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My dear Brother:

If our printer is not vacationing in Florida and the devoted slaves in the office have not succumbed to the flu, these comments should reach you sometime around Holy Week. Once more the twentieth century preacher is face to face with the greatest seven days in all history — the hours from Palm Sunday to the Festival of the Resurrection. We, more than anyone else in the world, know that these are the seven days that shook the world. The entire history of humanity was changed, and in one short week the redemption of mankind was finally accomplished. The destruction of the pagan world began, and the foundations were laid for the structure of the Church. Once more we are face to face with the seemingly overwhelming task of preaching a love that would and could not let go, strong in its humility, infinite in its wisdom, willing to suffer all evil for the sake of all good — a love greater than life and death and as eternal as God.

I can add little to the thoughts with which you approach these decisive moments in your God-given task. As a backdrop for your meditations, however, it may be of value to examine the exact sequence of events during those seven days. Most scholars seem to agree on the following calendar. **Sunday**: The triumphal entry into the Holy City, the garments in the dust, the “Hosannas” which were to turn into “Crucify” by Friday. Behind the doctrinal and theological meaning of Palm Sunday there is, of course, the moral lesson that it is never good to trust a crowd. The mob is usually wrong, especially about God. — **Monday**: A series of sermons and parables about the withered fig tree and the great statement about Caesar’s coin. At this point a line was fixed forever between the Church and the world. Caesar and Jesus will never be friends. — **Tuesday**: The terrifying speeches to the Pharisees and Sadducees — the repeated “Woe unto you” — the sermon on the sureness of justice and the coming of the Judgment. It may be well for us to remember again that nothing in the world’s literature compares with the white, cold anger of the Son of God over those who use Him for their own purposes, who cover up hate and envy and ambition and pride with the trappings of religion. — **Thursday and Friday**: You will be preaching on these events again this year — the last journey into Jerusalem — the Last Supper — the last Sermon — the last Prayer — the trial at night — the Cross — Death at three o’clock on a spring afternoon.

For a long time I have been interested in the fact that apparently Wednesday is omitted. There seems to be silence in the Gospels about the events of Wednesday. It is the last hush before the final act of the drama begins. Very probably our Lord was alone somewhere getting ready for Thursday and Friday. It is a strange, divine thing that we know nothing of that Wednesday even though it was the very heart of that mad, crowded Holy Week. Thursday and Friday belong to time and to eternity, but Wednesday seems to belong to heaven alone. It is really a silent Wednesday. He was gathering up His robes for the last triumphant march to death and to victory.

Silent Wednesday. As His children and servants, do we not need such silent Wednesdays in our own lives? Modern life is so crowded that there seems to be little time for prayer, for adoration, for getting ready for the contemplation of the Cross. Together with our people we are often lonely because we are never alone. Perhaps we can use silent Wednesday to remember again that there is a benediction in occasional solitude, where prayer is the only sound, and God is the only light. We know that He speaks most clearly to the heart that is silent before Him, and there must be times when we must be alone with Him. That can be done, of course, almost anywhere, even in a crowded church or wherever we may be. It is a spiritual exercise, a lifting of the soul to the eternal, the turning of the heart toward home.

This would be my wish for my brethren in the ministry as Holy Week of the year of our Lord, 1957, comes over the horizon. We shall all be the better for it in these dark and anxious days. We shall be able to face the uncertainty of the immediate future, the deadening weight of routine, the inward hurt of our problems and difficulties, with faith and courage. Everything and anything that keeps us from all that we might be can be placed in His hand on a silent Wednesday. He will take care of them, as He did many years ago, on Thursday and Friday.

University news: As these lines are written, the first reports on our annual congregational collection are reaching the campus. We are tremendously encouraged and pleased by the united and loyal response of our pastors and congregations to our appeal for additional funds in order to recover from the losses incurred by our auditorium fire. Apparently President Behnken’s letter to the brethren stirred the hearts of many, and our congregational collections seem to be running considerably higher than they ever have before.

At the present moment the University is beginning to prepare for the centennial in 1959. We hope to observe this important milestone in our history with a series of divine services, convocations and cultur-
all events during the calendar year 1959. It will enable us to look closely at our work and to assess its possibilities for the future. I feel that there are still many things for a Lutheran university to do, especially in the crowded and challenging years that lie immediately before us. As our plans develop, we shall keep our brethren informed because we hope that many of you will be able to attend some of the events which will mark the commemoration of our Centennial.

Over the years many brethren have written concerning the possibility of graduate work in various fields here at the University. We have been discussing the problem at regular intervals for more than a decade. Things are now beginning to crystallize somewhat, and we have a faculty committee working hard on the self survey which is always the first step in the introduction of work beyond the A.B. level. I am happy to say that Professor Alfred H. Meyer, the head of our Department of Geography and Geology, has consented to serve as our first director of Graduate Studies. It will be his task to evaluate our present work and to make recommendations to the Administration and the Board of Trustees for future development on the graduate level. His long experience at the school and his outstanding scholarship equip him uniquely for this important task. It is evident, of course, that such a development must be worked out very cautiously and soundly. Whatever graduate work is finally offered must be academically sound and practically relevant to the needs of the Church. If you have any ideas along these lines, I hope you will not hesitate to write.

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Unsung-heroes section: It is probably inevitable that our ecclesiastical journals must feature the comings and goings of big-wheels, executives, newsworthy personages, big doings, mass meetings, conventions, rallies, etc., etc., etc. In my rare thoughtful moments I have, however, felt that a little column in all church papers should be devoted to the "unsung heroes" of the Kingdom, the parish pastor who does not even become "Visitor," who never makes headlines but who quietly builds souls into the walls of Zion without asking anything (or getting anything) but the supreme accolade at the glorious end: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Perhaps an item similar to this: "Last Sunday Pastor Theopholus preached at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. In the nine o’clock service the Schmidt twins had a fight in the rear pew during the sermon. At 10:00 a.m. the Pastor conducted Bible Class, and Deacon Schluckebier asked his usual dumb questions. In the eleven o’clock service the pastor baptized two adults from whom he had been ‘working on’ for more than a year. Immediately after dinner (which was partially burned because Mrs. Theopholus was held up at the church door by Mrs. Schwastzer) he went to see Grandpa Helliger and read him parts of the morning sermon. At 4:00 p.m. he umpired a softball game for the Junior Walther League. At 7:00 p.m. he attended a meeting of the Building Committee. It left him with a throbbing headache. At 9:30 p.m. he was called to the bedside of Deacon Sauerepiol who had acquired a violent stomachache from dinner on chicken livers and beer. At 11:00 p.m. Pastor Theopholus read the Lutheran Witness, and at 11:30 p.m. he fell into a troubled sleep." Not very newsworthy to be sure but vastly important in the eyes of Him who sees all these things, little but great, with a warm understanding and all-seeing love.

Still with the unsung-heroes: In The Christian Century Simeon Stylites, far and away the best religious columnist in the country today, writes that he feels that a special medal (A Vacuum Cleaner with Crossed Palms) should be bestowed on all church janitors. Of course, there are janitors and janitors. I still remember with awe the one at St. Paul’s in New York many years ago who disliked all preacher’s kids and chased us out of the church basement with monotonous regularity. As I look back on it now, I realize that our baseball games on rainy days were not good for the Sunday School furniture. He was, therefore, probably right. However, my most vivid memory of him revolves around his stately approach to the chance for the purpose of lighting the communion candles. His shoes clicked, and his baggy trousers heralded his coming. Seated in the front row were kids watched, fascinated by the dramatic possibilities in the action. He reached for the match and applied it to the proper place on his pants. Would it light the first time? Would his pants catch fire? Would he need a second match? If he did, what would he do with the first one? Would he fall on his face as he came around the pulpit? The experience was not very spiritual, but it was full of high drama and adventure. We never really decided if we were for him or against him, but we were always tempted to hope for some new and startling development.

Simeon, however, feels that most janitors should be recognized for the heroes they really are — and now with the mellowness of more than 50 years I am inclined to agree. His proposed examination for janitorial applicants is worth quoting.

"1. Will you enjoy 100 keen-eyed demon housekeepers inspecting your work every week?
2. Can you stand dealing with 150 customers who will die from suffocation unless the windows are open, and 149 others who will die of pneumonia on the spot if a window is opened one inch? Can you make firm friends of all parties?
3. Do you love children in spite of mud on the carpet, broken windows and noise?
4. Can you fix the furnace in five minutes when it breaks down on a zero Sunday morning?

If the answer to these questions is 'Yes', you have a definite vocation for the post."

* * *

Time-for-thought-Section: Several months ago a brother stopped in the office — always a welcome excuse to push the correspondence and routine aside for some good talk. In the course of our conversation he said: "Say, have you read the Augsburg Confession lately?" When I answered that I had been exclusively occupied with reports, sewers, contracts and money, he said: "You really should. There is some awfully good stuff in it." While I was meditating on his advice a few hours later, I found on the
desk a letter from Hanns Lilje, the famous bishop of Hannover, to The Christian Century. His definition of the value of the confessions is interesting. After defining their positive importance he goes on:

"Alongside this the Lutheran confessions of course have a polemical function. They make clear that nothing has a place in the church that is in opposition to Christ's being honored. They oppose all false and inadequate safeguards of the church: for the Lutheran Church the idea, for example of a successio apostolica, in the sense of a historical safeguard for the church, is heresy. Yet on the other hand the confessions have a constructive significance. For in insisting that the witness to Christ be the most important mark of the church they at the same time assure their being bound to everyone who confesses the name of Christ. Therefore, the confession has a special ecumenical function in the Lutheran Church. In asserting that Christ is all-important, the Lutheran Church is in principle open to every ecumenical contact.

It need only be added that no large church whatever exists that does not have a real confessional position. Ecumenical contacts with the Orthodox Church or the Anglican Church which do not take into account the confessional position are unthinkable. There is no ecumenical fellowship where there is disregard of the confessions; there is such fellowship only where the respective confessional positions are taken as a starting point. One must know what one believes in order to be able to discuss the faith with someone else. The fruitfulness of an ecumenical discussion stands in direct relation to the thoroughness with which one's own theological presuppositions have been thought through. Ecumenical movement without theology is blind."

Paragraph-that-brings-trouble: Occasionally over the years I have paid my disrespectful respects to those academic disciplines and learned professions that substitute jargon and gobbledy-gook for sound learning and clear speech. High on the list has always been the profession of social work. Now let it be said at once that this is a tremendously significant profession in a world of great need and great trouble, that many of its practitioners are intelligent, devoted people, and that they are doing much good — real and lasting good. All this, however, does not eliminate the fact that some of its members are still frantically pursuing "professional status" and, in the process, are building an esoteric jargon which is the laughter and despair of all observers. An article in Harper's magazine for March, 1957, by Marion K. Sanders presents the problem clearly and sharply. After she has emphasized the fact that the profession is basically good, she brings into its obvious weakness — "chasing its tail" by scrambling desperately for "status". She believes that social workers should stop "talking" and start "doing" what they are often uniquely equipped to do. Her paragraphs on social work gobbledy-gook are refreshing.

"A serviceable glossary for this purpose would disclose, for example, that a social worker never tells you anything. She 'shares information' with you. Helping you find a job is 'environmental manipulation.' Instead of publicity, selling an idea requires 'interpretation.' The social worker is not employed in a school, hospital, or welfare organization but 'functions' in a medical, educational, or agency 'setting.' She does not care whether you like her but hopes you will 'relate' to her.

The patois is catching. Recently, for instance, a Salvation Army brigadier overheard two lassies, only one Christmas removed from the trombone, glibly dissecting the 'libidinous urges' of their wayward charges. Elsewhere a lady volunteer was startled by a twelve-year-old boy she was taxying from an institution to a reunion with his family.

"I've now had two years of congregate living;" said the youth. "I've worked out my sibling rivalries, so I'm going home."

Grapevine Section: Some of my brethren blessed with a long memory will have noticed that these comments return ever and again to the same subjects. That may be due either to approaching senility (the more probable alternative) or to the intrinsic importance of the topic. Whatever the reason may be, the "Missouri Synod Grapevine" still holds a horrible, pathological fascination for me. I can't get away from it. Although I am in principle opposed to most "Special Sundays", I would be ready to begin a little humble campaign for a "Sins-of-the-Tongue Sunday." Texts for a sermon on such an occasion are really abundant. God seems to know better than we how the tongue can hurt and maim and cripple and kill men and churches.

I was reminded of this sometime ago when a brother in Wisconsin sent me a grapevine item which hit a new low. While he was talking to a member about the University, he was told: "They don't get a cent from me. Don't you know, reverend, that Valpo is owned by five laymen in the church? They are gettin' rich on this deal while the rest of us are taking up collections. The students pay high fees to pad the pockets of the five men who have taken over the school." Of course, this one crossed the line between tragedy and comedy, and the members of our Board (who have probably sacrificed more for the University than any other group) laughed uproariously when I read it to them and suggested that we appoint an investigating committee to unearth the guilty five. I must confess, however, that I have become morbidly interested in the man now walking around in a little Wisconsin town with a mind like that. He is under my skin. What is he saying about his pastor? About Synod? About his neighbors? I would like to meet him and ask him to become president of my "Didja Hear" Club. He already has a sizeable membership. Before me — in writing — lie some contributions from potential members — all forwarded by brethren around the country: "The BFC Drive was only for a few pastors to get together to drink and divide it up." Item: "The University is now supported by the Federal Government as a home
for delinquent children of preachers." Item: "Valpo has Catholic priests say mass on the campus." Item: "Valpo spent $120,000 for a few acres of land." (Our entire new campus, more than 130 acres, cost exactly $74,000.)

Enough for this time. How about a "Sins-of-the-Tongue" Sunday? And save a front seat for me.

Footnote to homiletics: Recently I read a discussion somewhere concerning the matter of empathy to which I referred about a year ago. Do you have to experience sickness and pain in your own body in order to minister to the sick? The writer, as I remember, said, "Yes. Then and only then can you minister with real humanity, with real empathy. Only then is real communication and exchange possible." Certainly this is partly true — so true that one of the pastor’s daily morning prayers must be "Lord, give me understanding." Several years ago I heard a vicar preach on the problem of sorrow and pain. It was all letter-perfect, theologically sound — and completely insipid. One could tell that the young man was completely outside the problem he was discussing. He was repeating something he had read and had accepted intellectually, but his heart was not in it. He had not been down in the valley. He was peering into it from a sunlit hill and the cold of the shadows had not yet touched him. One day, of course, they will, and he will preach another and better sermon for those who have been there with him — and have found God waiting for them there.

... In the Saturday Review Bennet Cerf presents a quatrain which is reminiscent of some of the strange exegesis one sees and hears in homiletical efforts:

"The rain, it raineth on the just
And also on the unjust fell a
But mostly on the just because
The unjust steals the just’s umbrella."

Note: ... We are still wrestling with our enrollment problem at the University. At the present time we must keep our enrollment for next year at approximately the same figure that we have had this year. We simply have no more housing. What this does to our admissions office can readily be imagined. Last night, for example, I had a frantic telephone call from South Dakota making a special appeal for a young lady whose application had been rejected. Permit me to say again that if any of you have a student who should come to Valparaiso that you would write at the earliest possible moment. We want to be sure that we stay away from an exclusively intellectual emphasis for the candidates who are asking for admission to the freshman class.

Coda ... And so to Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. These are the fifty days in which it will be your task to preach the conquering Christ, the Christus Victor, the triumphant Redeemer who stayed here another forty days to pick up some loose ends and to prepare His disciples for the conquest of the world. In His glorified body He walked the earth, no longer subject to the laws of space and time. This is something absolutely unique in history. In this role, you might tell your people. He deserves the reverent attention of anyone who wants to know the full meaning of the Christian faith and life.

Have I ever mentioned the famous line from Swinburne in which he devastatingly describes a religious teacher: "For their tender minds he served up half a Christ." Tender minds! Swinburne did not refer to the true understandable tenderness of childhood and early youth. He was referring to the other kind of tender mind which is far more prevalent in the modern world than we like to think. It is the mind that likes to think of Christ our Lord as a good man with some advanced social ideas, slightly ineffectual, but still an attractive figure. It is the tender mind which likes to play with low and ugly things because they are easier to handle than the hard, great things of God. It is the tender mind which tries to get away from the ultimate realities by denying their existence. For these minds Easter and Ascension and Pentecost come with the message of a complete Christ — triumphant, victorious, bearing the keys of hell and of death, Christ the Judge, Christ the last power in life and in history — Christus Victor.

Perhaps this is what is really wrong with some of the people who will throng your church on Good Friday and Easter and will not be seen again until Christmas. Perhaps this is the trouble with churches who try to confine the complete Christ to sets of rules and definitions and laws. Perhaps this is the fatal error of preachers who talk theology without knowing anything about faith. Perhaps this is the sad problem of all of us who forget that the complete Christ makes demands upon our souls, our minds and our lives which are staggering. They are demands which must be met by at least a few of us if the world is to live and if we are to find peace and our lost happiness.

Perhaps this is the final message of Easter and Ascension Day and Pentecost — an appeal to give our tiny, fearful feverish selves to the triumphant, complete and victorious Christ — to practice our immortality here and now — to live with Him, His name, His kingdom and His will. To work for Him who will forgive us and deliver us! To bring all our work to Him to whom belongs the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever and ever — the totus Christus — this is our continuing task.

Sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann, President