

*Kerygma and Dogma: What's the difference –
And who cares?*

Dear Friends,

I'm (*almost*) back! I have so many things to share with you about my wonderful sabbatical; thank you for this precious gift. It has given me time to recharge my batteries and get excited about the future of our congregation. I pray it will also be a gift for you, as well. Not only was I able to travel to our Companion Diocese of Ecuador Littoral and Israel where I experienced amazing things, but I was able to spend a lot of time simply praying and planning for our own parish. I will get to all of both in the days, weeks, months to come, but first I want to share with you some things that I want to implement soon after I "re-emerge" into the active life of Christ Church.

The Easter Season in the Christian Church has traditionally been a time for the catechesis of the faithful. A time to especially think and consider what we believe – and how it impacts our lives. For the second year in a row, this Lenten Season I have spent each morning reading through a section of what is called "**The Outline of Faith commonly called the Catechism**" as set down in our Book of Common Prayer. I have it divided up so I can read it through once a week. That means by the time Easter Sunday arrives, I will have read through it six times during Lent. And every time I read it I enjoy it all the more. It so beautifully and poetically captures what we Episcopalians believe about such basic tenets of our faith as Human Nature, Sin, Redemption, the Christian Hope, and so much more. It is amazing just what it says – and what it leaves to the individual to ponder.

It has made me think again about those two Greek words: **Kerygma** and **Dogma**. Do you know the difference? "**Kerygma**" is the stripped down, bare-bones, essential message of the gospel (can you give it to me in 5 words or less?) In modern lingo, you might call it the Mission Statement for Christianity. Some say it can be pared down to one word: *Maranatha* – which is Greek for "Jesus is Lord". Some might say the essential message is "Jesus Saves" (or, as we so often see posted on signs at sporting events "John 3.16"). Others might say it is "He is Risen" the words that capture the Resurrection Event at the heart of Christianity. That is Kerygma. Christianity in a nutshell.

"**Dogma**" is a whole other word. It means how we interpret that Kerygma. What does it look like? What are the details? If we believe Christ is risen, what will that mean for the way I live my life? If we say "Jesus saves" – then we will also want to know more: who does he save? how does he do it? what does this saving mean? That is what Dogma gives us. It expounds upon the Kerygma. It helps to give us what we need to work out the central message in our lives. This is the role of the Catechism; it tries to guide and lead us from our core statement of faith into what that looks like in our lives. How we explain it all and make sense of what we do.

I don't know how long it has been since you have read through the Catechism, but get ready! Beginning on the second Sunday of Easter, we will replace the traditional Nicene Creed with a portion from the Catechism. There are 18 sections, and we will take one each week, giving us time to discover (or rediscover) just what Episcopalians believe. We should finish just as summer is ending up.

We are also going to tackle it in "Peak of the Week". Each week we will look at a new section, and parse just what it means. Do we still hold to these things? Where do these teachings come from? And what does it mean to me in my daily life?

I am so looking forward to being with you again. I now know more than ever that life without a lively faith – and a lively *community* of faith – is a much impoverished one. And life with Christ Church is filled with riches that reach right down to the core of who I am. I pray your Lenten Season has also been an enriching time for you. Do continue to pray for me as I pray for you.

Peace,

Mother Lisa+