

like clay to be molded by the divine Potter; after that time of quietness, which made him inwardly more free than he had ever been, he will often look back, and will continually ask himself: “Cannot this experience of the most beautiful and precious gifts of God, on the very brink of death, be given to him in the midst of life?”

—Hanns Lilje, *In the Valley of the Shadow*

Sing a New Song Unto the Lord

By Daniel L. Schutte

See print copy for words.

*“...That I may know Him,
and the power of His resurrection
and the fellowship of His sufferings...”
~ Philippians 3:10 ~*

We celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Old Orchard Church

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2009 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

Celebrating the Immortal Jesus as the Resurrection Community of Suffering

Raised from a corruptible body to an indestructible life,
Jesus Christ now invites his followers
To share not only in his resurrection power
But also in his crucifixion weakness.
O great privilege—
To suffer in solidarity with the Suffering Servant,
Even on this side of the empty tomb!

Afflicted but not crushed,
Perplexed but not despairing
Persecuted but not broken,
Struck down but not destroyed.
We carry within us the dying of Jesus,
That his exquisite life may be seen
To animate our broken bodies till he comes again!

Dying, we live;
Suffering, we triumph.
Alleluia!



Today's Scripture

Old Testament Lesson: Proverbs 22:15
New Testament Lessons:
Hebrews 12:3-11; Philippians 3:1-11

Sermon Series on Matthew

“It’s Not about You—And It’s Not About Them”
Matthew 23:13-39
Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

Paying a Price

The meditation below was written by Hanns Lilje, a Lutheran churchman imprisoned by the Nazis for nine months in the wake of the failed “Valkyrie” project in July, 1944, a plot hatched by high German army officials to assassinate Hitler (a story that’s been told well in the recent movie with Tom Cruise). Lilje was arrested because of his known ties to the Confessing Church (the Protestant churches who opposed Hitler) and because he had been pastoring some of the officials who were in on the plot. Lilje reminds us that suffering clarifies what’s truly important for a Christian while “normal” life is always tempting us to make ease our highest value.

This is the record of a simple Christian man, who although he was only a preacher of the Gospel, fell into the hands of the Gestapo, and whom God preserved, as He once preserved those three men in the fiery furnace. During his time of tribulation he had the same experience they had: **So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire....** (Daniel 3:26)

So it is a miracle of the mercy of God to have been preserved in body and soul, although on both there remain considerable scars.

But he is grateful to his Divine Lord for the precious school of trial, which he will never forget; for he is well aware that in peaceful times, no one will ever willingly tread the path that leads through such a dark valley. He has been allowed to touch that shore which is neither of earth nor of heaven but is irradiated by the dawning light of eternity more than by the shadow of earthly memories, and he knows that all his life long he will never forget how life on the threshold of eternity is transformed....

He also knows what a precious inward independence comes with the sense of having finished with this life, when rough and tyrannical hands had pushed him to the very brink of death. He will never forget the last words of Moltke [Helmuth J.G. von Moltke, German lawyer who opposed Hitler] before the People’s Court, which could never be modified by any lingering earthly hopes, and made him, a fettered prisoner, the one free man among the henchmen of a dying regime.

He knows too that henceforth he will never be afraid of any power on earth, for once in his life he faced life as a whole, and came to terms with it. Once in his life, he really and completely confessed his sins, and in the Lord’s Supper received the seal of a mercy which covers all that is unfinished, imperfect, and wrong, with the blessed gift of forgiveness.

He has experienced how sweet, how unutterably sweet is the life of freedom, and how precious is life, when it has been given back as a pure grace, as something unmerited and unexpected, no longer tainted by the curse of self-righteousness and self-assertion.

After that royal stillness, in which his imprisonment could do him no harm, since week after week he was able to pray, to meditate, to think, and to pray once more, when he was able to commit his spirit into his Lord’s hands,