

Concordia Lutheran Conference

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn

for the

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

- THURSDAY -

For the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. – Ephesians 4:12.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted an office in His Church on earth. An office is a service, a ministry, vested with certain powers, a service performed in the name and at the command of some superior person. Such an office, which is to be administered in His name, our Lord and Savior has instituted in His Church on earth. To what purpose? For the edifying of the spiritual body of Christ (His Church), that ever more people may be joined to Christ through faith, and be strengthened in such faith. What, therefore are the functions of this office? To preach the Gospel, to administer the Sacraments, and to forgive or to retain the sins of individual persons. To His disciples Jesus said: *“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:18-20). And again He said to them: *“Peace be unto you! As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”* And when He said this, He breathed on them and said to them: *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”* (John 20:21-23). This office is called the “Office of the Keys,” according to the saying of Christ: *“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 16:19). For by means of the Gospel, and the Sacraments connected with it, sins are forgiven. And where sins are forgiven, there heaven is opened. But when in accordance with the Word of Christ the sins of impenitent sinners are retained, then heaven is closed to such a one.

PRAYER. – I thank Thee, Lord Jesus, O Most High, that within Thy Church on earth Thou hast instituted the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, through which Thou dost increase, strengthen, and preserve Thy beloved Church unto eternal life. Grant me Thy grace, I pray Thee, that I may always seek forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of my faith. And guard me, lest I belong to those whose sins must be retained due to impenitence. Amen.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.

Hymn 292, 2. (TLH)

* Scripture reading for **Thursday**: **Luke 15:11-13, 17-24**
Theme this week: **Repentance**