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## WELCOMING KIDS AND YOUTH: PART TWO A SIXTH STEP TO VIBRANT WORSHIP

1 Not for the first time, faithful reader, I've thought of more to say about a topic I have addressed earlier. This issue has been so engrained in me, so much part of my psyche after all these years, that I may have simply assumed that readers got my message when I wrote in Essay 225, for December 2018, what I'm now calling Part One. If I were to write the whole thing over again, I'd squeeze this entire posting into place between paragraphs 17 and 18 in Essay 225. After my FiRST point, that is, and BEFORE my second point. Or you can call this Essay 232 simply Part Two.

2 The point I'd try to make, in every consideration of our glorious catholic, evangelical, Lutheran Tradition in Christian worship (my Point One in 225) is this: I'd strive to make every experience of Christian worship a High Adventure. I'd want to try to see to it that Christian worship – even while remaining faithful to its most traditional forms – is something YOU WOULD NOT WANT TO MISS, every week.

3 “Welcoming kids and Youth to Worship”? No better way than to TO MAKE WORSHIP FUN. For all. Not just for kids, but for everyone who walks in the door. Christian worship is not a rock concert. It's not a TV Talk Show. But it ought to be – and can be, believe me – something that's unlike anything else in human experience. Something attractive. Something exciting. Something WORTH GETTING OUT OF BED FOR!

4 I don't want to be mis-understood in making this proposition. We certainly don't want to turn every Sunday's experience of worship into a ritual and psychological circus, with every Sunday's worship a kind of minefield, to be navigated only with the utmost care. My life-long experience of planning and leading worship among young people on campus has convinced me: This is not only possible. It's necessary. If we want our worship to remain vibrant and vital. Something worth returning to, week after week.

5 What follows below are some suggestions for making this happen where you live and worship.

6 The simplest – and least offensive to worshipper’s sensibilities – would be to enlarge and to exploit the possibilities in corporate singing. It’s a near-tragedy: People today, in Canada and in USA, hardly ever sing together in a corporate setting. Maybe “Happy birthday to you” is the closest we come, these days, to that marvelous experience of corporate song. North America is probably alone in this cultural pathology.

7 Christian worship is today therefore distinctly COUNTER-CULTURAL. We’re trying to teach our own culture how to sing together with others, and enjoy it!

8 It’s a distinctly LUTHERAN GIFT to the ecumenical treasury to treat the Hymn of the Day (HOD) with special attention. The HOD, by long Lutheran tradition, is that hymn right after the sermon that presumably gathers and comments on the themes for the day. Worshipers should be trained to expect that every time we gather for worship, we should find some embellishments to the HOD.

9 I write this posting in the days after Easter. Several of our Easter hymns cry out to be used in alternation. Take “Jesus Christ is risen today”, hymn 365 in Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). One side of the hall sings the verses, the other side of the hall sings the alleluias. Reverse the pattern on the next stanza. And the next. The final stanza tutti, all together. Exhilarating! And even FUN!

10 Now, you need a sufficiently extroverted temperament, in pastor or in church musician, to lead such an exercise. And yes, for the pastor, let’s say, to suggest such a thing, right after the sermon, is “to interrupt the flow of the liturgy”. That’s OK, in my view. The liturgy must not constrain us, but liberate us. “The Sabbath was made for human beings, not we for the Sabbath.”

11 If I were boss, I’d never let a Sunday go by without some such embellishment to the HOD. See Essay 194 “Singing in Worship” above for a catalogue of other possibilities for enriching our corporate song.

12 But enriching our corporate song is only one possibility among the many that occur to me.

13 How about using one of the six Scrutinies during Lent and the post-Easter season? Each Sunday in Lent – and in post-Easter’s “week of weeks” – could include, after the sermon, a brief Scrutiny of one of the parts of the Catechism, Essays 146 - 151 above. These Essays are not now available here since this website was re-designed some years ago. But these Essays provide a useful version of the traditional Scrutinies.

14 Perhaps you can find a way to access these little teaching moments, focusing on the Ten Commandments (Essay 146), the Four Gospels and Creed (Essay 147), the Lord’s Prayer (Essay 148), Holy Baptism (Essay 149), Confession and Forgiveness (Essay 150), and Holy Communion (Essay 151).

15 Using these Scrutinies would afford an opportunity to re-acquaint even old-timers with the riches of Luther’s Small Catechism, helpfully included in ELW, pages 1160-1167.

16 A full-assembly Procession on Palm Sunday? If it’s rainy outside, or too cold, find a way to march together through your building. A Procession to your community garden on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, the traditional day for Blessing the Fields? To a local town park? To a local garbage dump? To a local polluter? Such a procession would be a splendid ecological witness!

17 Outdoor processions are furthermore a tremendous witness to the neighbourhood, with Cross and banners and fluttering ribbons, the children with bells and noise-makers. Remember: Any church procession is a kind of Protest March. Our allegiance is not to The Emperor, but to Another. Make the most of any opportunity to get people moving, to get them out of their seats! The handicapped, the elderly, and those in wheelchairs are always excepted. But perhaps even these can be accommodated in a procession.

18 How about distributing children’s noise-makers – dollar store bells, ratchets, tambourines – on festive Sundays, like Christmas or Easter, for the little kids to use, under adult supervision, whenever we sing? “Just when we sing, kids. Not when anyone is speaking.” Kids want to be able to participate. Even if they can’t yet read the words!

19 Be certain to check out Essay 202 “Gospel Acclamations”, above, for still another way to enliven worship. Every Sunday!

20 How about observing the Second Sunday of Easter as a type of Agape Meal, by offering, at The Communion, not simply Bread and Wine, but also a cup of milk laced with honey, as did the early church. This is the Sunday – *Quasi Modo Geniti* – named anciently after that verse in *1Peter 2:2*, reminding those newly baptized at Easter – the “newborn babes” – to persevere in learning and living out the faith they have just received in their baptism.

21 In my campus congregation in the ‘60s and ‘70s, we enlarged that metaphor. We offered, along with the Bread and Wine, milk laced with honey, and also finger foods like cheese and dates and raisins, slices of raw carrots or broccoli florets . Traditional Bread and Wine were offered at the Table by servers One and Two; Milk was offered from a chalice at the Table by a Third server, and finger foods on a tray by a Fourth server. A veritable Agape Meal! Essay 90, *Quasi Modo Geniti*, from April 2005, above is unfortunately not now available here.

22 You could return to your seat, if you preferred, after servers One and Two, and pass up servers Three and Four. But THAT would be a Sunday worth getting out of bed for!

23 How about a choral reading of a scripture lection? That magnificent passage in *Revelation 7:1 ff* – that lists the uncountable numbers of those “sealed in the blood of the lamb” – cries out for several voices in a choral reading. Our lectionaries no longer provide a setting for this stirring passage. But in Year A, on All Saints Day, we read *Revelation 7*, beginning at verse 9. I say – appealing to Jesus’ principle which I repeat in paragraph 10 above – begin at verse 1!

24 At the beginning of the reading of that list in *Revelation 7:5*, I’d engage several good readers to overlap each other, in a kind of musical stretto or fugue: The first voice begins “From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand sealed...” At verse 5b, a second voice overlaps the first voice: “From the tribe of Judah...” and so on. A third voice might even be added, each voice beginning the stretto at 5b, but starting their list at 5a, and each voice reading through until the list ends at verse 8.

25 The effect upon hearers is electrifying! It gives the impression of thousands upon thousands “from every nation under heaven.” The first voice concludes the reading, solo, at verse 10.

26 Other scripture readings from our lectionary can suggest to you other ways to employ the techniques of choral reading to enliven worship. Worship that in other respects is entirely traditional.

27 There must be scores of other ways to enliven ordinary, traditional, every Sunday worship. To make weekly worship something you wouldn't want to miss. Something worth getting out of bed for!

28 What's required, in embellishing worship like the examples above in 5 to 26, are two things. First, an active imagination. And second, a respectful knowledge of our tradition. This brings me to my second point in Essay 225: Worship Education. Education in worship. Now turn to Essay 225!

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