

20 *St. Luke's* 22

Sharing God's Love and Bringing Hope to the World

ROME
to
MEMBERGAD

Daily Devotional
May 30 - June 12, 2022

Trip Participants



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Jana Attaway



Josh Attaway



Lisa Beck



Mike Bell



Nancy Bell



Diane Brown



Gary Brown



Kirk Coyer



Karoline Daniel



Marcus Daniel



Bart Dixon



Margaret Dixon



Candace Fish



Logan Fish



Rafael Garcia



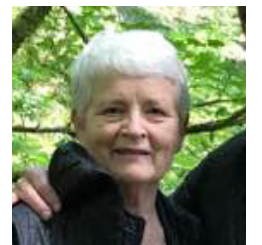
Tisha Tate-Garcia



Trent Gibson



Bob Hauck



Rita Hauck



Deanna Howe



Steve Howe



Brooks Lambert



Chris Lambert



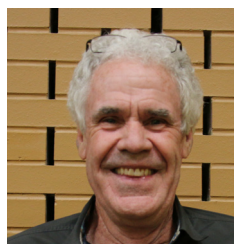
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Trip Participants



Brent Manning



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Erika Manning



Galen Manning



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Stacy McDaniel



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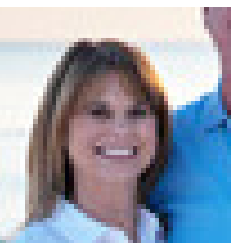
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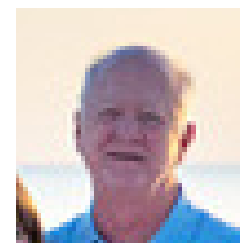
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Ed Sawyer



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Amanda Sullivan



Bob Sullivan



Stephanie Wendt



Janet Williams



Wiley "Butch" Williams



John Michael Williams



Kathy Williams



Joe Wine



Kim Wine



Linda Wrede



Ron Wrede

Itinerary

May 30 - Depart USA

May 31 - Arrive in Rome

June 1 - Ancient Rome

June 2 - Christian Rome

June 3 - Assisi

June 4 - Siena and San Gimignano

June 5 - Florence

June 6 - Florence

June 7 - Padua and Venice

June 8 - Venice to Village

June 9 - Innsbruck

June 10 - Oberammergau Passion Play

June 11 - Neuschwanstein

June 12 - Return to USA

As a little girl, I always loved the adventure our family vacations. While they were almost always road trips somewhere, we occasionally traveled by train because my Dad worked for Southern Pacific Railroad. We were a family of five and eating out was something we might do once a day. I remember eating countless meals at roadside parks or out of an electric skillet in the motel room. As modest as this may sound, that was part of the adventure to me. When we left on vacation, I always felt like we were taking the trip of a lifetime. We had such fun planning and learning about the sights we would see that I realized the planning was almost as much fun as the trip. As soon as we returned from one trip, we all began saving change for the “fun money” we would use on our next adventure.

With time, I realized there was a difference between a vacation and a spiritual pilgrimage. What sets a pilgrimage apart from an ordinary vacation? Sometimes it’s intention - we set out on a journey that we hope will draw us closer in spirit. Sometimes it happens without even being aware of it, and it is only in hindsight that we realize that the journey was in fact a pilgrimage.

One type of spiritual pilgrimage is a physical journey toward a place of sacred or religious significance, a journey that touches the soul.

In 1998, my parents joined us on such a trip from St Luke’s to the Holy Land. Words cannot explain how special it was for me to be on this spiritual pilgrimage with my parents, the very parents who raised me in a loving home with God ever-present in our lives. They taught me the stories of Jesus, and how very special it was to walk where Jesus walked and lived.

Twenty-two years ago, my parents went on another spiritual pilgrimage with their church in Houston, this time a very similar trip to the one you are leaving on today. They loved traveling with their church friends and the seeing the Passion Play in Oberammergau was the highlight of their trip. Their passion stirred my heart, and I knew then that I would see it one day.

Our group has been planning our spiritual pilgrimage to Italy and Germany for almost three years. We have planned, we have prayed, and we have packed! We are finally setting out on the journey! Although I won’t be experience the Passion Play with my parents, I love that I will be sharing it with you, my family of faith! For now, I know we’re taking a trip of a lifetime and we’ll see you in Rome!

Marsha Long

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You that we have the joy of making this journey with You and with one another. Help us to keep our minds and hearts open to all that You might speak to us during these days together. Bind us together in You. In Your Name. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

As I prepare for this trip, I've had many people ask me where are you going? I must admit that many times, I couldn't explain all that we are going to be doing. I knew we were going to Oberammergau to see the Passion Play. I also knew we were going to Rome, Italy. But to be honest, I hadn't done a lot of research to see where all we would be during this two-week adventure.

Typically, when Suzanne and I travel, we will both spend many hours researching the location we are traveling to, as we try to see and do as much as possible during our time there. One of our vacations, we took a road trip to California with our daughter Erika, my brother Galen (who is on this trip), and my parents. Suzanne's parents joined us for part of our trip as well. It was a great time that we all cherish. We packed as many things into the trip as possible, but it took a lot of planning to make sure we could enjoy all of it.

It was just recently I took an in-depth look at the itinerary for this trip to see how many hotels, countries, and cities that we will be in. In case

you haven't done so yet, we will stay in seven different hotels over the course of the next fourteen days. So, make sure you keep track of what hotel you are in and what room number you are staying in each day as it will change often.

I've put faith in our trip leaders from Educational Opportunities and our leadership team for the trip that they have done the research and have prepared a wonderful trip for us. It is in the same faith that I have put my faith in Jesus. Jesus said in John 14 that He was preparing a place for us. When Thomas asked, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus basically responded, to follow Him and He will lead the way. I grateful that I may not know all the details during this trip, but I do know that someone has prepared the way for each of us to enjoy this trip. I also know that God has prepared each of our hearts to hear from him during this time. I am so excited to get to travel with and make lasting memories with each of you.

Brent Manning

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for allowing each of us to participate in this trip. Thank you for preparing our hearts and minds to be ready to experience all that you have set forth for us to experience. May your presence be with us each and every day and protect us as we travel together. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

Welcome to Rome! This city has held a significant place throughout the history of Christianity. But it's possible that no greater contribution has been made to the Church from Rome than Paul's letter to the early church in Rome. This letter has made a transformational impact on the lives of many of the incredible saints of the church.

It was Saint Augustine who read Romans and said, "I had no wish to read further; there was no need to. For it was as though my heart was filled with a light of confidence and all the shadows of my doubt were swept away." Martin Luther was inspired to lead the Protestant Reformation, in part, after reading Romans 1:17. He called it "a gate of heaven" and said he felt himself "to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise." And it was after John Wesley heard someone reading from Martin Luther's commentary on Romans one night at a Bible study on Aldersgate Street in London that he would go home and write in his journal, "I felt my heart was strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation."

So what is it about Paul's message to the people in Rome that has made such an amazing

difference? I think the whole message of the letter, and really the message of Paul's ministry, comes down to what he writes in Romans 8:38-39, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It seems that when Paul wrote to the church in Rome they were struggling with a division between the Jewish and Gentile sectors of the church. Paul wrote to remind them that no one group was better than another. We have all experienced the gift of God's love, and all that is required of us is to trust in that love. It only seems appropriate as we begin our first day of tours on this trip preparing ourselves to ultimately remember the Passion story and the sacrificial love of God for us that we begin with this fundamental message from Paul. God loves you and there is nothing that will stand in the way of that.

Rev. Josh Attaway

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for the saints of the church – those saints on whose shoulders we stand. Thank You for people like Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and so many others, who have given their lives for the sake of sharing the good news of Your love for all people. I thank You that there is nothing that can separate us from Your love. Open my heart today that I might experience the depths of Your love. Help me to trust fully in You so that I might be transformed and renewed in Your image. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty... And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God... Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made...” So began the original Nicene Creed, adopted by the First Council of Nicaea in 325. Most early church leaders believed in Christ’s divinity, but others argued Jesus was a “created being,” lesser than God. Constantine, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity, called the council together to decide which was correct.

Constantine played a significant role in the trips St. Luke’s has taken. In 326, he sent his mother, Helena, to the Holy Land to trace Jesus’ footsteps. Her journey identified the traditional sites of the Sermon on the Mount, miracle of the loaves and fishes, Jesus’ birth and crucifixion, and Helena was responsible for Bethlehem’s Church of the Nativity, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. On the Journeys of Paul trip in 2019, the group visited Istanbul, Turkey, which was known for 1,600 years as Constantinople after Constantine moved his capitol there in 330.

The first place we visited after arriving in Rome yesterday was the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls where Constantine build the first church

over the Apostle Paul’s grave. Today, we’re touring ancient Rome, including the Colosseum, Forum, Circus Maximus, and the Arch of Constantine. The arch was dedicated in 315 to commemorate his rise to power. Constantine, however, left Rome in late 312 and did not return to the city until 326. It is the largest triumphal arch in Rome and spans the route military victors took in their triumphal procession.

While it wasn’t the first three-bay triumphal arch, it is the largest. So many others were modeled on it, including Brandenburg Gate in Potsdam, the Marble Arch at Buckingham Palace, and Paris’ Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel. It has inspired other works, such as the facades of Union Station in Washington, D.C., and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

We are called to be examples of God’s love. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus tells us, “...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Does your life – like the Arch of Constantine – serve as a model for others?

Chris Lambert

Prayer:

Dear God,

As the moon shines from the sun, let us reflect Your light to the world in all that we say and do. May all who look upon us, see You. - Amen

Daily Notes:

Legend has it that Rome was founded in 753 BCE. That is 2,775 years ago! Since that time Rome has been in constant war. As Rome grew stronger it conquered more and more people. When the victory was especially significant the general was granted a “Triumph.” When Titus conquered Jerusalem, and completely destroyed the temple, he was awarded a Triumph.

It was a massive public celebration across the entire city that went on for days! The general would wear a gold embroidered purple toga. On his head he would wear a laurel wreath. He would be pulled through the city in his chariot, where the crowds would cheer. But riding in the chariot with him would be a slave that was always whispering in his ear “remember, thou art but a man “!

Philip Barlag tells the story in his book, *The History of Rome in 12 Buildings*. I first heard the story, years ago in the movie Patton. After Patton was victorious in the Battle of the Bulge and

then in World War II, he reflected on this Roman tradition. The way that Patton told the story was that the slave would be there to whisper in the General’s ear, “All glory is fleeting!”

Either way the point of the story reminds us “don’t get the big head!”

It is such an important thing to remember, it is why on the night of the Last Supper, that Jesus knelt down, wrapped Himself in a towel and washed His disciples feet. Afterwards He said, “you call me Lord and so I am. If I your Lord have washed your feet then you should wash the feet of one another.”

We may have great success, and receive glory, but we should never forget that we are just another person, and all glory is fleeting. We are called to share God’s love and bring hope the world.

Dr. Bob Long

Prayer:

Dear God,

Be with us in all the highs and lows of life. Lift us up when we stumble in the valleys; keep our feet steady when we find ourselves on the mountain tops. And help us to remember that the true glories of life are found in You. - Amen

Daily Notes:

If you were to ask people to name a saint of the Church, other than one of the original apostles, Saint Francis will often be among the top names to appear on the list. I think this is incredibly significant, especially considering that Saint Francis was never even ordained as a priest in the Church. He truly lived an incredible life as a lay person in the Church helping to bring transformation in so many ways.

We believe that Francis was actually born into a family of great wealth. His father was Italian and his mother was French. His dad was a silk merchant and had apparently done quite well in business. Francis was accustomed to having nice clothes, a nice home, and anything he could want in life. But, one day he went into the San Damiano Church in Assisi to pray, and he felt that he heard God speaking to him telling him to help rebuild the church.

Francis took this quite literally believing God wanted him to help rebuild the San Damiano Church so he took some silk cloth from his family's shop and a horse, he rode to a nearby town and sold the cloth and horse. He then took the money he made and gave it to the priest at

the church to help with renovation efforts for rebuilding the church. This would lead to a lifelong commitment of helping rebuild churches for the sake of spreading the gospel message.

It was shortly after this experience that Francis felt a calling from God on his heart to give up all his possessions and commit to a life of poverty. He started traveling around gathering up others who wanted to commit to a similar way of life and eventually they would develop a Rule of Life that would guide them in every decision they made. Their Rule of Life was simply, "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in His footsteps."

It was a commitment to following this simple Rule that would eventually lead to the Franciscan Order that has now gone all around the world bringing hope to others. It wasn't started by a priest, bishop, or pope. It was all started by a follower of Jesus who simply wanted to live faithfully to the calling he had heard on his life. It's amazing how God can use us when we are simply willing to listen and respond faithfully.

Rev. Josh Attaway

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for this incredible opportunity to travel with our family of faith and walk in the footsteps of these amazing saints. I thank you for Francis and his willingness to faithfully follow You. Help me have ears to hear so that I might hear Your calling upon my life. Help me have eyes to see the opportunities before me every day to be used by You. Give me the strength to respond faithfully so that I can share your love and bring hope to the world. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

*She sits in the reliquary
Just a mummified head
Her severed body a relic
But what of the words she had said?*

*He was interred in a garden
But the stone rolled away
His holy body recovered
His saving word would remain.*

Despite being a teacher/historian, who should be awed and intrigued by the scientific ability to preserve a human head on display, I must admit – severed remains do not provide the ideal backdrop for my worship experience. While the majority of St. Catherine of Siena’s body is buried in the Santa Maria sopra Minerva Basilica in Rome, her head and thumb are held in reliquaries within the Basilica of San Domenico, also known as Basilica Cateriniana.

Pondering what we are about to see today, I consider the importance of the human head – the brain, the source of logic, the mind, will, and emotions. Our minds were given us to ponder the truth and wisdom of God, yet how often my head gets in the way of God’s word. My thoughts, when clouded with preconceived notions and human ignorance, can limit my awareness, and inhibit my surrender. I think about the form of attack the “cunning” serpent used in the Garden – an attack on Eve’s thoughts, “Did God really say?”

One of the most common uses of the word head in the English Bible is in reference to God anointing his chosen people. Leviticus 8:12 says, “He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him.” In 1 Samuel 16, David is anointed on his head by Samuel as God’s chosen king of Israel. In the Old Testament, God anoints the heads of priests and kings when he calls them to His service. Why anoint their head, and not their heart? Perhaps this anointing was to set apart their thinking to be God centered over self-centered. To guard their minds from the “cunning” thoughts contrary to His truth. In the New Testament we see this anointing poured over us. “*Now it is God who makes us...stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come*” (2 Corinthians 1:21). God has sealed our minds. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 to guard our minds with the helmet of salvation – the seal of God’s anointing.

I am grateful that Jesus did not leave behind physical relics of His existence whereby we could easily become distracted. He left us something far greater - His word, His truth.

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth” (1 John 2:20).

Susanne Manning

Prayer:

Loving Christ,

We thank You that You have brought us together as one body. We are Your people and You are our God. We love You and celebrate You as our Lord and Savior! - Amen

Daily Notes:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
Colossians 3:12

When Michelangelo was just about 22 years old a French Catholic Cardinal commissioned him to create a sculpture for his future tomb that would be in the old St. Peter's Basilica. Specifically, the Cardinal told Michelangelo to make "the most beautiful work of marble in Rome, one that no living artist could better." I find it fascinating that the Cardinal made what seems at face value to be a very self-serving request - the most incredible work of art to mark his future resting place. Ironically, Michelangelo ended up making a sculpture that was the greatest expression of selflessness.

The Pietà shares the moment of Mary cradling Jesus, her child, following His death on the cross. Michelangelo was able to capture the grief as well as the love on Mary's face. Not only was the death of Christ the ultimate show of selflessness, Michelangelo was able to show that Mary, too,

was selfless. There is a peace in her face that suggests that despite her grief, she understood that her child's life had a greater purpose.

When I've seen pictures of the sculpture, I can identify with that maternal element that has love and loss interwoven. When you love someone, you grieve when they grieve, rejoice when they rejoice. It is to feel what they are going through because you are focused on them. Rather than pursuing your own happiness as your main objective, you put others before yourself. Quite simply, it is feeling what they feel, which is compassion. The word "pietà" means "compassion."

As you look at the Pietà, consider Christ cradling you in His lap in your most difficult moments. He grieves when you are hurting and He celebrates your joys. While He has Your eternity in mind, He also is considerate of your present moments. Where you are, there He is.

Rev. Wendy Lambert

Prayer:

Christ Jesus,

Forgive me when I forget that You are always with me. Help me to take time and make time to be in the moment with You. For all the busyness of life and all the distractions that can surround me, let me not take my eyes off You. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

The Gospel of Mark has a real urgency to it. When you read it, you get the feeling that the author is talking fast. As one story will end the author takes the reader immediately into the next story through words like, “Immediately they went,” “And then”... The story is rushed until it arrives at the final week of Christ’s life. Once it gets to the Passion, it slows down and spends time taking the reader through each moment of the agony of the Crucifixion and the joy of the Resurrection.

To give you a perspective, the first 10 chapters of the Gospel of Mark cover the three years of the earthly ministry of Jesus while the last six chapters cover the last week of His life. 10 chapters for 156 weeks versus six chapters for one week. The crux of Mark’s message is found in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The weight that the author gave to the last week can be better understood when you consider the context in which the book was written. The author of the Gospel of Mark was living during the time of the early uprisings of the Jews against the Romans. But the small Jewish factions were no match for the strength and power of the Roman army. While there were a few initial victories, the “war” was quickly won by the Romans. Emperor

Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome and there was a growing persecution against the Jewish people. In the midst of that persecution, the Gospel of Mark highlighted the persecution that Christ experienced in His final week. It revealed that Jesus would be one to understand the people’s suffering. But of course, the message doesn’t end with the death of Jesus. Following the Crucifixion and burial in the tomb, Jesus would be resurrected from the dead. It would be a message that would remind the people of that time, and all of us today, that death is not the end. The darkest moments of life are overcome by the Light of Christ.

Looking around at the remnants of the Roman empire, you get a real sense of the fear that they could invoke in the hearts of their enemies. Yet, remnants are all that remain. The early church was by all appearances, no match for the might of the Roman power. However, we are here today as part of a living faith traveling to look at a former empire. Make time to read the Gospel of Mark on this trip and get a sense of why he thought the last week of Jesus’ life was important. Persecution, Crucifixion, Death - Jesus overcame.

Rev. Wendy Lambert

Prayer:

Christ,

You guide us in a world of uncertainties. We struggle with seeing the cruelties of humanity around the world. But we know that in all things, You are God. We believe, help our unbelief. To consider You conquered sin and death on our behalf is too wonderful to imagine. But we cry out, “Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!” - Amen.

Daily Notes:

Our God gifts us with a gracious love that surpasses our own understanding. When I think of this love, it reminds me of a song by Ellie Holcomb called *Color*, and a verse that reads:

*I thought truth was black and white,
but You took my hand,
and this world is made of color.*

I think of my Heavenly Father's love as color. Such undeserving love paints a canvas of many colors, some are unable to interpret or express, but important to mention as it contributes to the entire artwork.

I tend to put God's works in black and white, holiness or sinfulness. However, God's love does not act upon right and wrong but is ever constant in the midst of our sin. It is through Jesus's teachings we are taught to do likewise:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not

resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."
Matthew 5:38-39

I believe we all can attest that God's love is not always easy to understand, especially when it covers the graces of our enemies, or maybe even ourselves. When I looked up pictures of Innsbruck, Austria; I was overwhelmed with color, from the nature to the buildings, the city is vibrant. As we will be witnesses to this brightly colored city, let it be a reminder of our Heavenly Father's love and continue to be the advocator who bring Gods love to the Earth, spreading the good news of our Christ.

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." 1 John 4:16

Erika Manning

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for all the many colors you created in this world. The colors of nature that you created and the colors that we use in our creations. May we take time today to enjoy all the colors and beauty of your love. - Amen

Daily Notes:

If you've watched the musical, *The Sound of Music*, you probably remember the song *Edelweiss*. It's a song that talks about this flower edelweiss. It's a small white flower that only grows at the tops of mountains. The song was written for the musical to capture a sense of the Austrian pride in the face of the German nationalism in World War II.

In World War II, many German and Austrian soldiers would climb up to the tops of the mountains and pick edelweiss and pin it to their uniforms. Doing this was the mark of a true soldier because it meant they were strong and brave enough to climb up to the heights where the edelweiss would grow. Before it became a symbol of national pride during World War II, it was a symbol of loving devotion. Men would climb to the top of the mountains and pick edelweiss for their loved ones. It was a symbol of their commitment and love. Even now people will give edelweiss as a sign of their gratitude and affection.

As I thought about it, there is a similar symbolism found in the cross. The cross is a symbol of hope

and love. We know we all make mistakes - none of us are perfect. When we consider the love of Christ, we have a tendency to think we have to do something to earn that love, but the fact is God has already climbed the mountain for us. He has already offered the gift of love. Even when we feel we haven't done enough to merit it, or feel we done too much to lose it, Christ reminds us that His love is everlasting. It's not about what we do, it's about what Christ has done. God is always whispering to us reminding us that we are His children. As you walk through the streets and see the mountains, I hope that you find peace in the beauty around you, and that you remember that God has climbed the mountain to show you His love and devotion for you.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

Brooks Lambert

Prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for Your amazing love. It is sometimes difficult to imagine just what "unconditional love" means as shown in Christ. As we come to truly accept Your love for us, help us to share that love and bring hope to the world. - Amen

Daily Notes:

Years ago when our daughter Hannah was a young girl and before our son Brooks was born, we made a trip to Eureka Springs to see the Passion Play. We sat outside and watched the biblical story lived out in front of us. I was truly moved to see the interpretation of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Of course I'm looking forward to seeing Oberammergau's interpretation in their Passion Play. But I'm also really looking forward to seeing the production as the cumulative work of centuries of Oberammergau citizens. It was only that first generation of Oberammergau citizens, the ones who prayed for help to survive the plague in 1633, that made the promise to God. Yet the future generations of Oberammergau continued to uphold the promise and carry on the tradition of putting on the Passion Play. People who spanned almost 400 years all committed to the same goal of sharing the message of God's love. From 1633, each generation seemed to place the mantle of responsibility on the next generation and so on and so on. It reminds me of the mission of St. Luke's. From 1889, each generation of St. Luke's has passed on to the next, the commitment to share God's love and bring hope to the world. Of course, it actually goes all the way back to Christ. Following the

Resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples and commanded them to go out into the world, make disciples, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Truthfully, it is that original directive of Christ that gave way to the people of Oberammergau living out their commitment, the Eureka Springs Passion Play, and the people of St. Luke's striving to share God's love and bring hope to the world.

Through the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christ set us free from all that would hold us back from enjoying the life He created us. And the teachings of Christ show us the way to living life to the fullest - to love God and others. When you watch or remember the Passion Play, soak up the story of Christ's love for you, then remember you are part of a line of people dating back to Jesus and hear your role in the greatest commandment: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."* Matthew 22:37-40

Rev. Wendy Lambert

Prayer:

Holy God,

We thank You for the faithful witness of the people of Oberammergau. Help us to learn from their example to be committed to a higher calling. Grant us the strength to stay the course You have set for us. We ask that You continue to bless the people of Oberammergau and their ministry of revealing Your love. Please bless our church and let us continue to share Your love in order to bring hope to the world. In the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. - Amen

Daily Notes:

Daily Devotional

Daily Devotional

The first time I knew I wanted to become a musician was when I heard Anton Bruckner's 7th Symphony on my local classical radio station. I didn't hear the name of the symphony before the piece began. I sat captured by the opening theme as it climbed higher and higher, struggling to reach the heavens. It gripped me and took me on a very long and emotional journey. This symphony might not strike everyone, but at the time it was exactly what I needed to hear.

Later that year I was able to hear that symphony performed live by the New York Philharmonic, but it was not as enthralling as the time I heard it over the radio airwaves. There is something very special about timing. When we catch the right piece of artwork at the right time, it speaks to us. It could be when we are dead-tired and suddenly

we feel awake and struck with a moment of clarity. Or it happens when we feel angry and a piece of music helps us calm down and have perspective with the world around us.

God times things well. Certain people come into our lives when we need them, and this is just the same for special pieces of art. Art carries personality, and for me the personality of Anton Bruckner struck me in that moment. I was so intrigued, I decided to write a paper on him for a school project and I learned so much about this enigmatic man. He was fully devoted to God and music. He inscribed every work he wrote "Soli Deo gloria" - Glory to God alone.

Logan Fish

Prayer:

Beautiful God,

Thank you for equipping certain people with the gift to create beauty. As a piece of music speaks to my spirit or a work of art captures my imagination, let me remember to give You thanks. For You are the source of all good things and You delight in bringing me unexpected joy. Remind me to better appreciate the beauty that exists all around me; art that is a part of my everyday life. Thank you for the artistry that is created by Your hand and also that which is created by Your handiwork. - Amen.

Daily Notes:

“Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends, but is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers.” ~ Pat Conroy

If we are reading my devotional, it means our journey together is coming to an end. And I have to be honest, I had a hard time writing this. I love to travel with every thread of my being. I am infatuated by all the parts: the dreaming, the booking, the preparation, the packing, and the actual journey. I never thought much about the ending. It was always something that just had to be done.

Yoga has been good for me over the years. Only recently have I been able to practice in a yoga studio again. During class, the teacher said, the end of a posture is equally important to the posture itself. This was my missing link.

This day and the days to come are as important as all the preparation we did to get here. And we did prepare well, for some it was literally years in the making. Now we must return well. And to return well, it might be helpful to go back to the beginning.

A pilgrimage is said to be a time to step away from the distractions of everyday life and grow nearer to God. Why did you come on this journey? Whatever your intention was in the beginning, you made the sacrifices necessary to travel far from your home during these uncertain times. You are courageous.

The hope of all pilgrimage is to notice God’s precious presence more clearly in our everyday lives. We will unpack this trip for years to come. The artwork, architecture, conversation, places and spaces will stay with us long after we are back home. By remembering the times God met us with His love and compassion during this journey, we learn to meet others with increased understanding and compassion.

Will you remember this trip as a fond, but distant memory? Or will you allow its profoundness to be infused into your everyday life? Will you let its sacredness live on in your heart, so that all you say and do becomes a living tribute to those moments when God touched your heart and stirred your soul far away from home.

Tisha Tate Garcia

Prayer:

Dearest Holy Father,

I come to you in gratitude. I am ever grateful for experiencing the luxury of pilgrimage. My heart has been filled with Your grace. Please guide me to use this journey to be a living reminder of Your impact on me. As I return to my everyday life, help me make every decision one that shares, and grows and serves in Your honor. Maybe I hug a little longer. Maybe I show kindness to a complete stranger. Let me keep this voyage alive in my heart with all my actions. The journey of uniting my heart with Yours continues on. With ever-growing gratitude....Amen

Daily Notes:

