

Dear Fellow Children of God,

As I write this week's devotion I am on a plane in New Orleans waiting to fly back to Alaska. I have been here with Kathy and Mary working as "Ambassadors" at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering, entitled "Endure." We are full of God's Spirit, and WEARY of body.

When we flew from Anchorage Monday night-Tuesday, July 15, we missed that night of sleep. In addition, I'm not sure that we slept in any morning that we were in New Orleans. Most nights we had less than 6 hours of sleep, as we attended training, Mass Events, and as we worked our assignments with the Gathering. But, we were serving our Lord and the youth and other participants of this event. It was a worthwhile sacrifice to lose a little sleep..

Every night when we took off our shoes it was a *great* relief! My Garmin watch says I averaged 14,452 steps a day. We walked from our hotel to the Convention Center. We also hoofed it a little over a mile to the Super Dome, and then we walked back. Before training started, I also walked to the WWII Museum, and Kathy and Mary walked to Café' du Monde. We put in MANY more steps than we normally do. But, we were serving our Lord and the youth and other participants of this event. It was a worthwhile sacrifice to deal with tired feet.

Unfortunately, while we were in New Orleans the sockeye salmon arrived in great numbers on the Kenai Peninsula. I had tried to dip net earlier before we left, but the run had not yet peaked. I have friends who call the third week in July, 'Holy Week.' As a man who truly enjoys fishing, I share those sentiments! But, when the recruitment e-mails messages arrived, offering the 3 of us the opportunity to work at this mass youth faith journey, I knew the dates. I sort of whined to Kathy. (Well, maybe not sort of.) "Why is this Gathering during this peak of fishing?" Mary and Kathy signed up right away. I waited till near the last day till I applied. Nevertheless, we were serving our Lord and the youth and other participants of this event. It was a worthwhile sacrifice to miss fishing. But I had to think *really* hard!

To top it all off, this is a YOUTH Gathering, and I am 72 years old, an 'old . . . er man.' My grand-children tell me I AM old. I am pretty healthy and still feel full of life and faith. However, I may not have quite the energy I once did. I have wondered if the planners of this event will someday say, "He's TOO old!" But, they did still invite us. And, after all, we were serving our Lord and the youth and other participants of this event. It was a worthwhile effort, even for an old-er man!

So, as I return from 10 days of hectic schedule, little sleep, and tired feet, I ask myself, "Would I serve again?" Before I answer, let me share with you the theme verses of the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering from Hebrews 12:1-3. **"¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."**

Maybe you can see why the Gathering was entitled "Endure." God calls us in His Word to **"run with *endurance* the race that is set before us."** Anytime we face some worthwhile task there are challenges. To continue working toward the goal takes *endurance*, perseverance, and sacrifice. This is true for family, for work projects, for church functions, and even some recreational pursuits. There are always opportunities to grow "weary and fainthearted."

However, at the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering we were reminded that Christ endured the cross . . . *for us!* Jesus endured shame and hostility, suffering and death, so that He might win for us eternal love, grace, forgiveness, and life in heaven. Remembering what Christ endured for us, FOR ME, made a difference this year in how I answered when I was called to serve. I pray that the *great* sacrifice of Jesus will direct all my efforts in my life. I pray that the *great* sacrifice of Jesus will direct my answer when the next gathering is held in San Antonio in 2028.

What challenges are *you* facing? Does the loving sacrifice of Jesus help you to face those challenges, help YOU to endure?

“1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.”

A Child of God, Seeking to Endure the Challenges of Faith because Jesus Endured the Cross for Me!

Pastor Rockey

P.S. Gathering Highlights. I have not yet put captions on these pictures, but here are some images from our trip to New Orleans.

- Here are some pictures of 3 generations of Rockeys in New Orleans. 😊 Kathy and I had our daughter, Mary, join us in working. Grand-children, Jake and Emma, attended as participants. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/uk2nxe6sSKoSMAzV6>
- Here are pictures by the day in New Orleans.
 - Arrival, July 15 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/K6MVQK3386e5fZsX9>
 - Training, July 16 & 17 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/eZimg1WgHQgxnmJ9>
 - Training, July 18 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/mAaZj9FRJ7gxG7yW8>
 - Gathering, Day 1, July 19 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PSaacoBcJx8NdRtW8>
 - Gathering, Day 2, July 20 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/LFvYsakdd2CgpTHu8>
 - Gathering Day 3, July 21 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/dbrk7eJju5nQF5Dq6>
 - Gathering, Day 4, July 22 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ipzLjXiF64gTGtFE7>
 - Gathering, Day 5, July 23 – <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PG9LdELhvWUz7tvx6>
 - My steps log on Wednesday at the airport - <https://photos.app.goo.gl/vpy7ebah3SB86jxB8>
- On Wednesday, July 16, before training started, I visited the WWII Museum. I really enjoyed it. Again, the pictures are NOT captioned. Nevertheless, you might find them interesting. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PKXYNxxqkSY9ji6jj8>
- P.P.S. I am now serving Our Redeemer Lutheran in Chugiak, AK, as part-time Vacancy Pastor. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Bn2nosbisBc6JcWV9>

Regular Bible Studies and Sunday School

- **Adult Bible Study** continues on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. The class is studying “Basic Christian Teachings.” On July 6 we studied about heaven and hell. On July 13th we studied about the Word of God. Come and join us!
- **Summer Sunday School** - Children have an opportunity to study during the summer as well. Leah Rawlins is leading the children in studying the book of Ruth. At the end of this study they may put what they learned into expression through legos. All Children are WELCOME! 😊 (However, **there was no Sunday School on July 6 (4th of July weekend)**, nor on August 31 (Labor Day Weekend!))
- In August we will have meetings to discuss upcoming **confirmation classes**, and perhaps some **early communion classes**. Watch for more information. If anyone desires to attend an adult membership class, that is what we are studying on Sunday mornings at 9.

The Our Redeemer Call Committee has been formed. It includes Elder and chairman, Jerry Simpson, also Heidi Enlow, Ruth Keller, Theo Lee, Jacob Lewis, Scott Roelfs, and Martha Wilkins. They met on June 4, July 1, and July 22. The first step in the call process will be to complete a congregational self-study. The Northwest District has the study and tools to help in this study. The committee targets August 15 for inputs from leaders to the congregational self-study.

It is good for a congregation to be patient in the call process. **Please PRAY** that as our Lord leads this committee and Our Redeemer in this process, we will follow His guidance.

Other Activities of Faith:

- **MANY CONTINUE TO READ THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE WITH ME IN 2024 and 2025** using the “Today’s Light Devotional Bible.” We are now in the New Testament! **On Wednesday, July 23, we read John 7 and 8.** These chapters shared accounts of Jesus disputes with the religious leaders, and gave us an opportunity to hear Jesus assert, **“I am the Light of the World.”**

Feel free to contact Pastor Rockey at 907-841-4066 if you have any questions about these readings. Or send an e-mail question to jonrock53@mtaonline.net I have recently received questions and comments. It is always good to consider our Lord’s love and guidance. I will TRY to answer, but some things *only God knows!*

P.P.S. Family and Friends: -

- While we were in New Orleans, Josh and Erin returned from a trip to Japan, and drove to Olympia, WA. Here are some pictures from their trip.

- This week many family pictures are included in our Gathering pictures.

P.P.P.S. Fishing! - I did NOT do any fishing in New Orleans!

ABOUT THIS DEVOTION - I retired at the end of August 2019 from serving as full-time senior pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Palmer, AK. I was writing a weekly devotion previously entitled, "Thoughts from the Pastor." When I retired many asked me to continue writing these devotions. So I have continued writing. However, with life's changes I now call this weekly devotion "Journeys Through Life as a Child of God." Since I am no longer senior pastor at St. John, I felt it right to only send this message to those who asked to receive it. (However, I am currently as Vacancy Pastor for Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Chugiak, AK.)

So, if you stopped receiving these devotions and wondered why, now you understand. And, if you are now receiving these devotions and do not wish to receive them, please let me know, and I'll gladly remove your name from my distribution list. My e-mail address is jonrock53@mtaonline.net.

My prayer is that these devotions help each of you in your daily walk with our Lord, Jesus.

Jonathan Rockey

Child of God

Husband, Father, Son, *Grandfather*

Vacancy Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Chugiak, AK

Pastor Emeritus, St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, AK

907-841-4066 – cell

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1 a)

