

“[Jesus] said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.’” Mark 2:27-28.

Dear Christian friends,

February becomes a busy month in the Church year. We begin this month with the continuing revelations of Jesus as the Christ in his early earthly ministry. Then Transfiguration Sunday occurs which marks that dramatic shift in the focus of Jesus’ mission: he turns his mission focus directly toward Jerusalem. The Transfiguration ministry shift brings us into the season of Lent, which we begin with Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time in which Christians are exhorted to examine their Christian discipleship closely. It frequently marks a type of sacred resolution time. Christian men and women pledge to abstain from some pleasurable things, but also re-initiate in doing charitable acts. Lent is a time of deep personal self-reflection and therefore, when engaged in authentically, it demands more from us physically and psychologically. February is also the month in which St Valentine’s Day is celebrated adding to all the activity of the month.

February is a notable transition month for me personally. Normally about mid-month the winter season begins to take its physical and psychological toll on my being. The Seasonal Affective disorder (SAD) exerts its maximum force. When I begin to sense this stress in my body I have two options, either ignore my body’s gentle feedback and take the risk; or heed those gentle signals and take appropriate action.

I liken this bio-feedback to the battery in my cell phone. When it is at full charge the phone can function well without any concern about shut-down in mid-task. If the battery is only about 25% charged it drains much more rapidly and I have to be careful about what I use the phone for. Only a recharge can rectify the situation.

Jesus reminds his followers about the importance of the Sabbath. Jesus often took time apart from others to be in prayer. Even when his ministry was at its busiest and seemingly most successful he would withdraw for a Sabbath and even order his disciples to do likewise. (Mark 6:45-46.) Remembering the Sabbath is the Third Commandment. That time is important as a recharge for us. Resting and being restored is the purpose that God commands the Sabbath, knowing that we need it.

I have learned the importance of this Commandment and order in life the hard way. The LORD has been able to teach me to order it. So I now take a winter vacation even when it comes in the season of Lent. I comment that this “winter Sabbath” recharges me enough so that I can get over the last snowdrift of the season! This February won’t be different than the previous two. I will escape from this winter grip in early Lent to have a Sabbath rest and be fully recharged for Holy Week and Easter celebrations. I will choose to allow the wisdom of the LORD to guide me in my physical and psychological well-being.

As we make this seasonal shift in the Church year in February, I would encourage all in their Lenten discipline to make room for some Sabbath time that the LORD might restore us in the fullness of Christ’s presence for us. We are the hands and feet of Jesus in our world now. May the world see that in us.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.