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My Dear Brother:

If you have been blessed with an unusually good memory, you may vaguely remember that in the last issue of these random notes I asked a question about the number of meetings which our brethren must attend in a given calendar year. Whether it was the almost universal interest in the question or whether the brethren were moved by the generosity of the Christmas spirit, the response to this request was astonishing. From East and West, from North and South, came postcards and letters telling a dismaying and frightening story. Apparently the number of meetings attended by our parish pastors is one of the very real handicaps under which the Church Militant labors in our hour in the history of mankind. Let's take a look at a few examples. The brethren report:

From Montana: 210 meetings a year.
From Arizona: 300 meetings in 1961.
From Minnesota: 226 regular meetings; 181 church services (I should hasten to add that this brother has three congregations.)
From Georgia: I must report the horrifying figure of 247 meetings for 1961.
From an Army chaplain: 270 meetings during the past year.

Some of the brethren took the time to append some remarks to their reports. One brother wrote: "I would like to answer your question, but I have to go to a meeting." Another one sent a clipping: "Meetings are places where people go to learn better how to do things they already know how to do but don't have time to do because they have to go to so many meetings."

Most of the brethren who replied seemed to accept the situation with the tolerant good humor which is so characteristic of our clergy. On the other hand, I see an undertone of dismay which I fully share. Surely there must be something that can be done about a situation which requires a man to attend 250 meetings a year. Questions: "Are all these meetings necessary? Could some of them be conducted without the pastor?" And so on. I hope to return to this problem at some future date. Meanwhile, any further comments will be greatly appreciated.

Church History Section:

Perhaps you will remember that in the last issue of these notes I referred to the curious and intriguing story of Dr. Edward Preuss, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who embraced the Roman Catholic faith after he had written a marvelous treatise on "Justification." Two of our historians now take the time to write in detail concerning this event. From E. J. A. Marxhausen, long-time friend in New Ulm, Minnesota, comes the following:

"Since writing you I have tried to recall what Prof. Reinhold Pieper told us in Springfield. As I recall he told us that Ed. Preuss had been a Catholic, embraced Lutheranism and while professor at the University of Berlin wrote his 'Immaculate Conception.' This was published in 1865. More or less as a result of this magnificent presentation he was called to the St. Louis Seminary, wrote his wonderful 'Justification by Faith,' and returned to Catholicism."

Another interesting commentary comes from Dr. George A. W. Vogel at Greenfield, Iowa. He writes:

"I am writing you concerning Dr. Ed. Preuss who left our church to become a Roman Catholic. You will find a chapter in Dr. Fuerbringer's '80 Eventful Years' on pages 230 to 238. (I should have known that.) In Fuerbringer's 'Persons and Events' Preuss is referred to when reference is made to Prof. Herman Baumstark, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who also left our church to become a Roman Catholic. In fact, he was succeeded by Preuss. The article on Baumstark is Chapter eleven in 'Persons and Events.' This chapter is a must. It is interesting that among the theologians who tried to convince Baumstark of the error of his ways was none other than Dr. Preuss, who had lately arrived in St. Louis from Germany . . .

"Announcement of the Preuss apostasy was made by Dr. Walther in 'Der Lutheraner,' Vol. 28. Pastor Julius A. Friedrich is the translator of Preuss' 'Justification.' (I should have known that, too.) In his 'Briefe' Vol. II, pages 157 to 162, a few interesting sideglights are to be found. It interested me to read a P.S. in a letter to Dr. Schwan, 'Nun haben wir endlich auch einmal einen missourischen Gelehrten.' He meant Preuss. Perhaps an indication of Preuss' mental processes may be seen from the fact that he 'in anguish of heart' prayed the Lord for a sign as to what he should do since for some time he had felt doubts about the correctness of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith without works, especially on account of James 2.' The sign came on October 14, 1870, when suddenly 'the whole horizon blazed in an unheard-of fiery red as if the city and country were aflame.' This was the deciding factor. So in modern parlance he had an encounter with God, or became a Middle-Age 'enthusiast.'"
I hope, by the way, that the scholarly information furnished by Brothers Marxhausen and Vogel will find its way into the files of Concordia Historical Institute. It is still a very interesting and mysterious story . . .

University Notes: I am happy to report that the second phase of the Law School campaign, under the direction of our Department of Development, is proceeding satisfactorily. Apparently the brethren who were not able to take part in the offering last spring are now beginning to take hold of the problem. Many of them have promised to have a special offering either this fall or make it a part of their congregational budget. The ground-breaking for the building has been scheduled for Commencement, June 10, 1962.

While I am talking about the University, I should like to point out that we are this year graduating our largest class in the Lutheran history of the University — 436 men and women. These graduates represent approximately 350 congregations in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In other words, it becomes perfectly clear that the sending of so many men and women back into the church underscores the importance of the University in the life and work of many congregations. We are trying very hard to impress upon these graduates the basic need for their work in the life of the church. They must be willing to be of help wherever they can. Many of the reports from the field indicate that they are doing this in increasing measure.

Still at the University: I hope that you have had time to read the new translation of Walther's theses on Law and Gospel and the commentaries by members of our faculty published in the March issue of The Cresset. This issue was sent to all our brethren in the ministry as our own contribution to the sesquicentennial of Walther's birth. Personally I can say that the study of these theses and the job of writing new commentaries has been a real revelation of the richness and relevance of our Lutheran position. The study of these theses and their application for the life and thought of our church is one of our great musts at the present time. If it is done faithfully and prayerfully, it will undoubtedly clear the atmosphere of many misunderstandings which seem to hang like a shadowy cloud over our work at the present moment. It should be noted, also, that these theses reflect very clearly and sharply the theological position of the University.

Here and There: The administration of the Senior College at Fort Wayne sends some of us the report of the Commission of the North Central Association which investigated the college in January. I must say that I have never seen a more favorable, even enthusiastic report by any committee of the North Central Association. They were deeply impressed not only by the plan of the institution but also by the manner in which the program is now being carried on. I think all of us should make a polite bow in the direction of our Senior College.

Please insert the following letter in your church bulletin next Sunday.

"Dear Members of the St. X's Congregation:

Undoubtedly all of you know that one of the most remarkable changes in American history has been the coming of the paperbacks — cheap books that are selling by the thousands. Many of them, especially those that you see in your corner drugstore, are horrible trash. On the other hand, there are now many thousands that are very much worthwhile — reprints of great classics, new and important studies, and so forth.

This is particularly true of religious books. There are thousands of them that are worth reading and studying. As I thought about this a few days ago, I suddenly remembered your pastor. I have traveled far and wide in our church these past thirty years, and I have seen how often it is financially impossible for a pastor to buy the books he really needs for his life and work.

And so I am coming to you with a question and an appeal. Would it be possible for you to add $100 a year to your congregational budget and earmark the money: 'Pastor's Paperback'? This sum would enable him to buy sixty or seventy books a year and to keep up with his studying more than ever before. I am sure that this will make him very happy."

Very sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

P.S. Of course, your pastor will want to choose his own books, if, however, you want to help him get started, I will send you a list of fifty of the best.

O.P.K."

I really hope that you will find it possible to print this letter in your Sunday bulletin. After all, it just came to you through the mail and all that you are doing is passing it along for whatever it may be worth.

Odd-ball Section: I cannot remember any time in my entire life when I have received more odd-ball mail than during the past years. Apparently there are curious and somewhat dismaying apparitions just beneath the surface of twentieth century life, and these reflect themselves in the communications from unstable people who probably should be going to a psychiatrist three times a day. Here are a few examples:

"Dear People—

I hope that no damn Jew reads this as its name is 'Jews will probably Rule the Universe.'

I mean just that. Who cares? In the first place the Jews wrote the bible so that they could easily di-vide it and use the part they wanted for themselves and fork off the rest onto the white man to use for their advantage. The Jews even prophesy their own persecution. Lots of stuff in the bible is suggestive and meant to govern events. If somebody accuses the Jews 'unrighteously,' all they got to do is point it out in the bible and show you that was predicted too. They wrote it.

Notice that Jews get along the worst in countries that have no part of their Religion! Hitler and the rest of the Nazis seen through their trick though. The Jews would of taken Germany over if Hitler hadn't of stepped in. The Nazis accomplished the decimation of the Jews if they done nothing else. The Nazis were maraters in a way. It took cold hard guts and they had it! All Leaders that accomplish have hard guts. Feel sorry for people in this world and they take advantage. They most all do just that."
And so on — for five pages of stupid hate and frightening ideas. Most mysterious is the fact that this kind of stuff is often linked with fundamentalism of a certain type. This is a connection which I have never been able to understand.

Another one:

"Now we have known about the slogan 'Make Room for Father.' Let us think this over. Isn’t Father to make room for every one of his household. Isn’t he the provider, the one who gives himself for his family? Isn’t he the man who should see that the fires of love are kept burning for his family. In the last years so many men have given their lives to save America. Perhaps others of other nations should help to protect the United States too.

Let's make room for Mother. Isn’t she the one who will give up a bed for an overnight guest while Father snuggles warmly in his bed when there is not an extra bedroom. Let me see! Just how is this thing any way. Does not Psalm 29 command the mighty men to give their strength for 'God's glory?' Does not Psalm 150 tell us how to praise the Lord?

Make room for Father? So many of old Fathers have retired from their farms and are living on interest from the profit of the earth. The apartment owners are living on usury. 40% of our people in the U.S. do not own a home. Why? Isn’t it because many of the old Fathers retired? Read Gen. 3:19 on retiring."

And then suddenly one morning the mailman brings another kind of letter — in shaky handwriting on an old yellow piece of paper. As I read it, the office falls away and there is only the far music of sainthood. There really are saints left in the world, but most of them are in hidden towns, forgotten villages, the little saints whom God loves so tenderly — the saints who write something like the following:

"Wanted to write to you long ago, but just couldn’t get curage to do so, to let you know that we are not able to keep up our contribution any more as we pledged to do. It makes us feel so bad, but we just can’t do it any more. We are two old sick people, I am all crippled up with arthritis and can’t do any work any more and Mrs. is old and feeble to. We have no income what so ever, and can’t earn any thing, so had to go on old age assistance, and as you sure know they don’t give you anything for church dues or charity, we just get enough to keep us alive, and that is very scarce, we just got to skimp and scratch to come out even.

We always have an extra collection for Valparaiso in our church, we always try and give a little then. We always lay aside right away what we can give for the Kingdom of God and the rest we got to budget to keep us a going. Am enclosing a Dollar yet, that I got for my brithday from a friend and I always saved it, but will send it to you, maybe the last one I can send you, but will try and give a little more in the collections they have in our church, as the Lord prosperus us. May God bless you and all in the university."

Still here and there: Some quotes from a remarkable article by Alan Simpson, Dean of the College of the University of Chicago. "We are surrounded by shams. Until recently the schools were full of them — the notion that education can be had without tears, that puffed rice is a better intellectual diet than oatmeal, that adjustment to the group is more important than knowing where the group is going, and that democracy has made it a sin to separate the sheep from the goats. Mercifully these are much less evident now than they were before Sputnik startled us into our wits ... In front of the professor are the shams of the learned fraternity. There is the sham science of the social scientist who first invented a speech for fuddling thought and then proceeded to tell us in his lock-jawed way what we already knew. There is the sham humanism of the humanist who wonders why civilization that once feasted at his table is repelled by the shredded and desiccated dishes that often lie on it today. There is the sham message of the physical scientist who feels that his mastery of nature has made him an expert in politics and morals, and there are all of the other brands of hokum which have furnished material for satire since the first quacks established themselves in the first cloisters ... "

"No one has ever told our students about the first rule in English composition: Every slaughtered syllable is a good deed ... ." Please read that sentence again. It is the very heart of a good approach to writing. "It is very difficult to write a bad sentence if the Bible has been a steady companion ... ."

Dean Stimpson ends up with a transliteration of the twenty-third psalm into the language of a committee of sociologists. The opening lines of the psalm read as follows:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul."

The revised version would sound something like this:

"The Lord is my external-internal integrative mechanism, I shall not be deprived of gratifications for my viscerogenic hungers or my need-dispositions, He motivates me to orient myself towards a non-social object with affective significance, He positions me in a non-decisional situation, He maximizes my adjustment."

Just a few words for your meditation during Holy Week. The true power and value of any given section of Christendom can always be measured in terms of its distance from the Cross. It may move either in the direction of Sinai, as Rome has, or in the direction of Athens, as much of modern Protestantism has. In either case it loses its claim to be directly in the Christian tradition. By the grace of God the Lutheran Church has always avoided both dangers. It has realized that the great secret of Christianity, the fountain of its perennial youth, the source of its power lies in two words: In Christ — and not in the first place in the historic Jesus, in the Christ of the mountain-side or the little children — but in the Christ of the Cross, the Lamb of the eternal sacrifice, the sin-burdened fashioner of atonement. Here is the very heart of our faith! The silences of eternity, the councils of the Holy Trinity,
the crying of prophets, the long night of waiting, the whimper of a Child in a manger — Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost — all point to the center of the world's history and the heart of the world's hope — the Cross of Christ. In it the entire age-long conflict of sin and grace comes to a burning focus. We have on Calvary the full generosity of God and the full shame of man.

The Lutheran theology of the cross — the justification of faith — always presupposes an overwhelming consciousness of sin. This was the great mark of St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther. They all felt the horror of sin like the lash of a whip. They felt sin in the one way that the modern mind does not feel it — as the real reason for our broken world, broken physically and spiritually. We must remember that sin is always division. It is the breaking down of fellowship. The ruin is more complete the higher we go. It is bad in the world, worse in the church, worst of all in the relationship between God and man. Every reference in Holy Writ uses this picture. Sin is wandering, loneliness, going away, going astray, separation. It always has the same tolling theme. We had a home once and lost it. We had a fellowship and we broke it. We had a love and we forgot it. And there is finally no difference in kind between the little hates, jealousies, malices in our hearts and in the church, and the roar of planes and bombs and guns. It is all of one piece. It is all sin. It is the crashing of our world into pieces because of sin.

And yet, all this vital as it is, is only preparation for the theology of the Cross. Men must be driven to their knees before they can ascend Calvary. There comes now the amazing humanly incredible miracle of the Cross — the miracle of forgiveness, the restoration of fellowship, the return to the Father's house. In Him our brokenness is healed, and our union with God and man is restored. Our great separation so long now and so bitter has been ended by the reunion with God through Jesus Christ. The bonds of sin are loosed. We have again the freedoms beneath and beyond all human freedoms — freedom from fear of sin, freedom from want of God, freedom of worship of God, the freedom of God to God.

The great burden of our message to the modern world in the year of our Lord 1962 must be that this is an accomplished fact. This is a finished redemption. It is one of the most curious phenomena of church history that there is a constant tendency to return to paganism even within the framework of Christianity. There is always the effort to make Christianity a quest instead of an achievement. In contrast to all other religious systems the faith of Christianity is a fact, done and complete, and not a search for higher truth. The life of the church may be a quest, a progression toward a goal but never its faith. The essence of Christianity is that something has been done and nothing remains to be done. It is finished, holy, perfect. How that message fits into our world with its haunting sense of incompleteness, of unfinished faith, of broken dreams and lost hopes!

This is our message and our faith: Once and only once in the long story of our incompleteness there was one task that was done — completely, finally, absolutely — by every standard of measurement, human or divine. The work of our Lord from the first cry in the manger to the last cry on the Cross was a divine symphony coming to its final and inevitable end, complete and perfect, turning all our unfinished lives, the loose ends of history, the frayed edges of time into something new, complete, holy and glorious. Our Lord's cry, "It is finished," was the cry of a worker whose work is done, a soldier whose victory is won, a Savior whose purposes have been accomplished. And since that day — and forever — He has in His grip these days and these years and what we have done to one another and to Him. He has restored the ancient, divine balance between justice and mercy. Now and forever mercy rules the believing heart and the believing church.

My good wishes for a blessed and quiet Holy Week.

Sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

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