jesus dealt gently with fields of worthless weeds because He beheld the wheat He had hidden within (Matthew 13:29-30). Like surprise pregnancies and terminal diagnoses, there are inconvenient (and even evil) aspects about us all. If God desires and saves us still, how much more does the One Righteous Man's sacrifice make every human life a privilege, no matter what age, appearance, or ability! *Gracious Savior, lend us Your eyes to see past nuisance and receive every neighbor as gift. Amen.*

Transfiguration of Our Lord – Jesus radiates the glory of God among human beings humbled by sinful brokenness. This glory resides not in a certain age or a particular appearance or a specific ability but in God's love for us creatures as His children. Let us behold this glory embodied in the least of these and remind neighbors of their eternal worth. *Holy Son of God, lead us to listen and mimic You in respecting, protecting, advocating, and assisting. Amen.*

Septuagesima – God our Father can draw water from rock (Exodus 17:6), reward the unworthy (Matthew 20:9), and make the last first (Matthew 20:16). Surely He will overhaul our hopeless circumstances and lost causes, even when human pains and mistakes have brought them about (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Indeed, we not only witness it but participate in it as well (Exodus 17:5). *Keeper of our souls, work faith in us and those we serve to await great transformation at Your hand. Amen.*

Sexagesima – God's Word does things, guaranteed (Isaiah 55:11)! That's because God Himself works in and through His Word, accomplishing His will. His work through the Word made flesh changes hearts. That is why Lutherans For Life bases everything upon that Word. When hearts and minds are changed, people change. People changed and motivated by the Word can influence and bring change to our society. *Almighty Father, bring forth fruit from the seeds You plant in and through us. Amen.*

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Quinquagesima – “[T]he Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance” (1 Samuel 16:7). Age, shape, and ability do not establish or inhibit human worth. “[T]he Lord looks on the heart” and sees the life and spirit hidden within. Every human pulse beats with the Creator’s own love – patient (1 Corinthians 13:4), enduring (1 Corinthians 13:7), making perfect (1 Corinthians 13:10) what was wrecked (Luke 18:42). *Dear Jesus, give us Your love that looks past appearances. Amen.*

Lent I (Invocabit) – Satan’s temptations of Jesus reveal his main tactic—make that which is bad look good. These days he spends much time making death look good; abortion is good and the way out of a difficult situation; assisted suicide is good and the way to relieve suffering. But death is not good! It is the curse of sin! It is our enemy. But just as Jesus defeated Satan, so He has defeated death. We can trust and live in His victory. *Jesus, may Your Word be ever on our hearts and lips that we might resist the snare of the devil. Amen.*

Lent II (Reminiscere) – We as God’s people regard it our privilege and delight to abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). The eternal joys of godly relationships and bodily service to neighbors (1 Thessalonians 4:9) more than make up for whatever momentary gratification we forego. *Heavenly Bridegroom, captivate our hearts by Your self-giving love that we desire in body and soul to receive Your blessings and serve Your kingdom. Amen.*

Lent III (Oculi) – Children of light (Ephesians 5:8) need not hold back a word (Jeremiah 26:2), even when it becomes politically dangerous or elicits cultural hostility (Jeremiah 26:8). Indeed, we find great blessing (Luke 11:28) in lovingly shining the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the haunts of darkness and death. *Light of the World, let us walk and speak Your image as beloved children. Amen.*

Lent IV (Laetere) – Christ in the flesh assures us that God knows how to care for what He creates (John 6:11-12). His Gospel gives sustenance, company, and community along with forgiveness and salvation (Acts 2:42-45). Having such a Father and family nearby can stave off sin and death. *Good Shepherd, let us bring care by being it. Amen.*

Lent V (Judica) – God’s gifts do not always make immediate human sense (John 8:48, 53, 57). What remains certain regardless is that God is good and God gives. The Father who eternally gives Himself to the Son (John 8:42) and the Son who offers Himself to the Father in appreciative obedience (John 8:55) are the Holy Trinity who imparts this life-giving Spirit even where only death appears possible (Genesis 22:10). Trusting His Word and work releases from death’s threatening grip (John 8:51, Genesis 22:13). *Father, Son, and Spirit, guide us to trust Your Gospel that we may share in Your abundant life. Amen.*

Annunciation of Our Lord – Whose life matters most? Every human being matters down to the teeniest and feeblest, since God made sure to incarnate Himself as embryo in Mary’s womb and then became completely helpless in crucified execution. How much do they matter? So much that Jesus redeemed them each and all, with His lifeblood as the price. *Lord Jesus Christ, bring forth Your name from our lips so that it draws all people to You. Amen.*

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Palm Sunday – In the midst of the darkness and forsakenness of that Friday we now call Good, we see God “hiding” in it all, demonstrating His love in a way we cannot comprehend but only apprehend by faith. The passion of Christ assures us that God works in our darkness demonstrating His love, bringing good, and promising never to forsake. *Lord Jesus, redeem all our fallenness by Your humility, compassion, forgiveness, and company. Amen.*

Easter Sunday – The resurrected Jesus first appeared to a very sinful, formerly demon-possessed woman, Mary Magdalene. The hope of the resurrection is for those hopelessly lost in their sins. In one sense, we could say that this hope is especially for those who are—like the rest of us—hopelessly lost! Thanks be to God! *Heavenly Father, draw me into rejoicing in Jesus’ resurrection and the value it gives to all humankind. Amen.*

Easter II – Our bodily life matters so much to God that He incarnated human flesh Himself. Even after accomplishing atonement by His body’s brokenness, He did not discard it but inhabits it by resurrection as His eternal instrument (John 20:27). When we are physically suffering sin’s consequences, our Savior’s words of forgiveness breathe healing (John 20:21-23), and His ways of faith bring peace into our very bodies. *Lord Jesus, let me take hold of You by faith until Your wounded and resurrected body redeems my own. Amen.*

Easter III – The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11-16). Herein lies our assurance that our Shepherd does not abandon His sheep. He loves them too much. He paid too much for them to forsake them. We live our lives, not in the absence of suffering, but in the presence of the Good Shepherd. *Good Shepherd, thank You for laying down Your life for me. Amen.*

Easter IV – The joy that comes from the risen Christ cannot be taken away (John 16:22). This is not a feel-good happiness dependent upon circumstances. It is a fruit of Christ’s Spirit, the joy of our salvation in Christ that circumstances cannot change or diminish. Many of the life issues we deal with today are “joy robbers” and present opportunities to share the joy of the resurrection. *Gracious Savior, fill my words with the comfort and hope of resurrection to everlasting life with You. Amen.*

Easter V – Only the grace of God could supply as supreme a blessing as a mother’s company and comfort. In the same way (John 16:7b), the Holy Spirit gives life and saves life even and especially when sorrow fills the heart (John 16:6). Indeed, the Word of forgiveness, joy, and hope He implants redeems both hopeless situations and helpless souls for everlasting celebration (James 1:21). *Ever-present Redeemer, embrace us with Your Spirit until we trust Your truth, follow Your way, and enjoy Your life. Amen.*

Easter VI – Paul encourages Timothy, “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). Sharing in the suffering of Christ sometimes comes when we share Christ and apply His Word of Life to spiritual issues that are also controversial. But faithfulness to the truth means to “endure everything for the sake of the elect” (2:10). *Faithful Lord, permit me to share You in the sufferings of my neighbors as You share in all my own. Amen.*

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Easter VII – The loving Creator’s presence and power surmounts every impediment to life and sanctifies all its impairments. He works new life in those as dead as stones (Ezekiel 36:26), abundant life among those as abandoned as exiles (Ezekiel 36:24, 28), and everlasting life for those as bereft as beggars (Ezekiel 36:29-30). Jesus stoops these gifts into – and brings them up out of – every kind of uncleanness (Ezekiel 36:25). *Dear Father, invite and involve us in Your overcoming. Amen.*

Pentecost Sunday – The tower of Babel used God-pleasing technology but not in a way that pleased God (Genesis 11:1-9). The technology to cure disease and to enhance and prolong life is a gift from God. The misuse of this technology, therefore, is an affront to God. The Spirit of Christ enables the believer to discern between what one is able to do and what one ought to do based upon the Word of God. *Almighty God, let Your Spirit fill me through Your Word and Sacraments so that all I say and do may bring Your glory to my neighbors in need. Amen.*

Trinity Sunday – God the Father sent His Son because He loves life. God the Son paid the price necessary to redeem life. God the Holy Spirit calls people to faith, giving them new life now and eternally (John 3:1-17). The Holy Trinity is For Life! *Holy Father, Son, and Spirit, make my life reflect Your own and extend it especially to those in the shadow of death. Amen.*

Trinity I/Fathers Day – So much does our Father love us that He sends us angels to assist us in our lowest moments (Luke 16:22). Identify those He has surrounded you with and thank them! Then look for the closest Lazarus God has laid at your gate. Brush off the crumbs, shoo away the dogs (16:21), and set him or her a brother’s place (16:27-28) at heaven’s feast (16:19). *Dear Lord God, make me to find my luxuries in sharing life with Your children. Amen.*

Trinity II – Our Savior and our Scriptures do not recognize a functional distinction between physical deficiency and spiritual deficiency. All human beings suffer from a fallen sinfulness that makes us decisively compromised (Luke 14:21-23). And Christ’s sacrifice, victory, and companionship call and escort every such one into His heavenly household! *God of compassion and mercy, gather together Your precious ones so that we embrace both You and each other. Amen.*

Trinity III – God’s love and Christ’s forgiveness come to us and carry us. Afraid and unable on our own, His words and ways bear us home every time to rejoicing (Luke 15:1-10). Let us seek with Him to rescue His little ones, no matter where they’ve wandered or how they’re wounded (1 Timothy 1:12-17), that we may celebrate together. *Holy Father, accompany me with Your grace through this collapsing world that no more may be lost. Amen.*

Trinity IV – Whether it be the evils of abortion or the assaults on biblical marriage, it becomes easier to attack people rather than confront the evil. We end up fighting evil with evil. But the way of Christ is different. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them” (Romans 12:14). “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:21). *Jesus, help us boldly confront evil and compassionately deal with those caught up in it. Amen.*

Trinity V – Sacrificing relatives or slaughtering rivals—either for their own good or for ours—results in no righteousness. God has chosen those we are tempted to treat as disposable for

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demonstrating the depths of His blessings (1 Corinthians 1:26-30). Patiently awaiting His salvation as humble companions reaps the great reward. *Lamb of God, gather me in together with all Your little ones. Amen.*

Trinity VI – The death Jesus died, He died “once for all” (Romans 6:10). He purchased “all.” Thus, He gives value to “all.” Every person we encounter, no matter their size or location or condition of health, is someone for whom Jesus died. Our responsibility is to acknowledge their value and lead them to see its true source. *Loving Savior, reflect Your self-giving mercy and devotion in us. Amen.*

Trinity VII – Jesus declares and demonstrates compassion even for those who cannot feed themselves or walk on their own (Mark 8:1-3). He who breathes life into each human body (Genesis 2:7) also provides everything necessary to survive (Mark 8:8) and promises all the abundance of Eden’s paradise in the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). And He mercifully involves us in this miraculous ministry (Mark 8:5-8)! *Almighty Maker, show through us the life-giving compassion You have shown to us. Amen.*

Trinity VIII – The relaxing lies our culture prophesies cannot even approach our Lord’s promises (Jeremiah 23:16-18). We speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ boldly and gladly (Jeremiah 23:28-29), though it earns us persecution, because He sets great joy before us. In this faith we will sit around His throne with the cloud of witnesses His Word saved. *Lamb of God, You have given me Your people’s crown of life; forge in me Your prophets’ faith. Amen.*

Trinity IX – Temptations to idolatry exist today as they did in biblical times. The great idol “Death” draws many to its altar. They look to death for rescue from a crisis pregnancy or chronic disease or pain. Death’s allure is so great it even tempts Christians to bow before it. But we have a way out of such temptations to faithlessness: “God is faithful” (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). Christ our “Rock” never leaves us (10:4). We can trust in Him. *Rock of our salvation, may Your faithful service to us through Your cross and resurrection move us to be faithful to You. Amen.*

Trinity X – With God’s prophets we call the culture around us to turn away from the destruction they are bringing upon themselves (Jeremiah 8:5, 11; Luke 19:43-44). With us they each remain precious to Jesus, who by His visitation in the flesh (Luke 19:44) for forgiveness delivers the Gospel that makes for peace (Luke 19:42) and righteousness (Romans 10:4). *O Lord God, intervene and redeem our people that we may behold and inhabit Your kingdom. Amen.*

Trinity XI – Heaven and earth grieve every life ended by another (Genesis 4:10). Worse yet is believing ourselves any better than murderers (Luke 18:11-14). Lord God regards all as precious as little babies, and His Son’s forgiving Word and works of faith rescue from death’s mouth when tempted (Genesis 4:7) and from hell’s mouth when guilty (Genesis 4:15). *Merciful Father, intervene that we may be saved and safe from death and hell. Amen.*

Trinity XII – The Word of God’s love and Christ’s life brings forth healing and hope, purpose and preciousness, survival and everlasting salvation. This He delights to do even for impaired or undeveloped human bodies (Mark 7:32-35) and no matter how dismal the situation (Isaiah

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29:17-19). *Dear Father, give desperate hearts life and confidence knowing that their sufficiency comes from Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Trinity XIII – The compassionate Samaritan does not euthanize or terminate the already half-dead traveler. He treats this stranger and rival not as less human but as dear neighbor and trades his own convenience, cost, and comfort to help a brother (Luke 10:33-35). Our Savior showers us with just such grace so that we may share it as well. *Dear Savior, grant me fully to appreciate Your grace to me and freely to extend it to all in need. Amen.*

Trinity XIV – Jesus’ merciful words and ways work life and healing (Proverbs 4:20-22). He brings forth brilliant and abundant fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) even from flesh like ours (Galatians 5:19-21) that was born broken. We who take these words to heart—and the hearts we touch with them—will live indeed. *Gracious Savior, bring life to us and bring life through us. Amen.*

Trinity XV – Our God Jesus has set us free from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He also gives us the gift of dependence, to depend upon Him in faith and on one another in love and service (Galatians 6:2). Rather than diminishing our humanity, mutual dependence dignifies it. *Lord Jesus, help me to depend upon You with Your people and defend those who depend upon me. Amen.*

Trinity XVI – In both the Old Testament and Gospel readings we see the ultimate miracle, sons raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24, Luke 7:11-17). Yet they present but a tiny picture of what will happen because God raised His Son from the dead! All the dead in Christ will be raised to eternal life. Death is a defeated enemy! *Prayer: Lord, may Your defeat of death give us courage as we confront a culture of death. Amen.*

Trinity XVII – In Christ God embraced and befriended hearts and bodies ruined by sin. He allowed neither disabilities nor disobedience to separate anyone from His love (Luke 14:1-4). This forgiveness heals us to share the same gracious kingdom with the ones right in front of us who struggle with impairment and iniquity (Luke 14:12-14). *Prayer: Extend Your kingdom, Lord Jesus, through me to those who are broken like I am. Amen.*

Trinity XVIII – Those who see abortion as just “another issue” and would support or encourage a woman to make such a choice fail to understand the scriptural concept of “neighbor” and have a false sense of what it means to love. Those who see both mother and unborn child as “neighbor” and take action to bring help and hope fulfill the second greatest commandment in the Law and reflect the love of Christ (Matthew 22:34-40).

Trinity XIX – The horror of abortion happening over 3,000 times each day in the U.S. should make Christians angry. The silence of the Church and the indifference of fellow congregational members should make Christians angry. But anger must not lead us to sin (Ephesians 4:26). Screaming and yelling and returning evil for evil is not the way of the body of Christ. The truth needs to be proclaimed but without “bitterness and wrath” (4:31).

Trinity XX/Reformation Sunday – The Reformation truths Lutherans have celebrated for 500 years apply beautifully and powerfully to life issues. A human being’s identity and sanctity come

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from God’s grace in creating, redeeming, and calling each one. Abilities or accomplishments, efforts or emotions cannot establish anyone’s value or invalidate anyone’s worth. *Prayer: Gracious Savior, let us honor with You the preciousness of every human person because of Your grace, forgiveness, and free salvation. Amen.*

Trinity XXI – The picture of the armor-clad Christian in Ephesians 6:10-20 is one of defense not offense. We are not fighting to obtain truth. We have the truth. We fight to defend the truth upon which we stand. Be encouraged in this spiritual battle that can seem so frustrating at times. “[B]e strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (6:10). *Prayer: Thank You for Your truth, Lord, and Your armor. Help us stand firm. Amen.*

Trinity XXII – God would have us forgive each other “from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). When terrible sins are involved, such as abuse or incest, it is no easy matter to forgive—maybe it even seems impossible. The same is true when trying to forgive ourselves when we have committed some horrible sin, like abortion, for example. The starting point for forgiveness in all situations is not what we should do but what God in Christ has done for us. Only His complete forgiveness can give us peace as we strive to forgive others and ourselves. *Prayer: Father, forgive our many sins for Jesus’ sake and give us opportunity to share this forgiveness freely with others. Amen.*

Trinity XXIII – Since God created humankind in His image, their fate belongs in His hands above Caesar’s (Matthew 22:21). Life issues are more than just private or political—they are matters of the heart, to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks most directly and effectively. They must remain part of the Church’s conversation for the sake of people struggling with them. *Prayer: Almighty God, impart unto us ears that rejoice to hear Your whole counsel and tongues that proclaim it with courage and compassion. Amen.*

Last Sunday of the Church Year – Our Savior considers human bodies so precious that He has already begun making a new earth for them to enjoy eternally (Isaiah 65:17-25). He has not designed humankind’s bodily existence as disposable but as indispensable to our identity and abundant life. How shall this affect our approach to illness, disability, conception, and age? *Prayer: King of creation, increase our respect and protection for the bodies of others with the esteem You bestow upon our own. Amen.*