

BISHOP'S E-MESSAGE FOR FEBRUARY

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the course of this month we move into one of the oldest, and longest observed, liturgical seasons of the church year – the season of Lent. The six weeks of Lent, together with the three days (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter), has historically been observed as a time of intense instruction in the Christian faith, culminating on the Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday with the profession of faith and baptism of new believers.

Knowing something of these historical Christian practices in Lent can inform how we view the season, and what spiritual practices might commend themselves to us. Brief orders of thanksgiving for baptism and remembrance of baptism are certainly in order, as in these six weeks we return to the waters of our own spiritual births as God's beloved children. Water in the baptismal font, accessible to the worshipping assembly and near the entrance to the worship space, provides the people of God with the opportunity to dip fingers in the font and mark themselves with the sign of the cross – a practice Martin Luther commends in his Morning and Evening Prayers.

It's the waters of baptism that connect us to the Passion of our Christ, and incorporate us into the story of salvation through the Cross and Empty Tomb. I recall a practice in one of the congregations to which we have belonged that warmed my heart. When a little child was welcomed into the family of God through Water and the Word, the already-baptized children of the assembly would form an ad hoc children's choir to sing: "You have put on Christ / In Christ you have been baptized / Alleluia! Alleluia!" And of course, that is the essence of it – you, me, each of the baptized - has put on Christ. It is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. And the lives we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. May yours be an informed, reflective and holy Lent.

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories