

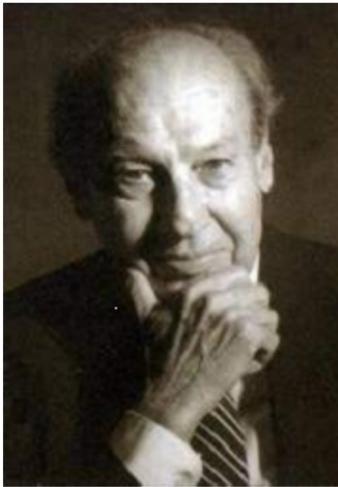


The Beacon Online

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The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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Rev. Jaroslav Vajda

Part 3

by Rev. John Telloni

We begin Part 3 of our reflections on the life of Jaroslav Vajda by briefly studying his first original hymn, "*Now the Silence*," which many consider his masterpiece, and which is a perfect example of his hymn writing and his overall perspective on Christian worship.

"*Now the Silence*" was written when Vajda was 49 years old. As he tells it, "*While shaving [one morning], I was haunted by a question that had been troubling me for most of my lifetime as a worshiper and worship leader. Why did David say, 'I was glad when they said to me, "let us go to the house of the Lord"?' Reviewing the features of a liturgical service, I composed a free verse, "Now the Silence," and entitled it "An Entrance Hymn." It all came together within half an hour, in an unusual poetic form without rhyme or punctuation.*" Here is the text of this brief but stately and majestic hymn.

**Now the silence
Now the peace
Now the empty hands uplifted**

**Now the kneeling
Now the plea
Now the Father's arms in welcome**

**Now the hearing
Now the power
Now the vessel brimmed for pouring**

**Now the body
Now the blood
Now the joyful celebration**

**Now the wedding
Now the songs
Now the heart forgiven leaping**

**Now the Spirit's visitation
Now the Son's epiphany
Now the Father's blessing**

Now Now Now

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Carl Schalk provided the music for this unique text written in free verse rather than a rhyming scheme. Vajda was convinced that hymns could take on new forms and yet be appropriate for liturgical worship. This particular hymn was meant to be a Processional Hymn at the beginning of the service, although many congregations sing it just prior to the distribution of the Holy Sacrament. Vajda explained that *"the reverse order of the Doxology/Benediction not only expressed the order in which I pictured the Holy Trinity coming to us in worship, but also the order in which the Incarnation took place: the visitation of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, then the Son's epiphany as the Incarnate Word, followed by the universal blessing that is bestowed upon all in whom this same process occurs."*

This hymn, in my opinion, set the pace for his vocation until the Lord called him home in 2008. The hymn also is the beautiful foundation for his view of liturgical worship centered in Word and Sacrament, a position which pastors and worship leaders could well follow. Vajda admitted that throughout his life he had *"struggled"* over the worship life of the church. He asserted that many other Christians also have struggled with worship through the years which has caused renewals of revivals, alternate services, the changing styles of sacred music, and even a bit of theatricality and casualness in the worship services that churches have brought to the people so that they might be *"glad to go to the House of the Lord."* These issues still are debated today.

Vajda, for sure, became acutely aware of this *"struggle"* and as a hymn writer, seriously took into consideration the essential elements of worship, the theological content of the hymns, the language of the times, and the culture that the Gospel is

trying to reach and transform. In this connection, I believe all pastors and worship leaders would do well to follow this guidance in their preparation for worship.

Above all, regardless of the setting or the background of the people, the various tastes, or group and national culture, a worship service should begin and continue with what he calls "*reverence*." Then, from leader to musician to lay leaders to congregants, every word and every act should be delivered with reverence, especially recognizing that the people are in the presence of the Lord God Almighty – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who stand before Him as sinners, or as Luther asserted, "*beggars*," hungering and thirsting for righteousness and overcoming sin and the devil. Everyone in God's sanctuary is there so they might receive God's love and forgiveness in Christ Jesus, who died and rose again and offers eternal life to all. Vajda's many hymns for the sacred seasons or special festivals or other special services truly reflect this whole approach of proclaiming the Gospel and glorifying God and serving the spiritual needs of the worshipers.

One very clear caution that Vajda articulated is that the music should never override the words or draw attention to itself so that the message somehow gets garbled or lost in the clutter of the sounds emanating from the various instruments. The Gospel is what is to be beamed into the ears and minds and hearts of the worshipers. As Vajda once wrote, "*Better to understand than to exaggerate. Otherwise forget the words and just keep on repeating all hallelujahs!*"

I would invite the reader to browse through the *Lutheran Service Book* and read the words of the many hymns written by Vajda. Discover the erudition, the fresh and "*modern*" phrasing, the theological depth, the Christ-centeredness, and the humble giving of all glory to God.

I conclude this article with some personal thoughts and musings from my relationship with Jaroslav Vajda, a fellow born in Lorain, Ohio, like me. He indeed was a hero and mentor of mine for a long time, stemming from my service as a seminary student field worker at St. Lucas, St. Louis, from 1972 to 1974, where he served as Assistant Pastor. That "*reverence*" mentioned above was clearly manifested in the sacristy when he and I would prepare for the conducting of the services on Sundays when he preached; we would enjoy a brief, informal "*vigil*" which he led with some encouragement and beautifully spoken extemporaneous prayers. Listening to his sermons was an exercise in learning from a true literary giant – soft spoken, yet uttering strikingly powerful words that brought a clear Gospel message to the worshipers in the pews. His hymns were certainly melodic Christocentric homilies!

Then as a pastor, I had opportunity to see him at conferences and conventions of the SELC. He encouraged my own hymn writing during the last 10 years of his life, as I started writing original hymns when I was 49. He was kind enough to take the time to edit my little book of Entrance Psalms or Hymns (57) called "*The Christ Canticles*" and offered corrections and additional thoughts, for which I owe him a special debt of thanks. Two years before his entrance into a nursing home in St. Louis, Pastor Vajda wrote a long personal letter in which he "*passed on the torch to me.*" Subsequently, I wrote a hymn (words and music) dedicated to him entitled, "*The Word of Christ Delivers Peace.*" Alas, he passed away before I was able to share it with him, but the hymn was debuted at the 2009 SELC District Convention in Ann Arbor.

By the grace of God, Jaroslav Vajda's voice has joined the ranks of angels and saints with all their cries of triumph to the Lamb on the throne who rules His own on earth until we all are raised to live with Him in glory everlasting!



Late Pastor Rev. Reverend Stephen Tuhy's Last Daughter Called to Glory at age 103

Miss Darina J. Tuhy, age 103, passed into eternal life on Wednesday, September 27, 2023. She was the last surviving child of Reverend Stephen and Ludmila (Lichner) Tuhy who served St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Wilkes Barre, PA for 51 years. Darina was an engaging and thoughtful woman. She retained her sharp mind and quick wit; still playing Scrabble until a few months before she passed.

After World War II, Darina was hired by Bucknell University for one year to fill in for an instructor who was on sabbatical. She noted, "They never fired me, so I stayed." While at Bucknell, Darina performed solo and chamber music recitals and presented several harpsichord lecture programs. She was a member of the Slovak Heritage Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania, for whom she co-edited the English translation of the Society's publication "Slovak Folk Customs and Traditions" and taught Slovak language classes for several years. She taught the basics of reading music and hymn singing to a small group of St. Matthew parishioners for a time. She visited family in Slovakia many times before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and spent a semester teaching English at the Bratislava Conservatory. She noted that some areas of Slovakia look like northeastern Pennsylvania.

Memorial funeral services for Miss Tuhy will be conducted on Friday, November 10th at 2:00 p.m. in Saint Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church, 663 North Main Street, Wilkes-Barre. The Reverend Peter J. Haenftling, pastor will serve as celebrant and offer words of reflection.



2024 Congregational Support for the District



This *Mission of the Week* is the second in a series to highlight the work that we do together as a district through your mission offerings.

So you want to be in mission work. Well, you are!

Faith Wesley Chapel is based in the growing suburbs north of Tampa, FL. Pastor Kurt and Melissa Steinbrueck are praising God for the congregation's fifth anniversary, November 4!

Pastor reports, "We very strongly believe in ... getting outside the church doors and being in our community to show the love of Jesus and share the Gospel." Service and outreach events were part of their ministry's regular rhythm, but COVID made it difficult to engage and interrupted that rhythm for a while.

But Faith is back in stride, ahead of their goal of engaging their community with two service/outreach activities each quarter. And the beat goes on!



Christmas in the park



Helping other serving ministries

Pastor Steinbrueck rejoices that the people at Faith have met this goal enthusiastically, helping Metropolitan Ministries serve the poor and homeless, doing a supply drive for local schools, hosting a booth at the local Fall Festival, putting on Christmas in the Park celebration for the whole community. They proclaimed the Savior's birth, caroling their neighborhoods.

Early 2024 Faith plans to add an emphasis on personal evangelism by training and encouraging members to be ambassadors for Christ in their families, friend-groups, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

Pastor's dream for further ministry is for the opportunity to launch a school. Wesley Chapel is a booming suburb of Tampa with lots of young families and few Christian schools. Now, Florida's new school voucher system has increased demand for private education.

Through your prayerful offerings to the SELC district, you are in the Western Florida mission field, sharing the love of Jesus Christ. Let's give thanks for the Lord working with us!

--Rev. Warren Huffines, ret.

This Mission of the Week is the second in a series to highlight the work that we do together as a district through your mission offerings. Also, share this inspiring, three minute video in worship, church groups and council meetings.

[Stream](#) or [Download](#)



Booth at community event



God squad



Slovak Fest Held at St. Lucas Lutheran Church St. Louis, MO

Scores serve and hundreds dine at 32nd annual event



A joyful throng crowded the St. Lucas gym on Saturday, November 4 to feast on traditional Slovak cuisine. Approximately 785 meals were served in person or through the drive through by approximately 60 volunteers, who served on that day or in preparation leading up to it. Some said that the cabbage rolls were the best ever. The event is held on the first Saturday of November. A total of \$9,700 was raised by the event, including the Christmas Bazaar. A tithe of the proceeds is sent to Lutheran Seminary in Slovakia.





Construction has begun on the Lutheran Haven Aquatic Center!



After a global pandemic, after construction delays for lack of materials and labor, and after 2.5 years of fundraising, the Lutheran Haven Aquatic Center has begun! When Lutheran Haven initiated this project, it was just one month prior to the pandemic, so all facets including the fundraising had to pivot to accommodate the inability to do *everything* as planned! But our God is so good, and despite numerous challenges, construction has begun on our wonderful therapy/swimming pool!



Who, but people of faith, would move forward with such an ambitious project in such uncertain times? Through your faithful prayers, your belief in the numerous health benefits of a project of this nature, and your tremendous generosity, our "Water Works Wonders" dream is now becoming a reality!

We are rejoicing in God's goodness and faithfulness for this amazing 75th Anniversary gift of health, wellness, and rehabilitation that this pool will bring to our residents. We are so grateful and thrilled to finally see this great, big hole in the ground knowing how it will bless so many for decades to come! We hope you visit Lutheran Haven soon and bring your bathing suit!



Clark Lutheran Church Collects Shoe Boxes for Operation Christmas Child

On Sunday, November 5th, the Sunday School Children at Zion Lutheran Church in Clark, NJ filled 20 boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Operation Christmas Child is a program through Samaritan's Purse that collects shoe boxes filled with gifts and delivering them to children in need around the world. Each box is an opportunity for a boy or girl to experience the love of God in a tangible way and hear the Gospel. Zion's Sunday School filled 20 boxes with items donated by the members of the congregation. Zion will continue to collect boxes until November 19th. Last year they collected over 65 boxes and are hoping to collect more this year!



June 2024 Trip to Israel

Next call is November 13th

Do you want to go to Israel in June 2024? Learn more by attending the Israel trip ZOOM session, led by Pastor Dan Lepley, or email him pastorlepley@gmail.com to learn more.

November's zoom session will be held on November 13th and will focus on Lower Galilee. To join the zoom session, please click here - [Click here](#) All sessions are held at 8 PM Eastern time, 7 PM Central time.



SELC LWML Let's Meet Monthly Women's Bible Study

The Bible Study for next week is "Here am I, send me!", the last Bible study in the Summer Issue of the Lutheran Women's Quarterly. The Bible Study will be on November 16th at 10:30 AM Eastern time. The session will be an hour in length.

[Click here](#) for the link to register for the Bible Study.



Prayer Requests

Rev. Brian Roberts, St. Luke's in Oviedo, FL is continuing to gain weight (over 25 pounds) and his energy level continues to increase. He has returned to work at St. Luke's in October. He and his family are grateful for your prayers.

Rev. John Telloni, St. John in Massillon, OH is continuing his recovery and is working on regaining his strength as he has returned to work.

Rev. and Mrs. Panzigray, John Huss in Arnold, PA

Rev. and Mrs. Edgar Anthony, Sts. Peter and Paul in Lorain, OH

Rev. Tom Soltis, Parma, OH

Rev. and Mrs. Kenneth Ballas, Parma, OH, Mrs. Ballas had successful surgery last week. Please keep her in your prayers for her recovery.

Rev. and Mrs. Edgar Anthony and son George for their health needs, Lorain, OH. They give thanks for all the prayers as their son George met with his doctor who discussed healing options for his medical issue.

Rev. Alan Mercer in Galloway, NJ for his ongoing health struggles.

Megan Skelton in Oviedo, FL who had brain surgery on Wednesday. She responded well to tests following her surgery. Please continue to pray for her healing and recovery from this surgery.

Please include those listed below in your prayers.

Ardyne Kirn, Lutheran Haven SELC Lay Representative

The SELC Central Circuit Pastors and congregations

Mr. Rod Jackson, SELC Education Executive

Mrs. Margaret Pohlod

Thank you to everyone for all of your prayers!

If you have people you would like to be included in the prayer list, please send the information to selc.lcms@gmail.com or call the District Office at 610-965-3265 and press 6.

Did you know your investment can have a bigger impact this season with Lutheran Church Extension Fund? Our new, limited-time, six-and-a-quarter term note empowers you to grow your savings while strengthening, sustaining and starting Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ministries. This is for new money, with a minimum of \$500 to open an account. And that is what truly sets us apart – your investment with LCEF directly supports LCMS ministries through this 2.5 year term note. Visit lcef.org/invest to open an account today and earn a solid 6.25% return as you help build a brighter future for LCMS ministries.



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Mark Your Calendars

November 13, 2023 - Zoom call for Israel trip 8:00 PM Eastern time

November 16, 2023 - 10:30 AM Eastern - LWML Mid-week Bible Study

November 17, 2023 - 7 PM - St. Luke's Concert Series - UCF Symphony Orchestra

May 3 - 5, 2024 - LWML Convention - Concordia Lutheran Church in Macungie, PA



Closing Thoughts

What Is It about "US" Apart From JESUS?

Rev. Ken Ballas. EM

No one enjoys being reminded that the middle letter of the word "sin" is the letter "i." Forgive me, therefore, for "piling on" with an admittedly repetitious "word play" involving a largely *disgustingly negative* listing of six more English terms in which we find embedded the personal pronoun "us" including:

bust

crush

dust

lust

must and

rust

Reminiscent of Martin Luther's birthday (November 10, 1483) and Baptism the day following (St. Martin's Day), thankfully, there are at least two much more happy "**us words**," namely, **justify** (as meaning to *declare righteous* by imputation) that also enable us also firmly to **trust** for salvation the Gospel words of our mercifully forgiving God!

This side of heaven this Veterans' Day weekend we do well to give serious thought to being (and staying) on the "winning side" of a *spiritual warfare* (partially of our own making!) as our Triune God's elect blood-bought eternally redeemed children. It is no accident that mentioned above as the world's only **Sin-Bearer** is the **Name** of our victorious returning **King, Emmanuel Lord** and **sinless Brother-Savior** who willingly chose to identify Himself as such by becoming **ONE WITH US!** Thank You **JESUS!**



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***Showing Everyone Life in Christ, by Showing
Everyone Love in Christ***

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