



# *Leaning into the Heart of the Holy*

*2016 Lenten Devotions*

Friday

March 18, 2016

## ***Leaning into God's Earthly Angels: Comfort and Celebration***

**By Cassandra Martin Baker**

Lakeside's Lenten theme of "Leaning into the Heart of the Holy" has taken me some time and sleepless nights to understand how important it is as I reflect on special moments in my life.

First of all, the words "leaning into" can be a bit upsetting. They imply getting off balance, taking a chance and hoping for a good outcome. To avoid disaster, I think the words "leaning into" need to be met with the words "leaning out" for stability, comfort and success. How does God manage to "lean out" every time we "lean into his heart?"

I believe in earthly angels. They are all around us; sometimes their actions are very obvious and well planned. Other times, even their actions that bring comfort and celebrations are unknown even to them and "just happen." As Jody preached last Sunday, "God is always doing the unexpected through unexpected people."

There is an old Cherokee saying that comes to mind---"Happiness is a butterfly which, when pursued is always just beyond your reach, but which, if you sit quietly, may alight upon you." I think God could substitute "an earthly angel" for "a butterfly" in this saying.

I am a saver; you know the kind who saves clippings, cards, programs and photos. It is hard to say why some things get into that folder to save, but when I go back to that folder from time to time, I am thankful for the memories that are evoked.

I would like to share some of my memories where I "leaned in" and was met with God's earthly angels "leaning out."

--This past Christmas, our first Christmas card was from a Lakeside member whom I have known for over 50 years. Years passed, no contacts were made and our lives went in different directions. Yet she sent a note saying that she is glad we are back at Lakeside and what my "coming home" means to her. Not only did I "lean in" to

find my church, she "leaned out" to welcome me. Yes, Thomas Wolfe, You Can Go Home Again!

--Mother's Day, 2002. That was a day I dreaded. It would be the first Mother's Day since my mother's death a few months earlier. Jody Wright never met my mother (Marian Martin) since she had moved to Georgia to be closer to us just before he came to Lakeside. Jody had never met me either but was my contact for information about Mama's death for the LINK. A few days before that Mother's Day, here came a beautifully worded hand-written note for the upcoming Sunday without my mother. I was "leaning in" with dread of what that day would be like without her, and earthly angel Jody "leaned out" to comfort and support me.

--When my mother died, I had to deal with the usual estate business. There was the family farm in Northampton County that needed to be settled. I just wanted to go to the lawyer's office, sign the papers and get back to RDU as fast as I could. My uncle and aunt insisted that I come the day before and spend the night with them. I didn't think I was ready for that kind of family visit. I had not seen them in years and had lost touch with the rest of the family who were scattered all over NC and Virginia. But, I agreed to go. I drove up at their house to be greeted by about 20 family members who had driven miles to welcome and comfort me. Wow! I "leaned in" and they not only "leaned out" but almost knocked me over! Little did those earthly angels know what a gift they were giving.

--In the summer of 1967, I was very fortunate to have a summer job at the Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, just outside Zurich. The seminary hosted various conference weeks during the summer, and my job was to make sure the day-to-day details were covered. Being in Switzerland was wonderful; making name tags, serving coffee and checking people onto the bus was not so exciting! One conference was with university students from Western and Eastern Europe. One evening, the students invited me (the only American there) to join them for a bonfire in a field overlooking Lake Zurich and snow covered mountains. I was excited to go but a little apprehensive with the language barrier. I never should have worried one bit...they included "This Land is My Land" in the songs they sang and concluded with "No Man is an Island." Talk about earthly angels and "leaning out." What a comfort and what a celebration!

As I conclude, I am thankful for this Lenten theme and how it makes me appreciate my Christian journey. I know that I can "lean in" and not lose my balance. But most importantly, I know I must "lean out," even in small, quiet ways to help others---even when I am not aware of their needs. We must all work together to get into the Heart of the Holy....."No Man is an Island."

## **Prayer:**

Lord our God, with cherished memories and bold dreams, with newly discovered joy and ancient pain, with purpose and resolve and with questions and doubts, we come seeking the comfort and assurance of your presence. Come now, we pray, to fill our hearts, lest we forget our past, lest we be too satisfied with our present, lest we be too casual about our future. Through this Lenten journey, strengthen our commitment, renew our vision, deepen our faith. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

– Peggy Haymes, adapted

## **Hebrews 12:1-3**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.