

Bishop's Message for February 2009

“In the bleak mid-winter” comes to my mind as I watch more snow fall and impatiently await longer daylight hours. Of course, snow is not the only thing that is falling. The global economy continues in a shambles. Nortel Networks filed for bankruptcy protection. This uber-Tech darling is now frozen at thirty-eight cents a share. Barack Obama has been inaugurated president in a country (and perhaps a world) that has near-Messianic expectations of him. Time will tell. The human tragedies continue unabated in Gaza as Hamas and the Israelis perpetuate the carnage. Folks are hunkering down in anxious fear, not knowing yet how all of this gloom and doom will impinge on their lives and lifestyles. Of course, I don't need to recite the most recent newscast to you – you know it all too well.

My morning devotions directed me to Isaiah 41, and these words: “Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you.” These are not words inviting us to escape reality by clinging to pious platitudes. They are words inviting us to walk by faith and live in hope.

I was also reminded this morning that when Dietrich Bonhoeffer was in the Flossenburg concentration camp in 1944, he wrote to his friend Eberhard Bethge that he was neither a pessimist – expecting things to get worse – nor an optimist – expecting things to get better. Rather, he said, he was living by hope. Hope! One of those three forces – faith, hope and love – that Paul declares remains when all supports are washed away. And not just some kind of generic “hope”, but hope in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For the living of this “winter” (in every sense), Christ – be our light!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada