



Bethany Lutheran Church
4644 Clark Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90808

**The Cross is our
Root & our FRUIT!**

*(That is, The Cross
is our reason for being & the beauty
we bring into the world)*

**Inspire Phase
Worship Services:**

March 5, 12, 19, 26,
and April 2

**Commitment
Dedication Sunday:**

Sunday, April 9, 2017
ONE Service 10:00am
(Children's Event, Food,
and Fellowship to follow)

To Our Members At...

Renaissance

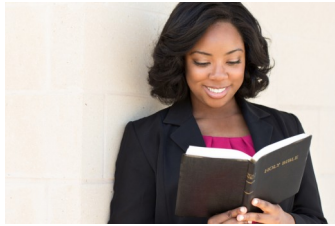
“The Dual Nature of the Cross and the Dual Nature of Sacrificial Giving”

The cross is the great expression of God's grace and the cross is the great location of God's wrath. On the cross God's grace is known, received and experienced in all its wonderful fullness through the pleasing sacrificial offering of Jesus' holy and perfect life. After all, Jesus was “A lamb without blemish or stain.” At the same time, on the same cross, we see God's wrath in all its righteous fury. St. Paul writes, “He who knew no sin became sin.” Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, one with the Father from eternity, through His agony, suffering and death was forsaken and condemned because of our guilt. This is the dual nature, or twofold reality, of the cross!

There is a dual nature, or twofold reality, to sacrificial giving. On the one hand, sacrificial giving enables us to experience “...everything we need to support our body and life.” We confess this as Christians, in the 1st article of the Apostles' Creed from Luther's Small Catechism. When we return a sacrificial gift to God, we know that He will continue to provide for our needs and we trust that all we have is His to begin with anyway.

On the other hand, sacrificial giving enables us to experience in our lives that which we hold dear as Lutherans, “God works with means.” Through Word and water, wafer and wind, God works faith, forgiveness and forever for us. Of course, not all means are inanimate. God works in and through us too! Our daily vocations, our stations in life and, our passionate service at Bethany are all means through which our God works. Our weekly offerings and our sacrificial gifts to the Renaissance Project are also means through which our God, in all His wonderful fullness, will work.





BETHANY

LUTHERAN CHURCH - LCMS
LONG BEACH, CA

Jesus: Unchanging Hope For A Changing World

Outside of Jesus' own Resurrection, the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels is the feeding of the five thousand. Of all the miracles Jesus worked, it is that miracle that stands out as unique. Jesus, who never did anything unintentionally, involved others in the miraculous feeding. The disciple who pondered how to feed the crowd, the child whose lunch was offered, the twelve who helped distribute the meal; each of these played a role in the event. True, while ONLY Jesus worked the miracle, He intentionally chose to use the gifts and service of others to bless the recipients of His miraculous action.

Our Renaissance at Bethany recognizes that the Lord works through His people for the sake of His people, intimate followers, and the crowd alike. In other words, we know that Jesus blesses through Bethany and that He works through the gifts and talents and service of the people of Bethany to bring about His blessings to those at Bethany and those outside of Bethany.

The child in the account of this miracle, recorded in each Gospel, had two small fish and five barley loaves. If that boy would have run away from the disciples and kept his lunch unto himself it would have remained a fine meal. Only in turning his lunch over to Jesus did it become a miracle worthy of being recorded in each Gospel.

Some of us at Bethany have "small fish" and "barley loaves" so to speak, while others of us have "King Salmon" and "large French baguettes". While we the members of Bethany will not all offer equal gifts, we can each offer an equal sacrifice. We each offer an equal sacrifice when we offer to our God something that is ours (*which is actually really His – remember our stuff is not our stuff*) for His sacred purpose. The miraculous is at the heart of the Renaissance as renewal, restoration and revitalization; all are miraculous works of God accomplished in God's Son even when the means are the gifts of God's people.

In our NEXT issue: Giving Pyramid

Equal Sacrifice

Equal sacrifice means that our Renaissance commitment isn't quite as easy as giving that which won't be missed. Some of us will give up Starbucks, others will give stock, some will give up vacation, others vacation property, some will give a sacrificial one-time offering, others a sacrificial gift given 12 times per year for 3 years. While our gifts will vary and not be equal in amount or size or duration, when these gifts are given in faith and trust and when that which is offered is something that will be missed we will know the joy of equal sacrifice.

Our sacrificial commitments to the Renaissance project are gifts given over and above regular tithes and offerings. Our tithes and offerings are "the means" through which God works the wonders He works in our budgeted ministry. Our sacrificial gifts to the Renaissance will have long term impact on the kingdom work of Bethany and bless our day to day ministry (*providing spiritual and personal Renaissance for many*) by funding that which is beyond our congregational budget - (*the campus Renaissance so badly needed.*)

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"Every Sunday I hear a message it seems like was prepared especially for me and there is something I can take with me when I leave to help me through my week." - Molly

"There are days during the week it gets really rough just dealing with things. Then we will come to Bethany and you'll know God's right here with me and it's gonna be ok, it's a message saying God's watching and taking care." - Luchie

"We hope Bethany continues to grow and be a place where Bethany kids of Bethany kids of Bethany kids can be...and at the same time becomes a place that welcomes and reflects our diverse community." - Matt and Jeannie

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Mark **Sunday, April 9th** on your calendar! Palm Sunday will be our Commitment Celebration event. **We will have ONE worship service on our grass field under the big top at 10:00am.** If you'd like to help with anything from set-up to clean-up, parking lot attending to table waiting, contact a member of our leadership team:

Our Commitment Celebration Directors are Marcia Esswein, Paul Muench, and Lucy Smith. Our Children Directors are Tracy Hunter and Candy Silverman. Our Campaign Coordinator is Teresa Ivins. And our Campaign Directors are John Holmquist and Gary McDaniel.