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My dear Brother:

Do you ever find yourself involved in a part of what people consider your "ministry" which is utterly beyond your depth and outside your training? For example, a discussion in the Ladies' Aid Society concerning the type of dishes which must be bought before the annual supper? Or what brand of pop should be sold at the Sunday School picnic? Recently I went through such a shattering experience. Suddenly (I was just standing there minding my own business) I found myself in the middle of a debate between architects and engineers on the question: "Should the storm water from the roof of the new Deaconess Chapter House flow into Manhole No. 15 or Manhole No. 8 on our new campus?" The argument waxed warm and fierce. It was another Suez Canal crisis. I listened carefully, summoned all my seminary training, tried to remember all the Pastoral Conferences I had ever attended—and finally decided in favor of Manhole No. 15. Two days later I learned from an expert that Manhole No. 15 was already overloaded and that my decision had placed half of our new campus under two feet of water permanently. I retired in confusion.

A silly and unimportant story—except that behind it lies one of the tragedies of the modern ministry. I have referred to it with monotonous regularity during the past ten years, but my meetings with brethren at the Synodical Convention last June and elsewhere during the summer indicate that we still have a problem here. The calm and bland assumption that a preacher must be an expert on everything under the sun still haunts us. While it is still probably true that many a good brother knows more about many things than his laymen suspect, the assumption that he must know everything, do everything, decide everything, involves a very bad theology of the ministry and bad stewardship from every point of view—the pastor's and the pew's. Let a brave brother who has been plagued by such a misunderstanding of the holy ministry arise this fall in his voters' meeting and announce that the color of the basement wall, the paving of the sidewalk and the amount of money to be spent for the janitor's new mop are herewith and forever turned over to committees of the congregation. I am certain that he will find a new peace of mind which will enable him to turn with surprised joy to the real God-imposed tasks of his ministry, the work of a preacher and "Seelsorger."

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University notes: At this writing more than 2300 students have enrolled for the academic year 1956-57. Every facility we have, both academic and housing, is bulging, and we have now reached the end of our rope. Unless we can build additional housing by September, 1957, our enrollment must remain stationary for a while. Voice from a brother in the rear: "Why don't you do just that?" Answer: "It limits our service to the Church at a time when it is impossible to do this. More young men and women from our congregations want to go to college than ever before. Many of them should come to Valpo. To turn some of them down when they ought to be given a chance to choose is a hard, almost impossible, task. The congregation that supports us has the right to ask admission for its sons and daughters. The brother who has given us a lift over the years has a right to ask us to help him train some of his young people. Also, let us not forget that Synod is growing day by day. All our institutions must grow with it. Under the continuing blessing of the Lord of the Church nothing in Synod can possibly stand still. Both in education and missions our thinking must be fluid, progressive, dynamic. That basic need applies also to Valpo."

More academic notes: One of the perennially thrilling and exhilarating parts of life in an ivory tower is the annual return of the students to the campus. One early September night there is still the strange stillness of late summer, the deserted buildings and the lonely sound of the wind in the elms; the next night the campus is alive with hurrying figures, the sound of laughter and cheers, the warm lights in the buildings. It may be autumn on the calendar of the year, but it is spring in the academic grove. Once more several thousand parents entrust their most precious possessions to our care. What happens now in the next 250 days may make or mar a young man or woman for life. Small wonder, then, that with the exhilaration of September there also comes a solemn, burdening sense of responsibility. To take these malleable souls and mold them for God in the year 2000 A.D. is a high and awesome task. If, therefore, you have time to include the staff of the University in your prayers, both personal and congregational, we shall be most grateful. Certainly we need them.



Now to other matters: The past summer has been most interesting and profitable. Under the pad on my desk I find some random notes which were taken at various occasions during the past three months. The first are some sideline observations on the Synodical Convention in St. Paul in June. I attended about half as an observer. The question has naturally been asked: "How good a convention was it?" I believe that finally only time and history can tell. It is difficult to judge the attitude of several thousand people gathered in a convention hall. There was a great deal of unity, even unanimity, but not always as much as some of the votes indicated. Sometimes I feel that we have not yet learned to distinguish between organizational loyalty and spiritual unity. Both are good and important, but only the latter is finally Scriptural and decisive.

As I attended the convention, my mind went back to the first Synodical Convention which I attended in 1923 at Fort Wayne, Indiana. It is a curious fact that all synodical conventions are conducted, at least partly, in hot weather. Perhaps there is some strange wisdom behind this. The real qualities of men, both good and bad, appear most clearly when the temperature is 90 and the humidity is 85. The man who is patient, charitable, kind, slow to anger under such circumstances will probably also be patient, charitable, kind, slow to anger in December. The brother who is not, will probably crack-up when the heat is on anywhere and any time.

During the days of the convention I collected some statistics which are not found in the official report. For example, my classmates who were graduated from St. Louis in 1923 have gained a total of 2,133 pounds over the past thirty years. In informal meetings we agreed that these two tons of avoirdupois could be better used if they could be sliced off in the proper places and given to Lutheran World Relief . . . . 29 brethren patted my midriff when I met them and said graciously, "Well, well." . . . My classmates have also lost 42,387 hairs—though this is only an estimate. In many cases, I must report, this has improved their appearance. They are beginning to look like vice-presidential timber. . . 873 brethren brought their wives along, who in almost all cases look like the real reason for the success of their husbands. . . 147 laymen voted for their own pastor for vice-president. . . 311 brethren wore sport shirts without an undershirt. . . 59 brethren were kind enough to send their sympathy to my wife for no reason except that she is married. . . 117 brethren smoke pipes which should be used only in rural parishes where there is more fresh air. . . 7 brethren said that they read these notes regularly, and one of them was most encouraging: "It's as good as my kids' comic books." . . . 72 brethren attended the entire convention by standing in the outer hall. . . 487 brethren consumed at least one "coke" a day and three of them asked for beer. . . 2 of them were from another Synod. . .

Voice from the brother in the rear: "Is that all you got out of the Synod Convention?" Answer: "Of course not, but I ought to leave the greater things to better hands." Just a few notes: In the more than thirty years which have come and gone since 1923 I have noticed a gradual change in the center of interest at our triennial gatherings. In 1923 much of the Synodical Convention was centered in education and building programs. The great voices of Pieper, Pfothenauer, Dallman, Lankenau, Miller of Fort Wayne and others were raised in warm debate over the new seminary. Changes in our educational system were thoroughly considered. Ever since 1938, however, at every convention, the center of interest has been our relationship to the rest of Christendom, particularly the other sections of Lutheranism throughout the world.

Whenever Committee Three on Doctrinal and Intersynodical Matters announces an open hearing things begin to look like a White Sox game when the Yankees are in town. President Behnken—a wise moderator if there ever was one—knows that he can bring the brethren (and everybody else) rushing back to the convention hall after a recess merely by announcing: "Committee Three will report."

What does all this mean? I am certain that all of us can agree that such profound interest in doctrinal matters is a great and healthy sign. Of course, a skeptical brother said: I am just going in because I think there is going to be a fight—and I love a fight." I am sure, however, that that is only a very small and insignificant part of it. The truth is that we are still vitally interested in doctrine. We are concerned about our relations with fellow Christians and we seriously want to do the good thing and chart a Scriptural course. We have a great and bewildering responsibility, and we know it.

May I make a few more sideline observations which are probably of very little importance?

*First Observation:* It appears that very often these discussions create more heat than light. There seem to be emotional overtones and undertones which I am unable to understand. Another observation is that at least some of the discussions in the committees are quite irrelevant. Some of us have a tendency to quote out of context, to blow up a personal experience into a general truth and to praise or condemn much too easily and quickly.



*Second Observation: The basic problem, of course, as President Behnken said so clearly, is the matter of our testimony to others. Is this most effective, for example, within the framework of the Lutheran World Federation or out of it? There was no disagreement among us over the fact that we must testify to the truth as it has been delivered to the saints.*

*Third Observation: Some of the discussions revolve around attitudes rather than doctrine itself. This can become very dangerous. And so we will continue to debate, I am sure, for many years to come, probably until the end of time. I view the prospect with a certain joy. It is clear that this is a part of the tension in which the Church Militant by its very nature and task must live and move as it approaches the final consummation. The entire business will become bad and tragic only if the day comes when the good brother who honestly believes that we can best serve our Lord by joining the Lutheran World Federation is branded as a dangerous liberal and the brother who honestly believes that we can best serve our Lord by remaining alone is marked as a black, dangerous reactionary. From that, good Lord, deliver us!*

One more Synodical observation: I am always filled with profound admiration for the efficiency with which the affairs of Synod are conducted. The committees present well organized reports and thoroughly considered plans for the future. Everything is laid out, and we say "yea" and sometimes "Amen." Certainly we will agree that all this is fine, even necessary. Did anyone else, however, miss just a little of the magnificent, flaming heavenly confusion of Pentecost?

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**More echoes of summer:** An anniversary which will not be celebrated in the Lutheran Church is the 400th anniversary of the death of Ignatius Loyola who died on July 31, 1556. I am, however, interested in one fact which was emphasized in the tributes which appeared to the founder of the Society of Jesus in various publications during the last few months. It has been pointed out repeatedly that the educational work of the Society of Jesus began in 1547 with the opening of the College of Messina in Sicily. Within eight years 33 colleges were approved by Ignatius and opened before his death. The first Jesuit College in the world, St. Ildefonse, was established in Mexico City in 1573, sixty-three years before the founding of Harvard. At the present time the Jesuits in the United States are conducting 41 high schools with a student body of over 25,000; and 28 colleges or universities with 97,183 students. This is 44% of the national total for Catholic colleges and universities. They also conduct 13 schools of law and five of the six Catholic medical schools in the country. Throughout the world the Society of Jesus directs 211 educational institutions including 341 seminaries. The largest is the Gregorian University in Rome with an international enrollment of 2,552. Certainly these facts should be of interest to anyone who is concerned about the growing power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Western World. The Jesuits have always been the spearhead of the work of the Roman Catholic Church in the intellectual world. I hope to return to this subject sometime in the future.

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Will some of the brethren join me in a jaundiced look at something I like to call "Informational Prayers"? They usually appear at the beginning and end of meetings and feature, instead of the usual God-pleasing thanksgiving and petition of all good prayers, a complete run-down on world, synodical and congregational matters recited for the information of the Almighty who must have been busy elsewhere in the universe while these events were developing.

The danger signal is always the opening phrase, "Lord, we are gathered here. . . ." A crude example? "Lord, we are gathered here to consider the building of a new church. Thou knowest that many new people have moved into the neighborhood. Our Sunday School is crowded; our Ladies' Aid has no place to meet; our young people need room for basketball and ping-pong. Thou knowest also that there are some among us who are fearful of the expense involved. They want to redecorate the old church—which will leave us right where we were. Help them, O Lord, to see the light of this need and pound some sense into their dull heads. Amen."

You never heard anything like that? No, not as crude perhaps, but the essence of the informational prayer is much too much with us. It violates the basic concept of prayer—that it is something addressed to God and not to the people who happen to be sitting or standing around. A good prayer is not an announcement, a sermon, an address or a homily. It is, as it always has been since Adam fell on his knees in the Garden at sunset—a petition, a thanksgiving, a confession, a plea for mercy and help. Let us now look again at the psalter-like beauty of our great Collects, and we shall not go wrong. Well do I remember the good brother, thirty years ago, who was asked to conduct the opening devotion at one of our summer camps. He prayed and prayed. He told the Lord everything that had happened in the Missouri Synod since the last synodical convention; he repeated the headlines of the past month. When he was all through, the conference patriarch, grown gray and wise in forty years of the ministry, said to him gently: "Don't you think, Brother X, that the Lord reads **The Lutheran Witness?**"



Quotes from here and there: "The church is always the encounter of eternity and the moment."

"I am who I am. God says that. This unique use of the present tense abolishes tense itself and sharply rebukes the attempt to imprison God in time or in granite cells however lovely the prison windows."

"Some men are so conservative that had they been around at the time of Creation they would have voted for chaos."

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Are you by any chance on the mailing list of some of the "Schund-Literatur" which circulates around the country, usually from an anonymous source? These fly-by-night publications are a curious and frightening fusion of fundamentalism and black hatred and lying. Sometime ago the lady who runs the house received copies of a sheet called "Women's Voice." Just look at this brief quote. It is from a scurrilous article on President Eisenhower. After polishing him off the statement concludes: "Even the widely known anecdotes about Mamie's heavy drinking sprees are suppressed. The nearest the public ever came to learning about them was in an article in a news weekly some years ago.

"They were trying to be delicate, but knowing that it could not completely avoid the issue if it must command the respect of insiders, the weekly talked about Eisenhower's spectacular war record.

"Then it turned to Mamie. Throughout the war, it said, she 'sat tight' in her hotel room."

Can anybody top that?

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And so into another year. It is quite probable that very shortly you will hear from Pastor Edmund Weber who has joined the University staff in order to present our program and needs to our brethren in the ministry. We also hope that under his guidance our services to the ministry in the field of publications, seminars and institutes will be stepped up. Only a few days ago, for example, a brother wrote that we should conduct annual workshops for parish secretaries. Apparently he has one that needs some improvement. There are many other areas in which the University could be more helpful to our ministry. If you have any ideas, a letter will be read gratefully and thoughtfully.

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Final note on books: One of the most rewarding experiences of the past summer has been a perusal of **A Diary of Readings: An anthology** compiled by John Baillie of Scotland. It contains brief paragraphs for every day in the year. While it is not readily adaptable to daily devotional reading, many of the paragraphs contain seed thoughts which I am certain you will be able to use in various ways. The authors represented range all the way from St. Augustine to Whitehead and Simone Weil. The book looks like a good investment.

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Please accept my warmest good wishes for abundant divine benediction as you prepare for the Advent and Christmas season.

Sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann, President