

4-6-1964

Valparaiso University Memorial Chapel Chapter Organization Sermon: Psalm 96:9, 1964

O.P. Kretzmann
Valparaiso University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.valpo.edu/kretzmann_collection



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, O.P., "Valparaiso University Memorial Chapel Chapter Organization Sermon: Psalm 96:9, 1964" (1964). *O.P. Kretzmann Collection*. 115.
https://scholar.valpo.edu/kretzmann_collection/115

This Collection Record is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives & Special Collections at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in O.P. Kretzmann Collection by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

SERMON

Preached on the occasion of the organization of the
Valparaiso University Memorial Chapel Chapter
on the Sunday after Easter in the year of our Lord, 1964
by the President of the University

Psalm 96:9 -- "O Worship the Lord in the beauty of
holiness, Fear before Him all the earth."

I have come to this pulpit this morning under somewhat unusual circumstances and with some extraordinary obligations. In the strict sense of the word this is really not a sermon. It carries some announcements, some history, some plans and some dreams for the future. A general theme for it might be: "We, the University, and the Chapel."

Over the past five years this building in which we are worshiping has already become world famous. Thousands of men and women have visited here. Thousands more have worshiped here. Within a comparatively short time it has become the symbol of Valparaiso University and of its approach to the post-modern world.

Several years have come and gone since we dedicated this building. Perhaps it is timely to ask again: "What was really behind it? What was in the minds and hearts of those who built it and those who paid for it?" The answer is quite simple. It was to be the spiritual and cultural center of a university dedicated to the centrality of God. It was to be a bold, soaring affirmation that Christ is the Truth and that a university ultimately lives by its Christological sanctions. This building was to represent the high and eternal dominion of Jesus Christ over history, knowledge and life.

Now, of course, every one knew that the attainment of these high purposes--so bitterly strange to the post-modern world and to some of our students--would require years and decades of hard, thoughtfully consecrated labor. Great incessant prayer would be necessary as well as a far and holy vision. We had come to this place from a wilderness, both in the academic world and in the spiritual realm. The long road home, we knew, would be hard and lonely--but the task was begun.

Even physically, we knew it would take a long time to complete this building. The basic structure was here, but only as a challenge over the years to God's people to make it ever more beautiful--in music and vestments, in mosaics and murals, in organ and other instruments. As in the medieval cathedrals this would be an on-going process.

Today we are happy to announce some additions to the physical features of our chapel. There is, in the first place, the great Christus Rex which will be installed behind the altar during the summer. Plans are now ready for

Sermon - April 6, 1964

the office of the Dean. There will be a collegiate chapter room in the undercroft beneath the narthex. Above all, I am very happy to announce that the two additional stained-glass chancel windows will be installed by early fall. These windows, as the great central window, are a gift from Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Munderloh of Detroit, Michigan. They will be known as the Munderloh Memorial Windows.

So year-by-year, decade-by-decade this building becomes a little greater, a little more beautiful, a little more worthy of the God who comes here to dwell with us.

Far more important, of course, than all physical improvements are the men and women who will work and serve within these walls. To this problem many of us have given hours of study and have attempted to do some pioneer thinking. This is really not a congregation in the accepted parochial sense of the word. It is not really only a university chapel. It is something radically new and different, at least for the twentieth century.

We have, therefore, now proceeded to the appointment of the first full-time Dean of the Chapel. He will be Dr. William A. Buege, D.D., of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Dr. Buege is already well-known in the church as an outstandingly thoughtful preacher and an understanding friend of youth. He will be installed on the Parents Spring Weekend on Sunday, May 10.

May I plead with all members of the University that each and everyone of us stand by our new dean in his significant and unique work? I ask your prayers for him and I hope that all of us will work with him in making our chapel all that it can be.

Of course, Dr. Buege knows, as the rest of us do, that this is not a task for one man. Just the very size of our numbers here--more than 4000 souls--presents many problems. In addition, this chapel is in use seven days a week. Daily speakers must be procured. Sunday preachers must be engaged. There is the entire problem of the arrangement of the services and the weekly Eucharist. Above all, there is also the problem of effective counseling for our students and others who may come through these doors.

We are, therefore, now ready to announce a formalization of the general structure under which the chapel has operated in the immediate past. Under the Dean and responsible to him will be a collegiate chapter of clergy and laity drawn from the campus. This collegiate chapter will be the heart of our entire approach. It will consist of the following:

The Dean of the Chapel and
Preacher to the University
The President of the University as
Chancellor of the Chapter

A Canon Precentor

who will be master of all ceremonies in the chapel

A Canon in charge of vespers and minor offices of the church

A Sacristan who will be in charge of all physical arrangements
(additional furniture, furnishings, vestments and so forth)

Two Canons in charge of daily matins

A Canon Theologian whose task it will be to study our distinctive
theology of worship, of institution and of the liturgical year

Two Canon Musicians

A Canon drawn from the faculty

A Canon from the men's residence halls

A Canon from the women's residence halls

A Canon representing the staff members of the University
(administrators, secretaries and members of the
Department of Maintenance)

A secretary of the Chapel

As I have noted, most of these are already in action in one way or another. We are today merely formalizing the structure. It is also to be noted that we are bringing back into the life of the church a number of terms and offices which have a long and honorable history, both ecclesiastically and academically. I should also like to note the fact that this approach to our problems is definitely and sharply modern. It is the multiple ministry which we have been discussing in the church for many years--a congregation of the faithful served by different men with differing talents--but all altogether for the purpose of praise and glory to God. Culturally and spiritually, unitedly and devotedly, they will bring Jesus Christ to the numberless generations who will worship here in the years that lie before us.

This is it--the structure of brick and stone and glass, of Word and Sacrament, of bread and wine and water, of men and women serving God in this sanctuary.

And now we come finally to the heart of the matter. Why all this? Is there a plan and purpose behind it? What are we really trying to do? All this is old--and it is new--is it also good?

The complete, simple and mysterious answer lies in the words of our text: "O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." This is the final and ultimate mission of the university--to center here a community of worship and intellectual endeavor, a forum in which the adoration of God sustains true unity and God-pleasing tensions. This will be the center of the dialogue between God and man governed by the mystery and miracle of the Incarnation. Here there will be a venture into total adoration! Here will be a mighty synthesis of the true greatness of the university--and what we truly hope and believe will be a unique contribution to the Christian Church and the world in the areas of intellectual and spiritual concern with God. This will always be a place, we pray God, where paradise and wilderness meet.

Sermon -- April 5, 1964

All this will bring us, under God--the children of the diaspora and the dust--this strange forgotten thing: "The beauty of holiness."

A curious, surprising phrase, especially to us in the twentieth century! We speak of beauty of line, of structure, of ornament as in this chapel. But what is this beauty of holiness? What is its ultimate meaning? Permit me to say it simply and clearly again: Holiness is beautiful with an incredible, unearthly beauty. Those who love God share in His beauty. It is only the life of holiness that is beautiful in itself and brings beauty into the life of others. It carries beauty into life because it brings God into it.

This we shall try to make possible in this chapel. Into this building will come men and women marred and scarred by the sickness of sin. Their shoulders will be bowed and their faces will be torn by sorrow--but here, if they will worship, if they will pray, they will, please God, again find beauty--a beauty which age cannot destroy and time cannot take away, the ageless, timeless, unending beauty of holiness, the beauty of surrender, of love, of the mercy of God Himself touching them with the sunlight of heaven. This will be their long home, a lovely and holy house for uncounted souls. This will be a bit of eternity, a touch of God, a glimpse of their real being with God and in God.

It is with this prayer and hope that we set out upon our task--that in these surroundings of beauty men and women will worship God in the beauty of holiness. We pray that God will dwell here in majesty and honor. We hope that all that is dark and ugly and sin will fade and disappear before the eternal light shining within these walls--God being here--brought here and enshrined here in our surrendered hearts.

Many years ago I brought an ancient prayer to some of our students. It can be repeated now for all who will come to this place in the years that lie before us:

Lo at Thine altar, Lord most high,
I claim the ancient right
To lay my battered armor by
And trust Thy sacred might.

The foes who follow on the track
My feet in fear have trod
Hold from the silent threshold back
Give peace to me, O God.

Within the shelter of these walls
The tumult fades away,
The wonder of Thy presence falls
About our hearts who pray.

Sermon -- April 5, 1964

Faint in the distance dies the din
Of armies iron-shod
From doubt and fear and pain of sin
Give peace to me, O God.

This shall now be our purpose in the beckoning years. Once more we shall attempt to place the sign of royalty upon all who come here. We shall place the King's hand in theirs and His peace in their hearts. We shall ask the Holy Spirit to gather them into His holy Church, the contemporary of all civilizations, and make them of the order and essence of eternity. Here we shall say to the world:

The tumult and the shouting dies
The captains and the kings depart
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice
A humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts be with us yet
Lest we forget, lest we forget.