April 1955

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Dear Brother:

This is written about two weeks after Easter. I have just listened to a report over the telephone concerning the progress of the "Building for Christ" effort. You will probably have more up-to-date figures when you read this. As of now: $3,000,000.00 from approximately two thousand congregations and 600,000 communicants. Judgment of observers at 210 North Broadway: With some thorough follow-up work the entire sum of $5,000,000.00 will be gathered before the leaves turn brown on our elms.

It is difficult for me to find words which would be an adequate reflection of the depth of our gratitude. For our Lutheran University this news means new strength, new responsibilities and new opportunities. The dollars will work here as they have seldom worked anywhere else, and the cold cash will almost immediately be transformed into the living warmth of students and faculty who will have a greater life and task because of the generosity of our fellow Christians. And so our gratitude is very real. A special salute to the brother who serves a small parish in Kansas and came up with an average of $26 per communicant — to the brother who has a large congregation in Michigan and despite heavy local obligations gathered more than $30,000.00 — to the brother in Iowa who had an excellent collection and picked up four fine pigs in addition. It must be axiomatic in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by now that the success of Synod-wide collections depends upon the attitude and leadership of our pastors. When they decide that a certain thing is to be done, it is usually, under God's grace, done. A "Te Deum" therefore for the brethren who remembered us so generously.

Even now at this early date the effects of the "Building for Christ" effort are evident in other areas. At this writing we have received the applications of more than 800 freshmen, a hundred fifty more than at this same time last year. I am sure that a brother will now reach for his pen or typewriter and ask: "Where are you going to put all these people?" That has been the subject for discussion at many long meetings during the past month. We believe that we can solve our housing situation, at least for September, 1955. Every other day I wander out to the woods behind the gymnasium where our new dormitory is rising with almost incredible speed. While BFC dollars are not in the brick and mortar of this building (it is self-liquidating on the basis of funds made available to us by our friends plus a loan from an insurance company), I am sure that the evidence of financial stability and nation-wide support offered by the BFC helped us to establish the credit which assured us of the necessary funds.

And that's enough about money for this time. Are you ever uneasy about the number of hours and days and years we who have come to the Kingdom at such a time as this are devoting to our financial problems? Of course, some of this time is necessary. An embattled church must have the material sinews of war. Our missionaries must eat, and our churches must be warm on winter days. There are jittery moments, however, when I wonder about the entire business. Have we learned too much from the world — "sound business principles" (whatever they may be), "efficient methods" (I suspect the Church at Philippi was happy and good, but not too "efficient"), "organizational know-how" when our great need is more knowing of God in Christ and His venturesome and fearless will for us? Perhaps all of us should include this matter in our meditations and prayers. Then the money will come too.

Now to other matters . . . . These random notes are intended solely for the brethren in the holy ministry. Occasionally, however, they seem to fall into unexpected hands. A recent copy came to the attention of one of our graduates, a first-rate, thoughtful social worker, the daughter of one of our pastors. She reached for her typewriter and demonstrated to my joy that what we are trying to do at Valpo often works out exceedingly well. We are producing a type of graduate of which our Lutheran University and the Church can be very proud. Many of them are loyal, thoughtful and deeply Christian. A few paragraphs from her epistle:

"You will be glad to know, I am sure, that social work is becoming more and more aware of the value and impact of religion. Of course, the field as a whole still thinks of religion as a little room which we add on to a house rather than a foundation on which we build, but
we are making progress. Recently the White House Conference went on record that each child should have some religion in his life and from time to time the whole subject is discussed at conferences. Last month I read a report from some eastern agency which had spent several years on a project of placing older and somewhat disturbed children in adoption. They then decided to do some research to discover what kind of parents made the best adoptive parents for this group of children and with some surprise learned that in those cases where placements had been successful, the foster parents involved had a strong, integrated religious philosophy. When those of us from church agencies attend mixed meetings where this matter is discussed, we tend to sit back smugly because we still don’t know how to do much else, but I think someday we will learn how to be leaders in this area and make a real contribution to the casework field.

"I find this progress especially gratifying because I have been able to watch the pendulum swing within the eight years of my own professional experience. When I first attended the University of Chicago back in 1949, I know the faculty looked at me with some misgivings because of my religious affiliations. As a matter of fact, my first-year supervisor wrote in my evaluation that ‘despite Miss ——— rigid religious background, she shows no conflict in the casework area.’ At that time I didn’t have enough experience to object to very much except the term ‘rigid’. In 1953, just before I graduated, my second supervisor wrote in my evaluation: ‘Despite Miss ——— close tie to her church, she still is a tolerant and accepting caseworker.’ By that time I was sufficiently sure of myself to treat my supervisor to a long lecture on religion and to point out that the sentence should read ‘because of’ and not ‘despite’!"

Back to Easter for a moment. An unusual combination of circumstances finds me in church on Easter morning 40 minutes before starting time. The older small-fry had to sing in the choir, and I was in the company of Stephen (age 2) who also sings, but in his own key and time, and must, therefore, be relegated to a back seat. Quietly we sat down where the ushers usually dwell and watched our own private Easter parade. Soon the crowd came (we had 702 people in a church that comfortably seats 400), and Stephen and I watched the new hats with warm and rapt attention. This, I thought, is one of the reflections of a huge daw on a garden more than 1900 years ago when a woman without a new hat recognized a voice and said the first and last and final words to our risen Lord: “Rabboni.” A few years ago, I suddenly realized, I would have become somewhat sad and bitter over the vast distance, both in time and circumstance, between the garden and my church this Easter morning. But not this time . . . . Was it the mellowing years or a spiritual myopia which led me to feel that the new hats and all the Easter finery were in a strange and profound manner Mrs. Schmidt’s and Mrs. Schultz’s way of paying homage in the tradition of the women of Jerusalem to their risen and reigning Lord? In any event, I was more than ever before to accept the curious way in which Christendom comes again to the crossroads of the ages, the moment which broke the backbone of history, the Cross and the empty tomb of Him Who sees a sparrow fall and looks in understanding and mercy upon a woman who anoints His feet or wears a new hat in His honor.

A special question to my brethren in the parish ministry: When do ushers worship? I watched them this Easter morning placing more chairs, opening windows, distributing hymnals, counting heads, taking up the offering and doing all the things that ushers are expected to do. I must say that ours were better than some I have seen. They stayed inside the church for the sermon. How many times have I ascended the steps of a pulpit, looked out over the congregation and discovered to my dismay that the ushers were in the process of ducking out the back door for business! I know, of course, that a brother will write that the entire problem is a personal one between me and the ushers and not at all general or universal. Perhaps. I have just been wondering.

Within the past sixty days I happened to be in New York at a time when the newspapers announced that the population of greater New York (not counting the suburban bedrooms) had now reached the amazing figure of 8,050,000. As I read the news story, I thought of all our preachers who are carving out human souls from this monolithic mass. This is where the Church of the twentieth century is doing some real work. Bringing the Gospel to a human soul is always hard but it is probably nowhere more difficult than within an hour’s run of Times Square, State and Madison in Chicago, Market Street in San Francisco, Canal Street in New Orleans, Euclid Avenue in Cleveland, and Cadillac Square in Detroit. Here the prince of this world is so obviously in command and his minions so rich and so powerful that the message of the Cross is really a voice from a far country, a still small echo in the forgetful roar. At least it appears so on the surface, and the work of our preachers must, therefore, be in the great, eternal tradition of the sower who sows his seed and cannot always wait for the harvest.

One noon I wandered into one of the Episcopal churches where wealth shouts from the pillars, the arches and the vaulting nave. To my great pleasure the sermon was very good. Through the years I have learned to expect almost anything from the Anglicans. I have met some who are good
Lutherans, some who are really Roman Catholics, and some who are Unitarians. They still persist in doing curious things. At this particular noon day devotion they sang "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" The strange rhythm of the music, born of the loneliness of the negro in the Lenten shadows of the Southern Pines, was too much for the Episcopalian dowagers and brokers. My students would say, "They really loused it up." It was like a pastoral conference suddenly trying to do the mambo. Even the organist was completely out of his element.

Which reminds me . . . . I have been watching the debate concerning Lutheran liturgy, hymnody and worship in the columns of "The Lutheran Layman" with interest and concern. By the way, "The Lutheran Layman" today is a major journalistic achievement in Protestantism. The editor, Elmer Kraemer, has an astonishing nose for the interesting and the important. He does not always believe in letting sleeping dogs lie — and that may be a healthy thing, too, in our time and generation. At any rate, when I read the letters about worship, liturgy and hymns, I began to feel like the Irishman who was quietly watching a street fight and finally said to the protagonists: "Is this a private fight or can anybody get in?" My contribution to the discussion is very minor. I merely want to protest mildly against the curious assumption so often found in Protestantism (not among the brethren who are writing intelligently in "The Lutheran Layman") that the Church must get down to the level of the people. The important and dismaying word is the word "down." "Get down" to their level in preaching, in doctrine, in singing, in liturgy, in bake sales, in bingo or what have you. I have my great doubt about the philosophy behind this cry. How far "down" can you go and still remain Lutheran? I remember our Lord — the profound parables and the great beatitudes, the sermons and the searching conversations — and how the common people "heard Him gladly." Then there was a man, St. Paul by name, who did very well with all manner of people (except at Athens) and still made no concessions to the mass mind and the faceless mob. His "all things to all men" has too often been used to justify shoddiness and cheapness rather than the magnificent humility and selflessness which the words really imply.

CAMPUS NOTES: Two very important appointments to our teaching staff have been made during the past month. You will be happy to hear that Mahela W. Hays, Ph. D., will become consulting psychologist attached to our University Health Service beginning September 1. Dr. Hays is a daughter of one of our Lutheran pastors and has a very remarkable training and record in counseling and guidance. She will be able to assist very materially in the solution of some of the emotional and spiritual problems of our students . . . .

I am also happy to report that Mr. Knute D. Stalland of Minneapolis will be the new Dean of the School of Law beginning September 1. Mr. Stalland comes to the campus after a distinguished career in the legal profession and as Assistant Attorney General of the State of Minnesota. He is a very sound and thoughtful Lutheran and will be able to make our School of Law increasingly distinctive, both ethically and intellectually . . . .

We have recently announced a special cooperative program with the University of Michigan in conservation, fisheries, forestry, wildlife management and wood technology. It is our hope that this program will appeal particularly to many prospective students west of the Mississippi River. We have had a large number of inquiries concerning this type of work during the past few years. Under this cooperative program the student will attend Valparaiso University for three years, transfer to Michigan, receive a degree from Valpo at the end of the end of the fourth year and additional degrees from Michigan at the end of the fifth and possibly sixth year. It looks like a fine arrangement . . . .

The new Student Union will be dedicated on the Saturday before commencement, May 28. We hope that many of our friends will be able to be present. Perhaps it should be noted again that the Union building stands as a monument to the devotion of our students to their Alma Mater. They have taxed themselves and the following generations in order to produce the income which enabled us to negotiate a loan on the building. By the way, it should be noted that a Student Union is not a luxury. It is an essential and significant part of a sound educational program, especially in a school like ours. There are 168 hours in a week. Less than one-third of these hours are spent in the classroom and in study — and even that may be an administrator's wishful estimate. At any rate, there are many hours which are devoted to recreation, conversation, music and all the other things which college students enjoy and which eventually assist in the maturation process. For that reason a Student Union in which these activities can be concentrated is a very important factor in the educational process, particularly in a small community such as ours. We are very happy that the Student Union will be ready for the fall of the year since it will undoubtedly add much to the happiness and comfort of our students.

. . . .

This will probably reach you sometime during the "Great Fifty Days" between Easter and Pentecost. Once more there seems to be a waiting hush over the Church, broken only by the lonely, powerful Voice on the shores of the lake, behind locked doors in Jerusalem, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives.
— preparing the minds and hearts of His followers for their work in the last aeon. Good Friday — Easter — Ascension — Pentecost — these are the four great golden threads in the pattern of our salvation. His sacrifice was offered on Good Friday and accepted on Easter morning; now He will rise into heaven so that the Paraclete might come down from heaven. There is a profound and necessary correlation between the depths of His redemptive humility and the heights of His redemptive glory. Both are necessary for our great salvation. And so there are still many things for us, His servants so late in time, to say to men in these fifty days. Unhappily for us, these days come in the liturgical year when some of us are spiritually exhausted. Shortly before Palm Sunday a brother stopped in the office for a few moments and said, "I fear nothing quite so much as the annual post-Easter let down." I am sure that many of us know exactly what he means. We are now coming to the end of the festal half of the Church year. There will be the long series of warm Sundays after Trinity when many of our people will be on vacation or at the beaches or anywhere else but in the House of God. On these days we must be sure to keep our vision clear and our eyes fixed on the ultimate glory of our task. Undoubtedly all our pastors have many fine experiences in their ministry. They see living demonstrations of the power of God and His Holy Word. Sometimes I imagine, however, all of us are overwhelmed by the magnitude of our tasks. There is so much to be done and so little time left to do it. We preach and teach year after year, and our people seem to be about the same. There are the same quarrels and bickerings and sins, small and great. We face them particularly at this season of the year when spiritual energies may be at low ebb and we begin to lose the deep inner peace which must always be the mark of the true servant of the living Christ. We cry with Elijah, "It is enough, Lord; now let me die."

At times like these we must remember that we shall always deal, by the very nature of our commission, with saints and with sinners. They are, however, not divided into groups. Each one is divided within himself. We are always dealing with two natures in the individual human being. That is why we must still preach the Law and the Gospel. Much of the peace and the power of our ministry will rest on the answer to the question, "Do we see the good over the bad, or the bad over the good? Do we see the saint or the sinner?" Here our Lord's example is great and illuminating. He always saw the present sinner and the possible saint. Luther's "simul justus ac Peccator" is not only a great theological principle, it is also a very practical dynamic for the holy ministry. With that approach we shall always be ready to try again, never to give up a human soul, to love them as our Lord loved them, and to do our work in the peace which commends the results finally to God and to the hand of His power and mercy.

According to the arrangement of the liturgical year the Church is now moving from Easter to Pentecost. In history, however, it is living from Pentecost to the great second Easter when we, too, shall join our Lord in His resurrection. We need not speculate as to the time of its coming. Since the first Easter we are always in the blessed company of Him Whose throne is now large in the heavens and small in our hearts.

Cordially yours,

O. P. Kratzmann