January 1952

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Recommended Citation
Kretzmann, O.P., "January 1952" (1952). Campus Commentary. 32.
https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus_commentary/32

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Dear Brother:

For several months these random, occasional jottings have not appeared. I must confess that I have not been overwhelmed by a tremendous popular demand for their regular appearance. On the other hand, there is occasionally the overpowering urge to talk to a few of the brethren, especially at this blessed season in our ministerial life. I hope you will not consider these few lines an intrusive and unwelcome visitor.

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Trying to visualize the spirit and attitude of our clergy in these days is somewhat difficult. I imagine that the world situation lies heavy upon your soul. Any faithful pastor must feel the dragging weight of tragedy as life proceeds these days. Korea drags on, and your boys are leaving the congregation quite regularly. In the field of morals you are seeing the inevitable backwash of the years of hate and war, the loosening of the foundations of the structure of our civilization, our morality fuzzy and frowzy at the edges.

Only a few months ago I read TIME's description of the younger generation. In chapel the next morning I told our student body that if TIME's evaluation is true we are in worse shape than many of us had suspected. TIME reported that by and large the younger generation worships only security and has no sure faith in anything. It is muddling along with a peculiar mixture of fatalism and small hope. Of course, I must confess that my own experience with the generation now in their twenties indicates that TIME's report was built too much around the large cities, especially east of the Alleghenies. A young woman trying to make her way in the world bounded by Broadway, 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue is hardly typical of what is going on in the minds of young people throughout our great land, and particularly also in our own church. On the other hand, one must admit that there was sufficient truth in TIME's report to warrant some careful examination of much of our educational work both within the parish and beyond its borders. I am wondering just how your young people's work is getting along these days. Some of our reports are very disquieting, and I know that many of our brethren are deeply disturbed over our apparent inability to create a program which will appeal to the generation that is climbing the slopes immediately behind us. If you should have anything to report on this particular question which I can convey to others who are in charge of this work, I shall be happy to hear from you.

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Talking about world conditions I am reminded that you may be interested in a little book which I read a few days ago. It is Stringfellow Barr's pamphlet "LET'S JOIN THE HUMAN RACE." It sells for only 25 cents, and I am sure that it is easily available for most of us. Mr. Barr's thesis is that we are now compelled to think in global and planetary terms because of the ultimate realities of the world situation as it confronts us. Like almost all books on the subject these days the statement of the problem is excellent. The solution however is not clear. By the way, that generalization can be extended quite far. We have arrived at a point in our world in which many leading men and women recognize the nature of the problem before us. They do not, however, wish to take the last step and point to the fact that the solution lies only in faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Until they take that second step, many of the things which are written these troubled days will be thoroughly unsatisfactory.

I think you will be interested in the following section from Mr. Barr's little pamphlet. It will also serve as good background material for a sermon on a Mission Festival Sunday.

"I believe there is a trick by which we Americans can understand these two billion men, women, and children scattered all over the globe. Will the reader play "Let's pretend" with me, the way children do? Let's pretend that you have not yet been born but will be born this year, somewhere on the planet, somewhere in this mighty neighborhood. And let's try to estimate your chances of living a happy, healthy, decent, and useful life.

"If you are born colored, you will probably be born either among people who used to govern them or else in a country that is still trying to throw the white folks out. If you are born in Africa, you are likely to learn the maxim: 'Never trust a white man.'

"If you are born colored, you will probably be born either among people who have recently revolted and thrown out the white folks or else in a country that is still trying to throw the white folks out. If you are born in Africa, you are likely to learn the maxim: 'Never trust a white man.'

"If you are born colored, you will probably be born either among people who have recently revolted and thrown out the white folks or else in a country that is still trying to throw the white folks out. If you are born in Africa, you are likely to learn the maxim: 'Never trust a white man.'

"You have only about one chance in four of being born a Christian. It is far more likely that you will be born a Confucian or a Buddhist, a Mohammedan or a Taoist.

There you have it. The task of the Church is clear and breathlessly tremendous. Once more we are a clear minority, face to face, closer each year, with a pagan majority. The Church has seen nothing like this for nineteen hundred years.
From the general to the particular. Here on the campus where we are trying to prepare a few men and women for the kind of a world in which we and they must live, our greatest problem just now lies in the area of student enrollment. For some strange and unaccountable reason some of our brethren in the ministry have not taken the time to send us the lists which we need to establish contact with prospective students. I am sure that you will readily see the fundamental importance of this first step. Without the names of high school seniors and juniors we have no way of reaching them directly with some of the materials which we believe they ought to have when they are deciding on the place for their college career. I would therefore be most deeply grateful if more of our brethren would send in these names. This gives us a chance to return in terms of service some of the prayers and gifts which make our continued life and work possible.

Still at the University. Undoubtedly you have seen the countless words and columns in the daily press referring to the athletic situation in the nation’s colleges and universities. I believe that we should not blink the fact that things have been pretty bad and that they have become steadily worse during the past five years. Fortunately here at Valpo our athletic policy has been under the solid and steady control of a faculty committee for some time. In addition, the loyal support of our pastors and teachers has often enabled us to put fairly good teams in the field without breaking either the letter or the spirit of a good, sound athletic policy. If the rules which are now being presented by various committees and accrediting associations go into effect, there will be comparatively little change in our general approach to the entire athletic situation. By the way, if you have not seen the lead article in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY for November by a former guard on a big name team, it will be worth your while to read that. Our information is that this article has aroused a great deal of attention and that it is a fair presentation of the spirit with which intercollegiate athletics are conducted at a great many big name athletic establishments.

Away from the campus for a moment. By now just about everyone in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod must be conscious of the Ten Million Dollar Collection coming over the hill. I still feel very optimistic about its eventual results. I believe that the great Missouri Synod will again demonstrate its loyalty and its devotion to the work of the Kingdom.

Having said that I must also append a little footnote that some of us are concerned about the effect of the Ten Million Dollar Collection on various activities within the Church, also our own here at Valpo. It would be tragic indeed if the concentration of our efforts on one thing in the Kingdom would lead to the handicapping of activities which go on year after year. I am not thinking, of course, of Valpo alone but of all those things which our congregations and their individual members do as a matter of course as the Kingdom moves on. I sincerely hope that none of them will suffer during the years 1952 and 1953. If they do, we shall have lost almost as much as we may have gained by the Ten Million Dollar Collection.

Into an entirely different area. An assignment for some class work a few months ago compelled me to examine several Roman Catholic texts in Christian ethics. I was especially interested in one which is based on the scholastic method. These textbooks are usually very clear and can be of very real value, even to those of us who disagree with some fundamental assumptions. It interested me that at one place considerable attention was given to something which is called “invincible ignorance.” This type of ignorance, the writer said, ordinary and proper diligence cannot dispel. I am certain that here and there a good brother will be impressed by the fact that this type of ignorance is so widespread that it finds its way into a textbook on ethics. I am sure that all of us in the ordinary ways of our ministry have occasionally met it and have not realized that it is by its very nature, both intellectual and ethically, completely invincible. Let that be an encouragement to us.

If and when you read these few lines, you will be moving, officially and spiritually, into the blessed season of Lent. There can be no doubt that this is the greatest time of year for a Christian preacher. His church is more crowded than at other seasons. People seem to turn to the Cross with a nostalgia and longing which our troubled years cannot destroy. When all is said and done, the heart of the Christian gospel, particularly our own Lutheran message, is the love of God for us. This appears most clearly and magnificently in the hours between Maundy Thursday evening and Good Friday afternoon. To be permitted to tell this story in the world of nineteen hundred and fifty-two is still life’s greatest privilege and highest joy. For its speaking and living I commend you to the benediction of the Lord of the Cross.

Sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann
President