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## Nexus, Vol. 3, No. 1

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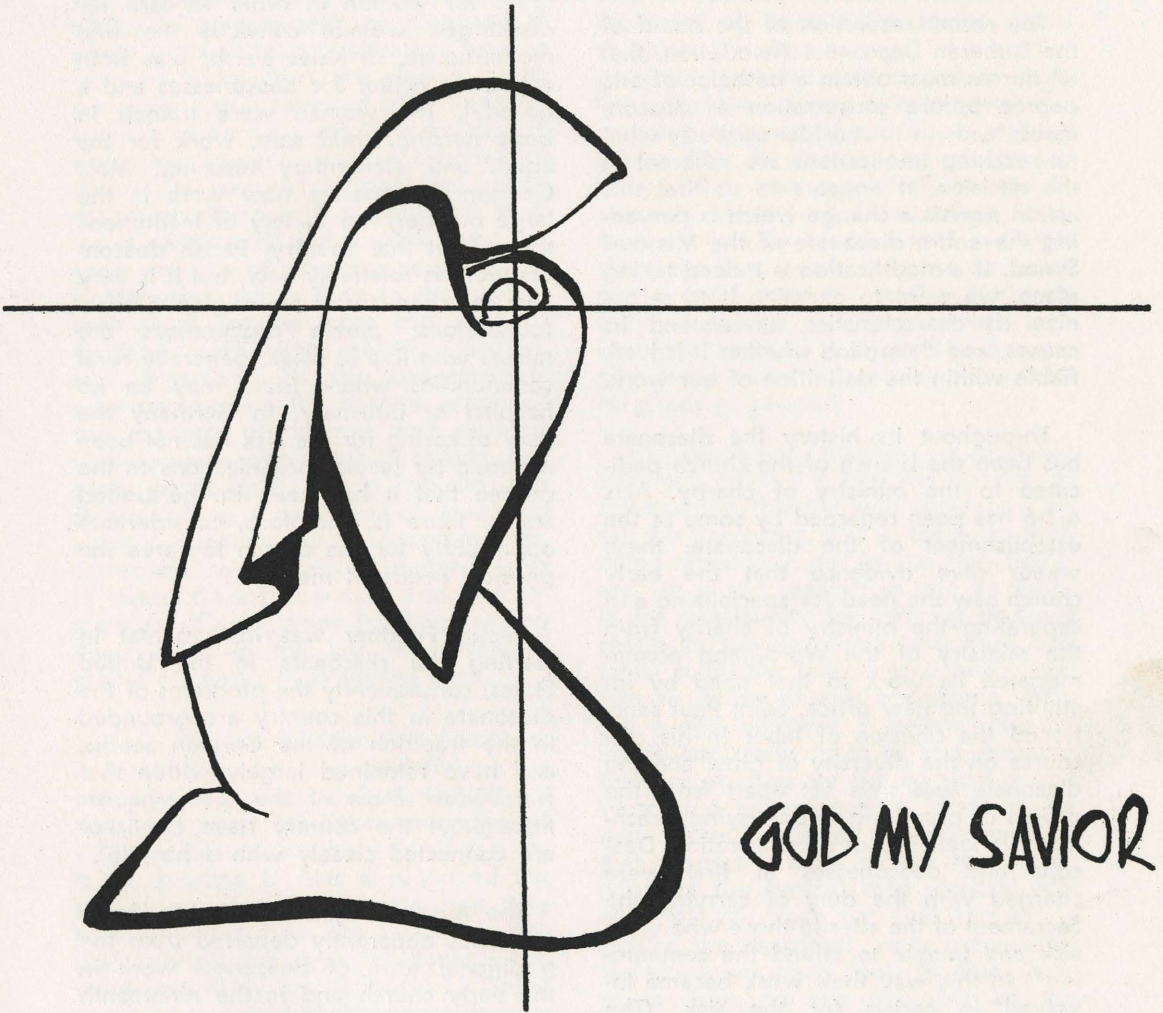


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# NEXUS



GOD MY SAVIOR

DECEMBER 1962 VOL.3 NO. 1





The recent resolution of the board of the Lutheran Deaconess Association, that all nurses must obtain a bachelor of arts degree before consecration as deaconesses, leads us to consider seriously what far-reaching implications are inherent in the decision. It appears to us that this action signals a change which is pervading the entire diaconate of the Missouri Synod. If a modification is indeed taking place, we want to examine it to recognize its characteristics, understand its causes, and determine whether it is justifiable within the definition of our work.

Throughout its history the diaconate has been the branch of the church dedicated to the ministry of charity. Acts 6:1-6 has been regarded by some as the establishment of the diaconate; these verses give evidence that the early church saw the need for specializing and separating the ministry of charity from the ministry of the Word, and accommodated its work to that need by instituting the new office. Saint Paul sanctioned the division of labor in his discourse on the diversity of gifts; and the diaconate was thus set apart from the offices of preaching, prophesying, teaching, evangelizing, or administration. Deacons and deaconesses at first were charged with the duty of carrying the Sacrament of the altar to those who were sick and unable to attend the communion\*; in this way their work became involved in caring for the sick. (The administering of the Eucharist was prohibited for deaconesses, however.) Because baptism was performed by immer-

sion, deaconesses were for the sake of propriety also delegated to assist in the baptism of women.\* As the office developed, though, the work consisted more and more of caring for the sick, helping the poor — in general, showing mercy to mankind in his physical needs.

In 1836 when Pastor Theodore Fliedner re-established the diaconate in Germany, he based it on this traditional understanding, that deaconesses were to find their role in the church's ministry of mercy. Pastor Fliedner began his program for women in order to care for discharged women convicts; the first motherhouse, in Kaiserwerth, was both a training center for deaconesses and a hospital. The women were trained in basic nursing, child care, work for the aged, and elementary teaching. Most German deaconesses now work in the large number and variety of institutions throughout that country. Parish deaconess work is relatively new, but it is very near the character of the original Biblical foundations: parish deaconesses are nurses who live in small, generally rural communities where there may be no hospital or infirmary. In Germany the duty of caring for the sick has not been assumed by secular organizations to the degree that it has been in the United States; there is, therefore, considerable opportunity for the church to serve the physical needs of men.

Pastor Fliedner was instrumental in starting the diaconate in the United States; consequently the programs of the diaconate in this country are grounded in the tradition of the German set-up, and have remained largely within that framework. Most of the motherhouses throughout the country have been, or are connected closely with a hospital.

The Missouri Synod diaconate, however, has apparently departed from the traditional form of deaconess work in the early church and in the nineteenth century re-establishment of the diaconate. In 1935 the requirement for nurse's training was dropped; and since

\* *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (cop. 1916), vol. VIII, s.v. "ministry."

\* *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (cop. 1957), s.v. "deaconess."



that time there has been a transition in emphases from a service primarily of men's physical needs to one primarily of their hearts and minds. Neither, of course, can entirely exclude the other — kerygma and diakonia are ultimately inseparable in the church; nevertheless, the emphasis has shifted. By examining the present structure of our diaconate against the background of deaconess history, we see that the new modification of the deaconess-nurse program is only one indication of a whole movement. To begin with, the requirements for deaconess training are different. The ability to grapple with an idea and to apply it cogently to a situation may be required more than the skill to work patiently with a retarded child in teaching him to tie his shoes. The training of deaconess students is now centered in theoretical courses in theology, rather than specializing in more practical studies of social work and medical care. The great majority of our deaconesses are in parish work rather than in institutions; their work consists more and more of teaching, counseling, calling, leading, and organizing in the congregation; whereas formerly the stronger emphasis was on care of the sick and shut-ins, welfare work, dispensing of charity, and work particularly among women and children. Now a new field of deaconess work is opening, the deaconess-teacher, corresponding to those specialized fields of deaconess-social worker and deaconess-nurse. Finally, there has been among deaconesses in the last few years, a growing interest in graduate work.

Does this modulation of emphases indicate that we are re-defining the office of the diaconate? Apparently it does. We must ask what grounds and what vindication we have for doing so. If the passage in Acts 6 is indeed the setting up of the diaconate, we may have departed from the historical, Biblical use of the term "diakonia." The word very likely has its roots in a Greek word for a servant of the lowest degree: "one who goes through the dust,"\* a person not worthy of the status of even a hard-labor slave. To be sure, we have

not desisted from serving, but we are not primarily supplying that humble ministry to the brother in his most basic physical needs. Does this change stem from a theological problem — the offensiveness to us, perhaps, of serving in such a lowly way? Are deaconesses now leading Walther League topics because that is a more gratifying task than carrying bedpans? Are we slipping into the belief that the physical needs of men are material, i.e. not spiritual, and that what he really needs is care for his soul which is "spiritual," rather than care for his body which is "fleshly"? To that sort of error Saint James points sharp words when he says, "If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving him the things needed for the body, what does it profit?" We are always in danger of interpreting "man shall not live by bread alone" as "what this poor bum needs is not a sandwich but a good sermon." Is the diaconate falling into this dangerous error? Is it changing because it is seeking a more glamorous task than serving the physical needs of people?

This conclusion, however, is probably incorrect. While it is true that that sort of self-exalting thought will constantly assail the deaconess, it is at the same time being repelled in her by the Holy Spirit; and He is still leading us into all truth. If the opportunity for carrying bedpans comes to the deaconess, she must certainly fulfill her task in love, and if she fails to do so, that is her shame. Who can judge whether a person's bodily needs are really more or less pressing than his longing for the comfort of the Word and communion of God; or for that matter, whether the speaking of that comfort is more or less humble or hard for the servant than physical acts of love? We trust that God Himself is putting the deaconess' work before her; therefore we must look to that God-given work to see the root of the change.

Throughout Western history since the time of Christ, the task of physical care of men has been the burden of the

\* From the Greek: "dia" — through; "konia" —dust.



church, and it has been borne with a fluctuating degree of dedication, patience, and skill for centuries. With the Renaissance, however, humanitarian world-views began to be put to dynamic use for the care of the needy, and these duties were gradually taken out of the hands of the church. This secularizing movement has reached a high point now, when the technical knowledge and skill of the welfare state have so boomed that if the church were to attempt to keep up with the secular powers in the ministry of mercy, it would have to slight its duties of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments. Since government and private concerns have assumed responsibility for the sick, the poor, the disowned, and the demented, the church must confine its task to the needs which it alone can supply. In this age the ministry of charity cannot be the integral charge of the church that it was formerly.

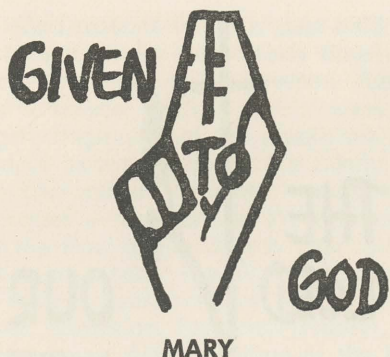
We do not, of course, simply relinquish the mission of mercy altogether. It cannot be done; for the act of healing must still be accompanied by the Word of forgiveness as it was in the work of Christ — the two facets of God-given healing cannot be separated. No secular institution can complete the real healing, as God desires men to be healed. In connection with this, the diaconate at one point in particular is coming into a broader understanding of how the church can re-enter the office that has been so thoroughly secularized in the last half-century. Members of the church, and specifically of the diaconate, can acquire with vigor and diligence the training which has been developed in our century for professions of mercy, and into those professions they can bring the distinctive attitude of the church and the truly healing Word of forgiveness. The deaconess-nurse is one example of the diaconate's re-entrance into the professional field.

We see that in a sense the deaconess-professional must surpass the skilled workers of the world: she must have the requirements which the secular powers set for workers of mercy, and

she must also be able to accomplish the work of the church effectively in her professional role. The demands become always greater because the educational climate of our civilization is broadening at a tremendous pace, and the church must be able to confront the world on the world's terms, to answer the distinct dilemmas of the age.

Thus the church, and the diaconate with it must engage in a sort of specialization. In doing so we do not simply look over a list of tasks and choose that which we like best; but we are led to a sharper distinction of our role in the world, to a deepening of our understanding of it, and to an intensifying of our ability to execute it. We do not de-emphasize the ministry of charity because it is distasteful to us, but because we see that the sort of work we have been doing in the past is now more and more being accomplished apart from the church. This development is freeing us to direct our energy more to a ministry of the Word, which is surely a form of charity. Indeed, it is notable that the first charity of deacons and deaconesses was assistance in the administration of the sacraments. The diaconate of the first century saw the need to broaden its field of work in order to accomplish tasks that weren't being fulfilled by the world; the diaconate of this century sees the need to specialize and deepen its service within the work of the church because the world has assumed a large part of the church's former task. In every age the church must evaluate its work and adjust it to answer the needs of the world. We hold that the question and the answer for every century is basically the same: man's tragedy is caused by his shattered relationship with his Creator, and he can be healed and made new only when the breach is fused in the person of Jesus Christ. But the form of the question fluctuates constantly, and we must always strive to shape our theology to meet the changing questions head-on and overcome them. The re-definition of the office of the deaconess which we are undergoing is a valuable and justifiable step in our endeavor to serve where service is most needed.





"For He has **regarded** the **low estate** of His handmaiden. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me **blessed**," Luke 1:48.

These three words, "regarded, low estate, blessed," are three of the most misunderstood words in history.

"That woman (Mary) . . . should be the means of restoring Paradise to man will always surround her with a glory which nothing can take from her. That one act sanctified womanhood and motherhood."\*

"Mary typifies 'the noblest qualities in womanhood.'"

"It is no wonder that the adoration of the Madonna has prevailed throughout the Christian and civilized world for nearly 2,000 years and that human genius, inspired by faith, has been dedicated to the portrayal of Mary as the Mother of Christ.

". . . in reality she lives on as the world's most beautiful example of motherhood. The world seems to know today why she was hailed, 'Blessed art thou among women.'\*\*\*"

Again and again these words, typical of a whole interpretation of Mary's role as a woman of the Bible, say, "Mary is blessed because she played so great a part in a miracle which gives an example of ideal womanhood and motherhood." This view often goes further in exaltation of Mary in extolling her humility, praising her poor, lowly peasanthood.

\* The Reverend A. T. Lundholm, *Women of the Bible* (Augustana Book Concern, 1926), vol. II, 57.

\*\* Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible* (Harper and Broth, 1955), p. 167.

Contrast this romantic, "blessed" view of Mary with Luther's portrayal of her in his treatise on the Magnificat:

"(Mary) would have us honor God in her, and come through her to a good confidence in His grace." "For this one thing alone, that God regarded her, men will call her blessed. . . . Therefore she points to God's regard and says, 'For behold from henceforth all generations will call me blessed. That is, beginning with the time when God regarded my low estate, I shall be called blessed.' Not **she** is praised thereby, but God's **Grace** toward her."\*

The words "He regarded" come first in Mary's magnification of the Lord, then **what** God regarded (her low estate), then the result of God's regard (her blessedness).

It seems that the idealization of Mary can be seen to be a mix-up in word order and significance. For those who romanticize her, she is first blessed — painted as haloed and hallowed in word and picture. Her low estate is an example of her blessedness. She can boast of humility because of her important role in Christ's birth. The angel came to her (the Lord regarded her) **because** she was so lowly and so blessed.

**Mary** says she was first regarded by God. Luther explains, "Mary confesses that the foremost work God did for her was that He regarded her, which is indeed the greatest of His works on which all the rest depend and from which they all derive."\*\* God came to her not because she was of low estate or blessed or anything of herself, but because **He was gracious**, and sought to save her and His people through the Son He would give her to bear. She happened to be of low estate and humble, but this doesn't exalt her: it only confirms the graciousness of the God who bothered with one as unworthy as she. Finally, she is blessed, but only because God graciously regarded her and gave her the message that His Son was to be born in her and

\* *Luther's Works* (Amer. Ed., Concordia Publ. Hse., 1956), vol. XXI, pp. 321, 322.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 321.



of her to be given to the world. As Paul exhorts (2 Cor. 10:17), "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord," so Mary boasts (is blessed and glorified) in Christ, God's Son, who was given to her to give to the world.

A deaconess, like all Christians, has been regarded by God, is humble and lowly and is greatly blessed. It is, however, only too easy to romanticize the deaconess and her work, calling her blessed first, by virtue of her own virtue. A deaconess, for instance, is dedicated, earnest, attentive, conscientious, etc. She wears a neat, distinctive uniform that brands her as "deaconess," "blessed servant." She, a woman, can serve as well as any man, but in "special, womanly" ways, as did the great women saints of old, like Mary for instance. The deaconess can boast of her humility, that she, sinner that she is, (making mistakes of judgment, bungling in attempts to serve) **can** serve, is miraculous and praiseworthy. Because she chose to be a dedicated, distinctive, humble deaconess, God consecrated her choice.

Contrast this easily dangerous view with Mary's view of her calling. The deaconess is blessed only because God regarded her and made her dedicated and distinctive in Christ. All other blessings (earnestness and the rest) are derivative of and dependent upon the Blessed who gives them—Christ. The deaconess is first of all a child of God, secondarily a child who lives this childhood as woman—first a saint, secondly a womanly saint. Her humility is nothing to glory in. The humility of Christ is her only glory, and He graciously gives it to her to serve in and suffer with. All Christians boast (are blessed, glorified and **consecrated**) in Christ who was born **in** us by His regard of us in our baptism, His Supper, and His Word; and who is born **of** us to those we serve—the world.

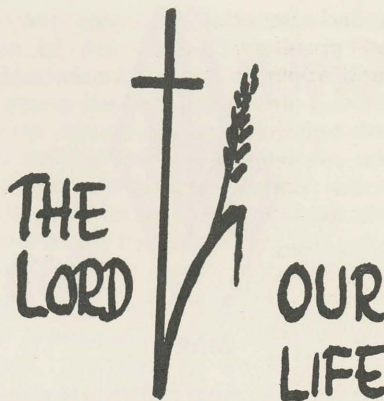
#### NEXUS

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#### WORSHIP IN ADVENT

Worship is difficult enough at any time, but surely it is even more difficult than usual in a season whose meaning has been lost not only by the world in which we live but also by the Church which is to give us life. Advent calls us to repentance, and it is hard to repent when all the evidences of the "green" Christmas of our society surround us. Advent calls us to contemplate the Lord flanked by the angelic Trumpeter of the Last Day when it is so much more pleasant to view the adorable Baby in the neat barn who is presented in all the premature Christmas concerts and programs and parties.

Against this indifference in both society and Church, Advent presses the words of the Alpha and Omega revealed by Him to St. John: "Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you." This is the Christ who fills Advent, the crucified and exalted Christ who comes again to divide mankind and to place some at His right hand and some at His left. The point which we are making is that Advent should not be seen as purely or primarily concerned with Christmas but rather with the completion of our redemption.

While it is true that at the present time the Church Year moves chronologically from Advent to Christmas, this has not always been the case. The Church Year has not always begun with Advent; Christmas itself and Septuagesima have



for good reasons in times past held that distinction. There have been times and places, for that matter, when Advent was a season of five or six weeks in length, beginning in the weeks we now observe as the closing of the Trinity season. Our present scheme — Advent to Christmas — may create the impression that the flow of the Church Year follows that same order. The flow of ideas in the Church Year, however, is Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost (Trinity), and then Advent. After the time of the Holy Spirit comes the return of the Lord to gather together the harvest. Advent proposes to keep the Church from ever forgetting that it must be ready.

A study of the propers of the season and of the weeks immediately before Advent shows this progression of thought from the close of the Trinity season into Advent. In times past the Church appointed propers only up to the equivalent of our Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity, especially in the collect which begins with the same "Stir up" that characterizes the collects for the First, Second and Fourth Sundays in Advent. The propers which our Liturgy provides for the final three possible Sundays after Trinity, have strengthened the continuity between the end of Trinity and Advent. An explanation of the lessons for the last three Sundays after Trinity reveals their concentration on the Last Things. Advent is the season of the "waiting Church".

The frequent use of the Old Testament in Advent casts additional light on the distinct character of Advent. The Old Testament does serve admirably to help us see ourselves as a "waiting Church." But we are not a Church waiting for Christmas. The equation is not, Advent is to Christmas as the Old Testament is to the New Testament. Rather it reads: Christmas is to Advent as the "even now" of our redemption is to the "not yet" of our redemption.

The Old Testament serves the "waiting Church" so well because it does share in this yes and no quality of our salvation. There is redemption in the Old Testament and yet there is something greater to come. Israel is given the

promise, she is led out of Egypt, she does return from the Exile, and yet the Messiah is not yet come. She both has and yet desires God's salvation. So now the Church looks back. The Incarnation has taken place. Salvation is here. And we find that it has not yet satisfied all our desires. It has rather made us all the more eager for His triumphant return. In Advent we look to the past and to the future so that grace may be ours today. The Reverend Fred H. Lindemann wrote: "The past is only a likeness or picture of present pardon and grace. The future is symbol and motive for the present. The Liturgy is intended to minister grace to us in the present. The references to the past and also to the future serve the present." (*The Sermon and the Propers*, Vol. 1, p. 30)

Our Lord cautions against making the error of "that wicked servant" who says to himself, "My master is delayed," and makes waste of his master's goods. (St. Matthew 24:48-51) Because the world has grown accustomed to its estrangement from God and the Church has grown comfortable in the world, Advent teaches us to pray both "Stir up, we beseech Thee, Thy power, O Lord, and come, that by Thy protection we may be rescued" and also "Stir up our hearts, O Lord."

In accordion-like fashion the propers of Advent present Christ's coming before, so that we may desire God's stirring up of His power and of our hearts. The season reaches back to the work of God in Israel, and it stretches forward to that Day when the Lord delivers all His children. It weaves together a fabric that includes these threads and also those of His Incarnation and the mystical coming of Christ today to us in a world which still seems to have little room for Him. Foreshortened, stretched, combined, blended, these threads form a pattern which can be unraveled only at the expense of losing the design. Always the saving work of God in Christ is presented so that today, now, we may hunger and thirst for that work to be done in us and by us.

How then shall we worship in Advent? In penitence and yet with joy; in



conflict and yet in triumph. There is much about which to be repentant: our willingness to be "wicked servants" who do not administer the Master's goods rightly, the evil we condone when it is done to others besides ourselves, the obstacles we place in the way of God's stirred-up power. And yet we also have the joy of the certainty of our hope. The Lord who came once to save will come again to free us from our sin. We have the knowledge that even our faltering efforts can be made useful by His purifying love. Whether we look forward or backward, we see the will of God for us today — that His name be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done — and that He will bring it to pass.

### A FORM FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP WORSHIP DURING ADVENT

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.  
Amen.

#### The Lesson

(Several series of lesson are available for Advent. Two such series of lessons, devised by Christians in Germany, are listed on pages 68 and 69 of **A Lutheran Prayer Book**, John W. Doberstein, ed., (Muhlenberg). They are recommended. The Hymn of the Week (**The Lutheran Hymnal**)

Advent I: Savior of the Nations,  
Come (#95)

Advent II: The Bridegroom Soon  
Will Call Us (#67)

Advent III: Ye Sons of Men, Oh,  
Hearken (#75)

Advent IV: Oh, Come, Oh, Come,  
Emmanuel (#62)

Others: #58, 60, 63, 68, 72, 609

#### Personal Prayer

(Silent or oral, it may be based on the reading, the hymn or some theme of the season pertinent to the worshippers.)

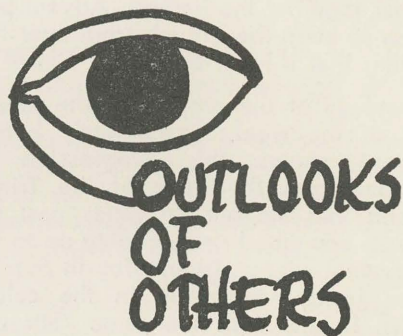
#### The Collect of the Week

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

An Advent wreath has much to commend it as an aid to domestic worship. One can be made or purchased. Religious goods stores often have com-

mercially prepared frames for a wreath. These provide sockets for the four candles, usually red, used on the wreath. (The first candle is lit during the first week of Advent, the first and second during the second week, and so on.) A simple base can be constructed out of wood by forming a cross with each arm of the same length and then drilling a socket for the candles at the end of each arm and resting a wreath over the base.

—Professor Hans Boehringer



### DEACONESS IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The Order of Deaconesses was revived in the Church of Scotland in 1887 by Dr. Archibald Charteris, who considered that this was a scriptural office within the Church and traced its origins back to the New Testament. There he found that women had served the Church in some capacity as "deacons" or "servants" and that, therefore, the Church was justified in regarding the diaconate of women as agreeable to the Word of God. His conception, and the conception which has been prevalent in the Church of Scotland since his time, is that the deaconess is a servant of the Church rather than a member of an Order or Sisterhood. The logical conclusion to which this has led us is the dropping of the word Order altogether, and this year the General Assembly has taken this step. This means that deaconesses in the Church of Scotland are not organized on the Continental European pattern in mother houses, owing their allegiance to the Head Deaconess. Rather they are responsible to the Courts of the Church and, in the first instance, to



the ministers and Kirk Session of the Parish in which they serve.

Within the Church of Scotland at the present time there are about 90 deaconesses and of these approximately 70 are serving the Church in parishes. The work which they do is of a fairly general nature, assisting the minister in education, evangelistic, and pastoral work, not confined to work among women and young people, though naturally deaconesses mostly have some responsibility in both these fields. At present, one of the main opportunities for deaconess service is in the new housing areas where congregations are large and the work is greater than a minister can handle by himself. Other deaconesses are serving the Church in more specialized spheres as youth organizers, Sunday school organizers, assistant hospital chaplains, workers with women in the armed forces, and as assistant chaplain in a university.

The Church of Scotland does not use the word ordination of deaconesses, but they are commissioned to service within the Church and this commissioning is an act of the Presbytery. This means that they are also responsible to the Presbytery in matters of life and doctrine. Commissioning takes place normally after a two-year training which is given in St. Colm's College, Edinburgh, followed by a six month period of probationary service in the parish.

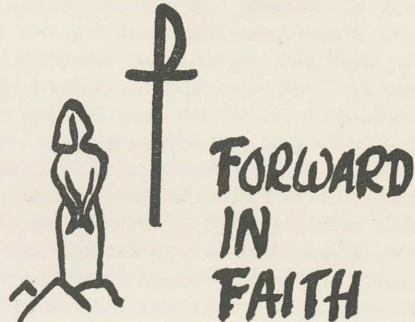
The training comprises a course of studies in Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Doctrine, Christian Ethics, Church History, and Religious Education; alongside of this there is practical training in youth work, pastoral work, public speaking, conduct of worship, etc. Recent development has been that deaconesses with a full theological training may now be licensed to preach, which means that they may do the full work of assistant in the parishes, taking their share in the conduct of public worship and in the preaching.

So far as the organization of deaconesses is concerned, there is a body known as the Deaconess Council which consists of all commissioned Deaconesses who meet once a year to discuss any

matters in common concern. There are also Local Associations in the four main centres in Scotland which meet more frequently for the same purpose. The deaconesses of the Church of Scotland are affiliated to the International Federation of Deaconess Associations and take their part in international discussions.

Mary I. Lusk

Assistant Chaplain to the  
University of Edinburgh



#### INTERNE RETURNED

A group of excited, curious, anxious girls left Deaconess Hall in June, 1961, facing a year of newness — an Interne Year. Many problems, many joys, and much learning were ahead of us, the first class of Valparaiso University deaconess students to intern for the period of one year.

In the class Fields of Deaconess Word, we had been prepared for many aspects of the life of a Deaconess. Under the professor's guidance we wrote out meditations for hypothetical cases: calls on the sick and shut-in, calls on new mothers, calls to prepare one for death. Our day as internes was to begin with prayer with our pastor followed by a morning of study and preparation. Afternoon duties would probably include calls, and evenings would be occupied by Walther League and Ladies' Aid meetings, Bible classes, and choir practices. Our pastor was to be our shepherd, our counselor, our spiritual guide. Almost as in the marriage situation, we were to submit ourselves unto him as he served to guide, lead, train, and instruct us, helping us to equip ourselves for the service of Christ.

The situation which each of us encountered was unique. Some of the in-



ternes worked with pastors who fulfilled the high expectations we all had. Some found that the practical situation as it existed for them was a far cry from the theoretically ideal situation explained in the classroom. Varied as were the tasks which we all faced, we have learned the same basic lessons. We learned to serve Christ present in every human being, no matter how ugly or odious they appeared. We learned that there was no way of making these people loveable **before** we loved them; in Christ, these **were** our brothers, our fellow creatures, and they **were** to be loved in Him. Our actions toward individuals and the whole congregation had to meet the needs as they existed — we had to see further than our self-centered desires to perform those tasks which would best show up our abilities. The most difficult task we all faced was that of realizing and acknowledging the fact that we, too, were sinners. As praise for our meagre tasks was heaped upon our heads by well-meaning but ignorant members of the congregation, this confession became increasingly harder to make. It was a constant temptation to agree with them, to believe that we had been doing a job well, instead of facing the fact that we as individuals were nothing, and that every action was sinful if it was not grounded in, and proceeding from, that unselfish love of Christ which seeks not praise, but an object to love.

In my own situation, my duties included the visitation of sick and shut-in members, calling on delinquent and prospective members, extending the fellowship of the church to those who had signed our guest register, and visiting the hospitalized when the pastor was out of town. I was also expected to visit every family in the parish at least once during that year, in order to establish a rapport, and to search out existing but hidden problems. The counseling of the Walther League was also a major project during this year.

These varied and demanding tasks were the means by which I could serve in helping others to see their calling in the Body of Christ. The culmination of

all my training was here, in this service to which the Lord had called me. My response should have been one of joy, but it was one of hostility. I didn't want to serve in this way, because it didn't agree with my ideas of the methods by which I was to serve. I expected to find in the pastor someone with whom I could pray in the mornings, and discuss theological and personal problems — and I was deeply disappointed. We never prayed together, and spent approximately ten hours in conversation during the year. He voiced little concern for the deaconess program. Although I had hoped to spend my mornings studying, he insisted that my mornings, afternoons, and evenings be spent in making calls, with the exception of those evening meetings for which I was responsible.

As the time progressed, my feelings of dissatisfaction grew into an ugly selfish demon. The seemingly interminable months of my interne year drew to an end, and I prayed that they would pass quickly — that I should soon be back at Valpo where I would be with sisters who could strengthen me; where I should know what to do, and be told what was to be done; where I could live my own life as I wanted to.

There is a method in my present "madness" of recording these complaints. Bound together in the body and through the blood of Christ, knit together into the one Body, one Lord, one Father, we exist as one corporate being. Irritations to the function of one member must of necessity affect the whole body. In order to assist other members effectively, each of us must be aware of the total being of the Church which includes sinful children of the world as well as righteous sons of God. Each deaconess possesses this duality, by virtue of the fact that she holds membership in two kingdoms, one ruled by God, the other by Satan. It is in this frame of reference that I see the fruits of my year.

As I look back upon my internship, I can see the darkness of despair in my attitude toward the service I rendered. Instead of daily and richly growing in



grace and abounding in Agape, the completely unselfish Godly love, I grew in sin, and abounded in a completely selfish love, hatred of God. Although the interne year was to be a year of continuing growth, the greatest learning process which took place in me occurred when I had returned to Valpo.

Where did I fail? Precisely at the point where I was unwilling to let God and His love be the motivating factor of my service, and instead took the reins of my actions in my own hands, meting out service to those who in my own opinion were worthy to receive it. If I had been wary enough, I would have seen the first sign of my unfaith in the almost complete lapse of my private devotional life. It seemed so pointless to spend additional time in private devotions when I spent the whole day praying with the sick and shut-ins; so I neglected them. Wittingly, and almost superciliously, I awaited God's damning judgment, daring Him to crush **me, His** servant. Nothing happened. By preventing the Holy Ghost from using this means of grace, I played into Satan's hands, where he schooled me, and taught me that I did not need God. And my life **did** continue, even as Adam and Eve's continued in the Garden.

My mornings began, not with words of praise on my lips to the God Who had brought me safely through another night that I might praise Him in joyful service, but with the cold dread of facing yet another day of drudgery. I did not "rejoice in the Lord alway" — in fact, I hardly rejoiced at all. I could not love in joy, because I didn't know the joy of being the beloved child of God. I had not confessed my sins, acknowledging my wretchedness and magnifying the Lord because of His grace and mercy to me, a sinner, because I couldn't admit that I had sinned. I could not hear God's condemning wrath on my sins from the Pastor, because I had convinced myself that "no good could come out of him." Oh wretched one, to believe that you are valuable, when your whole existence is heinous in the eyes of God unless it is seen through the love of Christ!

Once again at Valpo, where I was

subjected to the Word of God at least three times a day, the Holy Spirit had a chance to work faith and love in my heart through this means. I heard God condemning me, in love, in the words of a sister. I confessed the sins that I then saw so evident in my life, to her, and to myself, but most important, to God. How valuable this confession-absolution role is in our lives. When we confess our sins, we acknowledge our sole dependence not upon our own merits, but upon God's grace in Christ. He loves us sinners and will give us the renewed strength to love as Christ loved, with the love which proceeds from God through us toward others, to assure them of God's love for them. In all the God-given human relationships we have, our calling is to fulfill this loving role. We do not act only as confessors of God's love, but also as women who need to be reminded of this love, who need to recognize their sins in order to receive the renewing word of forgiveness through other Christian priests. I should have demanded this service from my pastor. He could not have loved me because I did not love him; but we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We love and are loved, **not** because of our apparent virtues but in spite of them, because God has loved us first. When two Christians have reached this relationship of forgiveness and love in Christ, human frailties can be overcome; it is not as if they did not exist, but in their existence they are a common possession. Each person is sinner and redeemed, bound by the love of Christ **to** love each other. The Holy Eucharist is for us a physical, spiritual reminder of this love. The Christ Who is Love deigns to dwell within us, through this Sacrament strengthening us for His loving task.

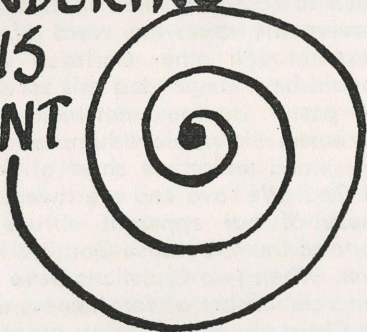
What a comfort it is for me now to know that even if I have not loved, Christ has loved through me. Through our imperfect, sinful actions, Christ works in love toward others. If any good work is done through our actions, it is not because we are in ourselves good, but because He who only is good is working this act. What a joy it is for us daily to be reminded of God's bap-



tismal covenant with us, knowing that it is not we who serve, but Christ in us; knowing that with the temptations, He offers us the grace and power to overcome them — not in and by ourselves, but in and by Him Who is our Life eternally.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

## PONDERING THIS POINT



### "THE CHRISTIAN'S SENSE OF HUMOR"

Some have one. Some do not. Christianity does not automatically make an introvert into an extrovert; likewise, it does not provide a sense of humor to someone without one. However, the Christian faith does provide a basis and a resource for developing a sense of humor or appreciating the one which an individual has. Religion and humor have much in common. Both are evidences of security. Our religion is evidence of the highest security. God has made a radical claim on us by incorporating us into the Body of Christ through our Baptism and maintaining us as His Own through the Gospel and the Holy Eucharist. Humor is also evidence of security. We can joke about that of which we are sure. Ordinarily, we do

not joke about the doubtful. This does not mean we do not kid about our having doubts: we are sure we have them.

Some very serious people think that Christianity is colorless and without humor. They see Christ as being always serious and always somber. This attitude does not tell us as much about Christ as it does about the people who hold such opinions about Him. Who knows what expression was on the face of Jesus when he pointed to a babe and said that the greatest in the Kingdom had to be like this infant? Or, who knows what look was in His eyes as He spoke of the camel going through the eye of a needle, or of men's straining at gnats while swallowing camels? The points He made were of the greatest seriousness. However, Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us in **Prisoner for God** that "absolute seriousness is not without a dose of humor."

Christianity deals with man's most serious problem: "how can I know a gracious God?" To man left by himself, God does not appear gracious. But in Jesus Christ we have grace, forgiveness, new life, all of the great magnitudes of the greatest faith in the world. It is the faith God gives and strengthens. Why not then, "Rejoice, ye Christians, loudly"?

Both religion and humor give a sense of perspective. In faith, we see reality and life in God's terms, not only in our own terms. Humor can cut down to size someone who has been strutting about with a disproportionate sense of his own importance. The task of defining humor is a challenge to precision, defying simple delineation. You may think you have defined humor only to find that you have grabbed a handful of fog. Perhaps in broadest terms it can be called that which appeals to the absurdly incongruous. One's use of humor will signal its type. One's motive and the result of its use will also signal whether the humor is really biting or truly edifying as humor can be.

A person's view of himself as well as of his religion can indicate a great deal about whether humor is a salutary



grace or a threat when directed at him. What is your view of yourself? What is your reaction when you are the object of someone else's sense of humor? Do you feel a threat to your existence when you are the object of a joke? Do you want to make a comeback that will put the other person on the defensive? The answers to all of these questions will tell you a great deal about how you view humor, and how you view your existence as a human being under God.

The key question is: What is your view of yourself? Perhaps it has been necessary for you to erect a protective shell of pride to defend your much-riddled ego. Perhaps your self-esteem is so shattered by comparison with others that any humor directed your way will bring what remains of it crashing to the ground. Perhaps you feel that you are terribly important. Perhaps you feel anything but that and wonder if you will ever be of service in your chosen calling.

Your Christian faith speaks to these questions and problems. It also provides the foundation for one of the greatest salutary graces in life: the ability to laugh at oneself. The greatest use of humor is, I suggest, not in the witty repartee at a party or banquet but in the inner sanctuary of your personal life. Here you can have a terrific time and an edifying experience if you can really engage in full-bodied and full-blooded laughter at yourself. See yourself against the mirror of reality and note the incongruous picture. What a relief to come to terms with life and self in terms of humor! What a breakthrough and victory for wholesome religion when a person can laugh at himself and no longer take himself with the seriousness of a misguided zealot.

But where is the real resource of the strength to laugh at oneself? It is found in God. The God who "sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," says the Psalmist. He has made me; that must be some kind of evidence that God appreciates humor. More important, He has given to me and to you the greatest source of security. He has actually taken me as I am and has taken you as you are.

He has shown His acceptance of us by incorporating us into Christ. He sees all of our sin, including the one of taking ourselves too seriously, and accepts us anyway. He sees our attempts to play God and forgives them. He sees our lack-lustre acceptance of life and faith and forgives it. He reminds us that when we die to self in Christ and rise to His new life we have a healthy self-esteem as well as the grace to see ourselves in the perspective of eternity. We need no longer the self-defense of pride. We do not need the shell of protection around our ego. We do not need constantly to compare ourselves to others. We do not need to strike back at someone who has kidded us. We can accept ourselves with a freedom to grow and to change, maturing in Christ. Our maturity will enable us to laugh at ourselves, a very ennobling habit.

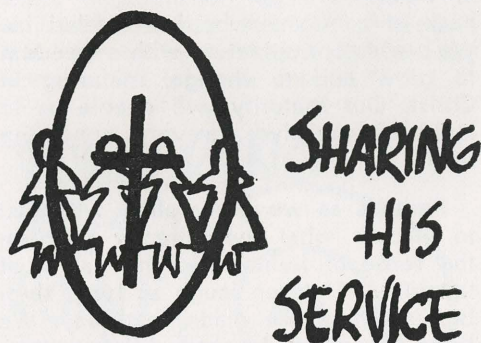
Perhaps as we grow older we need to recover what was already built in: the sense of humor and the gaiety of laughter. "Children laugh as birds sing: because they are made that way. We listen to a child's laughter, listen guiltily, and wish that our laughter were as unspoiled," the great university preacher George Buttrick reminds us. In the cross and resurrection of Christ we can reclaim a gift that has been spoiled by life not lived completely in terms of God. In the redemption we can recover what we have spoiled through our feeble attempts to make sense out of life as we muddle on through it. There must be laughter in heaven over our attempt to be more than human beings or to be less than human beings. But there is also joy in heaven over the one who repents, recovering his creaturehood under God. Again, Buttrick: "Perhaps our life is a pilgrimage from childish laughter, through the laughter of our guilty dilemma, to the childlike laughter that comes of God's forgiving and renewing grace. Many a man lives and dies only in the ruefulness of that middle term."

With storms gathering over a fractured human race; with atomic fears compounding our personal anxieties;



with a frustration that comes from achievements falling short of aspiration; with guilt over sin; with all of these and many other strands weaving a crazy-quilt life, how shall we laugh? We know there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, even in today's terms, because something radical has happened to us leading to a recovery of the salutary sense of humor about life and about ourselves. Jesus Christ has opened a door which no one can shut, and through that door lies life and laughter. It is Christ who reminds us to "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

by Pastor Ronald G. Goerss



### WORKING FROM THE WORD

Thanks be to God, for we of the diaconate are not serving by our own stamina and steam. We are linked with the Word, Jesus Christ, as we serve in God's Kingdom. Even more encouraging is the fact that God aims to keep the situation this way; various episodes of my life illuminate this idea. As we serve, God disciplines and teaches, guides and directs, uplifts and sustains. I am amazed to find that in the midst of details and frustrations God communicates to me that He is the Lord. "The Lord lives: blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation."

The significance of God's Word in the life of the deaconess cannot be overestimated. I have only begun to realize what power God can extend through His Word in relation to the business of loving in the Kingdom and out of the Kingdom. As our living Christ literally fills our existence, our existence lives with the brightness of the Son.

Occasionally in the life of a deaconess God lavishly showers His Word upon her. For example, on Reformation Sunday our area churches planned a day packed full of spiritual venture. The day included an afternoon worship service, which was televised, and a Sunday School Institute which was correlative to the service. Such days as these are the mountaintop experiences in the lives of deaconesses and all Christians. At these times I wonder how only a few days before I could have lacked enthusiasm for Christ's work. The words of the Psalmist come to living reality: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul."

A good starting point in the daily activities of the deaconess is the Word. My Pastor and I often worship together in the morning. There is real power from God as workers read the Word, pray, praise the Lord in hymns, and confess their faith. When Christians confront the devil with the Word-Christ, he can no longer fight, for he cowers before his mighty Conqueror.

Personal study of the Word also takes real discipline and diligence. I remember a wise sister deaconess telling me that her best hours for study of the Scriptures are early in the day when her mind is alert and the morning schedule has not yet subdivided the time. After her other regular tasks begin, her opportunities for diligent Bible study and prayer are decreased. It is striking how much a person's lovelessness and sluggishness can be traced to a very slim diet of the Word. But, in reverse, eagerness and love result from contact with God. In the knowledge that Christ sees past our sinful distortions and calls us children of light, we too can love and look beyond those sinful distortions in others: Christ died for sinners.

I have heard it said that pastors are excited about God because they must constantly work with the Word in preaching and teaching. Deaconesses participate in this response as they prepare to teach confirmation and Bible classes. The Holy Spirit teaches the teacher as well as the pupils. In fact, the teacher receives a double lesson:



one in preparation and another in instruction.

Teaching the seventh grade confirmation classes is an opportunity to share the power-book; the privilege of teaching it, however, demands thoughtful preparation. The three-year confirmation instruction program in my congregation involves three hours of classwork each Saturday morning: thirty minutes of worship and worship study, an hour and fifteen minutes of **Catechism**, fifteen minutes of recess and an hour of Church History. This year a new phase has been added to the Catechism period. A twenty-minute Bible study has been incorporated, directly related to the doctrine to be studied that day. My first section of study was the Third Article of the Creed; in conjunction with this I used short studies from John 14 and 15, and an examination of I Corinthians 12 on the Church as the body of Christ. I hesitated to teach some verses to children but the verses themselves clearly explained the doctrine we were studying, and the children displayed more ability than I expected. Following such a Bible study the teaching of Catechism doctrine is simplified and made more meaningful.

However, deaconesses must realize that everyone is not eager to study the Bible, a fact which is evident from the empty Bible classes in our churches. One of our area pastors made the following statement: "When your class fails to show up, rejoice; it will drive you to prayer and deeper study of the Word." We may wonder whether our teaching is effective, especially in youth work. We must pray with the greatest diligence that we may not lead these little ones astray by our teaching.

During the past year several of the ladies of our congregation have met with me to study various books of the Bible. Here again I had the fruitful venture of studying the Word myself and then sharing it with others. The ladies also prepared for each lesson and shared their discoveries of the action of the living Word for them. In the study of Paul's letter to the Philippians,

we grew together in our understanding of the Christian life: our suffering shared in Christ. "Have the mind of Christ"; "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain"; "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content"; "Rejoice in the Lord."

Probably the most responsive hearers of the Word are the sick and the aged. These people are especially aware of their need of God's healing power for both their bodies and their souls. In my regular visits to one of my shut-ins I realized more and more what great things God does through the Word of His power. This lady anticipated with joy each of our weekly periods of worship together in prayer, Scripture reading and singing of the hymns. What inspired me most, however, was her attitude toward her illness of asthma. During her severe attacks she prayed for forgiveness, not for relief; and God answered her prayers by giving her renewed strength. As she prayed for her greatest need, she learned the profound theology of living. Christ the Word can lift people above pain, for He has known all pain.

Christ is the deaconess' one sure resourceful Word. He lives in us by His preached and written Word, but also in our Baptism and our eating and drinking of His gracious Supper. Our Baptism provides genuine assurance that we are God's children and heirs, that we have the dynamics for service in the new life. At the funeral of a six-month old baby I realized that this baby had done as much to gain Heaven as I had; we had both been baptized, and, by God's mercy and love were certain of his forgiveness. As we serve and fail in service, as we love and fail to love, we are reminded: Happy is he who trusts in the Lord, to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity. "This is my body which is given for you, this is my blood which is shed for you, for the remission of sins." Working from the Word is working from the everlasting spring of life: this spring is Jesus Christ.

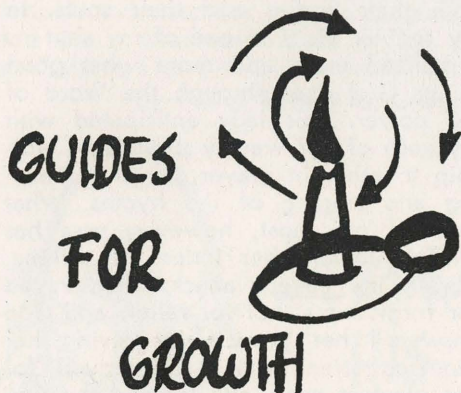
Deaconess Bev Reardon



## PLEASE NOTE

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**LIVING THE LITURGY**, Dr. Edgar S. Brown, Jr., (Muhlenberg, 1961, \$1.50, 140 pp.)

**LIVING THE LITURGY** is designed to be a simple guide to the Lutheran Liturgy; it endeavors to enable the churchgoer to understand and appreciate the form of worship which from early times has been the "Christian's chief act of response to God."

The service with which Dr. Brown is vitally concerned is that of the Holy Eucharist. "Liturgy" at one time meant "any form or rite of service used at worship." "At a later time the word was so restricted that among some people today it is used only to describe the rite of Holy Communion. It is in this sense that the word is used here."

Dr. Brown explains the liturgy by exposing in order, each individual section of the service, in terms relevant to the 20th Century man. For instance in his introduction to the Creed he says: "A couple of years ago a ballad entitled 'I Believe' flooded the airwaves. It was full of allusions to raindrops, flowers, candle glow, the ever-present 'you,' and the inevitable 'Someone.' Certainly it wasn't a Christian creed, in spite of

the fact that it was used in some churches as a junior choir anthem! . . . Christ asked his disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?' Peter's reply is one of the earliest of Christian creeds, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" (p. 65)

He dissects the order of service, giving brief historical backgrounds of each portion. The significance of the parts for the individual worshipper is pointed out, with suggestions of ways in which he and the pastor, with the members of the choir, may act out their responses of praise together. Where there is honest difference of interpretation and practice, effort has been made to state both sides frankly. Yet at the same time, the author emphasizes that which is traditional and most meaningful.

Dr. Brown not only describes certain portions of the liturgy but strives to indicate the spirit of the whole by pointing out how the various parts fit together. He strives to make liturgy **live** as Christians gather in formal corporate worship. Our liturgy only begins in the service, but its "living out" takes place in the home, on the job, and in our activities in the community.

Deaconesses should find **LIVING THE LITURGY** especially helpful as a source book which explains the service in a meaningful and concise manner. It may be used as a study guide with women's study groups, adult and child confirmation classes, Walther Leagues, and choirs. As Dr. Brown points out, the liturgy is to be lived by every member of the Body of Christ. We have as our task the responsibility of showing the layman where his task lies. For this purpose **LIVING THE LITURGY** is an invaluable aid.

Jeanne Louie