

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

WE TEACH that conversion consists in this, that a man, having learned from the Law of God that he is a lost and condemned sinner, *is brought to faith in the Gospel*, which offers him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46, 47; Acts 26:18.

...WE REJECT every kind of *synergism*, that is, the doctrine that conversion is wrought not by the grace and power of God alone, but in part also by the co-operation of man himself, by man's right conduct, his right attitude, his right self-determination, his lesser guilt or less evil conduct as compared with others, his refraining from willful resistance, or anything else whereby man's conversion and salvation is taken out of the gracious hands of God and made to depend on what man does or leaves undone.

Of Conversion (paragraphs 10 & 12)
THE BRIEF STATEMENT OF 1932



JULY 2007, VOL. 50 NO. 1

Citizens of Heaven in Exile

Consider Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

These young men had been captured by a foreign king, torn from their families and homeland, and forced to live and serve in a strange land. They give a marvelous example of faithfully serving the king under adverse conditions while they remained faithful to God through all. You probably know them better by their Chaldean names given to them in Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; their companion was Daniel.

In a sense, we too are exiles. “For our citizenship is in heaven...” the apostle Paul says, yet we are forced to live in the various nations of the Earth for a time. While we are here, we are to serve the country and government where we live. At the same time, we are to serve God above all. As the

apostle Peter summarizes, we are to “Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17).

This can pose some challenges and difficulties at times.

From our four brothers in the book of Daniel, let us learn how to live as citizens of heaven in exile.

Honor the King

How can we honor a king, prime minister, or president who is not honorable? Can we honor a ruler who opposes God and rules in ungodly ways?...YES! Look at our four exiles from Judah.

They were captured by the wicked and cruel king Nebuchadnezzar. He worshiped the heathen god Marduk and ruled with an iron hand. These four young men who were taken from their homes were now chosen to serve this

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evil king. They were enrolled in the royal school of the wise men. What should they do?

They honored their new king and served him faithfully. They did not resist or rebel. They applied themselves diligently to their studies and graduated at the top of their class.

When Nebuchadnezzar interviewed them, he found them to be ten times better than all the other wise men. Therefore the king chose them to serve in his palace.

In the course of time, they distinguished themselves as faithful servants and were promoted to high positions in the government. Even though there were many things with which they could not agree, they did their work faithfully and gave honor to their king.

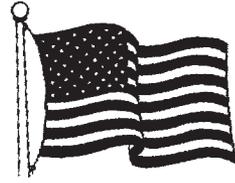
We like to think of North America as a Christian continent. While there is still a strong “christian” influence, things have been changing. More and more antichristian influences exist both in society and government.

In a democratic society, we have the right and responsibility to voice our opinion on things that are destructive to society because they oppose God’s Word and will. However, that does not give us the right to slander our leaders. We should honor them because of the position of authority God has given them. We honor them for the Lord’s sake.

Fear God above all

The four Jewish boys in exile honored the king, but they honored and feared God above all.

When the king gave them his wine and delicacies, which included unclean foods and perhaps food sacrificed to idols, Daniel determined not to defile



himself with them. They ate only vegetables, and God blessed them so that they were still as healthy as the rest. When the king demanded that they fall down to worship the image that he had made, they chose the fiery furnace rather than worshiping an idol.

Even in their disobedience to the king they were not disrespectful. They did not try to stage a revolt. They just quietly stood while others bowed down. When brought before the king, they did not speak disrespectfully, but they did make it clear that they would not worship anything or anyone but the true God of heaven. They would rather die than be unfaithful to their God.

And look at what God worked through them! He moved the wicked king to give glory to the God of heaven. In time, God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to glorify Him even more.

In our world which is more and more blatantly heathen, our exile is becoming more difficult also. If and when our country or society expects us to disobey God, we too can quietly continue to serve Him. May we not be intimidated into disobeying our God!

God’s people have often had to suffer for what is right. Yet by honoring and respecting our government and those around us, together with our quiet obedience to God even in the face of persecution, we can make a powerful testimony to our God and His Word. Who knows who may be moved to seek

God through such silent witness?

May we all learn from our brothers in Babylon, honoring and serving our country and government, while we

give glory to God above all.

—Pastor David Reim
Vernon, B.C., Canada



From the pastor's column of a local newspaper—

“YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN”

Do you remember your first car?

Mine was a well-used '63 Malibu station wagon which I bought for \$350. It was an ideal “starter” car for a high school student. It wasn't worth paying someone else to fix it, so I had to learn how to do that myself. I didn't have to worry about dings, scratches, or stains on the upholstery, because the car wasn't much of a gem to start with. But when it came time for the senior prom, it was a different story. For that special occasion, I borrowed a very fine Oldsmobile from my grandmother. You can be sure that I was very careful to keep it spotless!

Why? Two reasons: it was a very fine automobile, and it belonged to someone else.

The same thing holds true in a lot of areas, doesn't it? Everyone has old clothes for painting or yard work—but would you ever wear a rented tuxedo or formal gown for those kinds of chores? I hope not. We tend to take better care of the finer things we use, especially when they have been entrusted to us by someone else.

If this is true when it comes to the things we use in our daily lives, shouldn't it also be true when it comes to our own selves—our hearts and minds?

A person naturally tends to think of his own body and soul as his and his alone, but it is important for us to understand from God's Word that this is not so. We are told in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

There are two very important things for us to remember from this passage.

First, God valued us so highly that He was willing to pay an enormous price in order to make us His own. We would have been lost and condemned forever if left in our sins, but the Lord came to pay that price for us, in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus bled and died on Calvary's cross, He made the complete and final payment for my sin and guilt, and for yours.

By reason of this payment of His own suffering and death, Jesus now owns us and will, by His free gift, deliver us to a life of endless bliss and glory. We did not come cheaply!

Second, we now have an obligation to handle God's property—our own bodies, minds, and souls—with care.

Would you take a car full of kids to the drive-through for lunch, while driving your uncle's brand-new Lexus? Of course not! Would you indulge your

heart and mind with the violence and filth of this world, when that heart and mind now belong to Jesus?

I'm afraid it's all too easy to do just that in our modern world. It's all around us, on screen and in print, and the world thinks nothing of parading filth as entertainment.

The Scriptures do not call on us to be naïve, or snobbish, or to think of ourselves as superior to others. It does, however, remind us that, when it comes to our bodies and minds, we're

not driving a “junker.”

We ought to remember that, by reason of the high price Jesus was willing to pay, we do not belong to ourselves. Since He loved us that much, we ought to be careful to treat His property—our very selves—with the honor that our hearts have for Christ Himself.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right...think about such things” (Php. 4:8).

—Pastor Bruce Naumann
Sleepy Eye, Minn.



Important Lessons from the Psalmist David

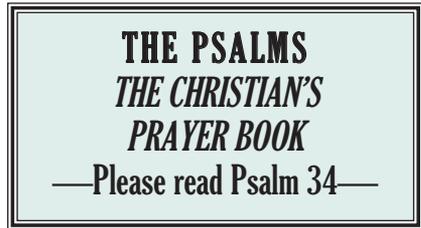
It has been said “experience is a good teacher”—provided, of course, it has a good lesson for us to learn, and we take it to heart in our lives.

The biblical record of the life experiences of the psalmist David provides us with a wealth of lessons, both from his spiritual missteps and his godly examples.

In Psalm 34 David invites us to learn from him how blessed it is to put our trust in the LORD in times of trouble, rather than relying upon our own impotent and flawed devices. He says, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (v. 11).

The subheading of our psalm indicates it was written as a result of what David had learned in one of the crises in his life. It states: “A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.”

The historical account of this sad event in David's life is found in First



Samuel 21:10-15. It was a dangerous period in David's youthful days when he was on the run for his life from King Saul who wanted him dead. At this point in his life, David foolishly thought he could find refuge among Saul's enemies. And so he fled into the land of the Philistines to the king of Gath whose name was Achish (Abimelech was the royal family name).

What David didn't count on was their recognizing him as a more deadly enemy than King Saul! Upon learning he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire, David pretended he was a madman, crazily scribbling on the doors of the city gate and letting spittle run

down his beard. Achish, not wanting a madman on his hands, was happy to see David leave his city.

How foolish and even disastrous it can be if one neglects to look in faith to the LORD as refuge and strength in time of trouble, relying instead upon the limited resources, plans, and ways of man. How needlessly we torment ourselves with fears, worries, and anxieties when we fail to trust in the LORD with all our heart but lean instead on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

May we never give way to the faulty thinking that God isn't aware of what is happening in our lives—of the problems and dangers we are subject to and how all these things affect us! Nor should we succumb to a questioning mind, imagining that God isn't always attentive to our pleas for help.

Counting On God

In the psalm David assures us, “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry” (v. 15). God never takes His all-seeing, all-knowing eyes off His children. And since He has commanded us to call upon Him in every trouble, promising to hear our every plea and to help us, we can always count on Him (see Ps. 50:15; 91:15; Mt. 7:7; 21:22).

As for those who think there are predicaments in life too difficult for God, the psalmist invites us to learn from his experiences when He did call upon the LORD and relied upon Him. So as to emphasize and drive home this point, David writes, “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (v. 4). “This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of

Your
WORD
is a
LAMP
to my
feet
and a
LIGHT
to my path.



all his troubles” (v. 6). “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles” (v. 17).

When David looked back upon the dangers he was facing from King Saul and then from the Philistines, and remembered how he vainly relied upon his own devices to get out of danger, we can hear him telling us (in effect): “Don't follow this terrible example. Rather, put your trust in the following protective way of God.”

“The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (v. 7). Through supernatural powers the LORD is faithful in guarding and protecting us from all harm and danger. A wonderful illustration of this is the case where the prophet Elisha and his servant were surrounded by a huge Syrian army in Dothan. When Elisha's servant saw this mighty army encircling them, he said to the prophet, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” Elisha responded by saying to his servant, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chari-

ots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kgs. 6:15-17).

May God give us eyes of faith to behold the angel of the LORD encamped around us to guard and keep us in God’s protective care!

When David tells us, “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (v. 8), he basically is calling on us to follow his good example of calling upon the LORD in time of trouble, confidently

putting our trust in Him. He assures us that when we do this, we will see for ourselves how good the LORD is; we will experience happiness in life instead of being filled with fear and worry.

May God grant us the grace to learn from the psalmist David’s experiences of life in the LORD!

—Pastor Mark Gullerud
Eau Claire, Wis.



Third in a series on the life of

Samson



Your transformation for good

We come to chapter three in the biography of that odd saint from our family tree, Samson, the teenage mutant Hebrew Rambo. We have anticipated some information about his being a Hebrew Rambo, and today we are about to see him as a teenage mutant.

When a force from outside produces a change on the inside, the cartoons usually show it creating a monsterish result; but—depending on the source of the force—a mutation can be good, as a caterpillar mutates to a pupa, and pupa to a butterfly. That metamorphosis transforms an ugly slug into a symbol of resurrected grace that will fly.

God gave such a blessing to Samson—a blessing that every Christian gets, on occasion—which makes all the difference between our being merely Christian and our having

a resurrected life of grace and power. See if you can figure it out as we track Samson through this transforming experience.

Now we read the Scripture you have been expecting (Judges 14:5-9):

“So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion.

He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.”

Did you see the mutation take place—and what it did for Samson? I think it was as big a surprise to Samson as it was a shock for the lion. On one of the hillside footpaths, going down to Timnah with his father and mother to make the wedding arrangements with the family of this valley girl Samson had stupidly chosen for a mate, they came to the dense, brushy vineyards of Timnah, where apparently Samson turned aside to enjoy somebody else’s grapes, while Mom and Dad went on ahead.

Far enough off the road so nobody would catch him pilfering grapes, he got a surprise: a juvenile lion was about to prove his beastliness to a two-legged quarry that couldn’t run as fast as a deer—and being a meat-eater, the lion attacked. We are spared most of the gory details of the combat, and I think Samson was almost as surprised as the lion when the Lord filled Samson’s heart with courage and pumped up his muscles with super power to wrestle with that lion until he had torn it limb from limb with his bare hands.

Every red-blooded American lad can picture himself on that hillside among the grapevines grappling with the tawny beast as he is filled with courage and strength to tear it apart in a burst of raw energy. (Talk about David Banning turning into the HULK!!)

Now, what good did it do Samson to know that he could whip double his

weight in wild lions? I think he puzzled over it. “How come I didn’t get killed or badly mauled? Dad and Mom told me I am chosen for God’s service, to begin to free my people from God’s enemies—but how does this lion-killing courage fit in, especially now that I am taking a wife from those enemies?”

He kept his puzzlement to himself, because he didn’t feel right to brag about it, and he was savoring the new thrill of being possessed by the Spirit of God.

And In Our Own Lives?

Here we wish to pause and direct our hearts to what God would have us learn about our own lives. To what vineyard have you turned aside since you have come here to our campus? Since your parents have gone on about the business of securing your future and planning how to help you in the big choices of life, have you found something more interesting to divert yourself with? What grapes are you interested in that belong to somebody else?

Whatever it may be, there a lion lies waiting—off the pathways of duty and hidden in the shadows of selfish diversion. Satan chooses a spot where the teenage Samson will get side-tracked by a lure as simple as “I want to see that” or “I want to sample some of that” or “I want to have that.”

Too bad we don’t see Satan as clearly as Samson saw the lion, for only the miraculous force of God’s Spirit can get us up and away and out of Satan’s jaws. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we may be able to stand and fight and rip the temptation to shreds—then go on our way again, rejoicing that God has given us a new

power to resist the urge to lie, or steal, or fornicate, or get drunk, or whatever a young Samson can find in the borderland of sinful indulgence.

We will have no cause to brag to Mom and Dad that we have avoided an allurements or conquered a temptation, because we know that only by the inner power of God’s Holy Spirit are we ever empowered to win against Satan. But we need to experience in spirit and soul what God did for Samson that day, and the oftener we have such a victory the better, that we may mature in our life with our Lord Jesus, and not only survive the stupid situations we get ourselves into but also learn to fight the good fight of faith.

May God graciously watch over our pathways, guard our footsteps, and

keep our ways safe—so we do not lead our souls into temptation but be delivered from the Evil One.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand!” (Eph. 6:10-13). Amen!

—Paul R. Koch

(first delivered as a chapel talk at ILC, Eau Claire, Wis.



Dedication service of the new worship facility at Messiah, Eau Claire, Wis. (story, p. 22ff).

Top: Messiah Lutheran School students praise the Lord.

Right: Pastors who have served the congregation: M. Gullerud, D. Lau, K. Olmanson, P. Tiefel, L. W. Schierenbeck (front)



Dear *Spokesman* readers:

When this series was begun, the editorial decision was made to print each of the *Brief Statement* articles in its entirety, even though this would mean a few of the articles would end up being considerably more lengthy—and even more theologically technical—than ordinary fare in the *Spokesman*.

This particular article—together with Pastor Nolting’s bracketed comments which show how timely the *Brief Statement* article is—is one of the longer ones. In spite of the uncommon length, our prayer is that our readers will both find and take time to digest, with the Spirit’s guidance, the solid spiritual meat here offered. It may be well to have your pastor lead in a Bible Class discussion of such an article as this.

The Spirit of God bless your reading and study!

—The Editor

Noting the 75th Anniversary of the “Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the MISSOURI SYNOD” (1932-2007)

**A Trumpet Which Gave—and Gives!—a Clear Sound
(See 1 Corinthians 14:8)**

Brief Statement **Of Conversion**

Introductory Thoughts:

Many of our readers, if not all of them, have been asked the questions: “Are you saved?” or “Have you accepted Christ?” Such questions reveal a misunderstanding both of the biblical teaching of salvation and that of conversion. The *Brief Statement* article “Of Conversion” reveals the biblical teaching on this subject and addresses the errors that have arisen against it. It does so clearly and demonstrates that a proper biblical understanding of conversion is not simply a matter of correct theory, but

absolutely essential for the comfort and certainty of repentant sinners.

Brief Statement text [with comment]

Of Conversion

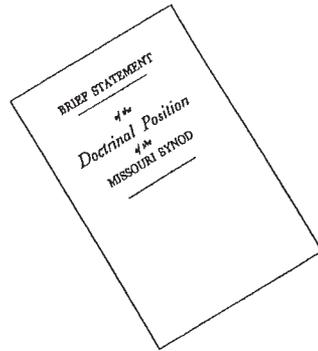
10. We teach that conversion consists in this, that a man, having learned from the Law of God that he is a lost and condemned sinner, is brought to faith in the Gospel, which offers him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, Acts 11:21; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 26:18. [The primary purpose of the law is not to save, but to reveal to man the full extent of his sin

(cf. Rom. 3:19-20), and consequently, his absolute need for God's grace and forgiveness. The primary purpose of the gospel is to offer man God's forgiveness, and it is thereby the tool used by the Holy Spirit to bring man to saving faith.]

11. All men, since the Fall, are dead in sins, Eph. 2:1-3, and inclined only to evil, Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Rom. 8:7.

[These truths are essential, if we are to understand the sad state in which man finds himself by nature, and if we are ultimately to understand the true meaning and splendor of God's grace.]

For this reason, and particularly because men regard the Gospel of Christ, crucified for the sins of the world, as foolishness, 1 Cor. 2:14, faith in the Gospel, or conversion to God, is neither wholly nor in the least part the work of man, but the work of God's grace and almighty power alone, Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; 1:19; —Jer. 31:18. *[At stake in this discussion is the glory of God. When man claims credit—either entirely or partially—for his conversion, he deprives God of His due glory! That is something we never want to do in view of the blessings that proceed from God's grace.]* Hence Scripture calls the faith of man, or his conversion, a raising from the dead, Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12, a being born of God, John 1:12,13, a new birth by the Gospel, 1 Pet. 1:23-25, a work of God like the creation of light at the creation of the world, 2 Cor. 4:6. *[Note the import of the pictures—from death to life, the process of giving birth, and the creation of light. A corpse cannot act but may be acted upon. A mother gives birth to a child—the child is acted upon. The creator acts to produce his*



creation, not the creation its creator. Even so, conversion is the action of God the Holy Spirit bringing forth spiritual life, giving birth to faith, enlightening a darkened soul with an understanding of God's love and forgiveness.]

12. On the basis of these clear statements of the Holy Scriptures we reject every kind of synergism, that is, the doctrine that conversion is wrought not by the grace and power of God alone, but in part also by the co-operation of man himself, by man's right conduct, his right attitude, his right self-determination, his lesser guilt or less evil conduct as compared with others, his refraining from willful resistance, or anything else whereby man's conversion and salvation is taken out of the gracious hands of God and made to depend on what man does or leaves undone. *[Many individuals and church bodies over the centuries have promoted these various types of synergism. In the 4th century Pelagius taught that man by his own powers, without the grace of God, could turn himself to God and believe. After Luther's death, Philip Melancthon maintained that man has the ability to apply himself to God's grace and so co-operate in his conversion. In opposition to John Calvin,*

Jacob Arminius taught that fallen man still has a free will that enables him to make a decision—either for Christ leading to conversion or against Him leading to damnation. The “decision theology” of modern evangelicals such as Billy Graham is based upon the teachings of Arminius. In his book, *How to be Born Again*, Graham writes: “Faith in Christ is...voluntary...it is your personal decision. God not only gave His Son on the cross where the plan of redemption was finished; He gave the law as expressed in the Ten Commandments...to show you your need of forgiveness, [and] gave the Holy Spirit to convict you of your need. He gives the Holy Spirit to draw you to the cross, but even after all of this, it is your decision whether to accept God’s free pardon or to continue in your lost condition.” Decision theology takes conversion, and ultimately salvation, out of the hands of God and, in the end, makes it dependent upon man. This destroys grace and deprives God the Holy Spirit of His rightful glory! For this refraining from willful resistance or from any kind of resistance is also solely a work of grace, which “changes unwilling into willing men,” Ezek. 36:26; Phil. 2:13. We reject also the doctrine that man is able to decide for conversion through “powers imparted by grace,” since this doctrine presupposes that *before conversion* man still possesses spiritual powers by which he can make the right use of such “powers imparted by grace.” [This position, known as *Semi-Pelagianism*, is taught by the Roman Catholic Church and views grace not as God’s undeserved love for sinners but rather a power infused by



Called by the Spirit

God into the heart of the sinner, which enables him to cooperate in his conversion.]

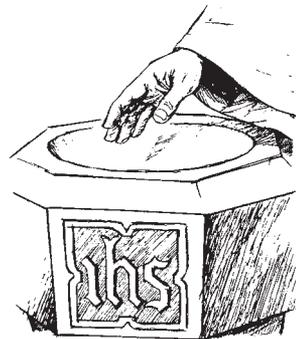
13. On the other hand, we reject also the Calvinistic perversion of the doctrine of conversion, that is, the doctrine that God does not desire to convert and save all hearers of the Word, but only a portion of them. [Calvinists maintain this error, unfortunately, in spite of clear biblical statements to the contrary: “God our Savior...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4).] **Many hearers of the Word indeed remain unconverted and are not saved, not because God does not earnestly desire their conversion and salvation, but solely because they stubbornly resist the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, as Scripture teaches, Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37; Acts 13:46.** [Think of Jesus’ earnest desire and impassioned plea to save the inhabitants of Jerusalem as referenced in the Matthew passage cited above: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,...How often I wanted to gather your children together...but you were not willing!”]

14. As to the question why not all men are converted and saved, seeing that God’s grace is universal and all men are equally and utterly corrupt, we confess that we cannot answer it. [There are times when we must properly confess our inability to comprehend

God's ways and thoughts (cf. Is. 55:8-9).] From Scripture we know only this: A man owes his conversion and salvation, not to any lesser guilt or better conduct on his part, but solely to the grace of God. But any man's non-conversion is due to himself alone: it is the result of his obstinate resistance against the converting operation of the Holy Ghost, Hos. 13:9. [*The credit for conversion must rightfully go to God (cf. Eph. 1:3-6), while the blame for damnation must rightfully remain with man!*]

15. Our refusal to go beyond what is revealed in these two Scriptural truths is not "masked Calvinism" ("Crypto-calvinism") but *precisely* the Scriptural teaching of the Lutheran Church as it is presented in detail in the *Formula of Concord* (Triglot, p. 1081; paragraphs 57-59, 60b, 62, 63; M., p. 716f.) [*This section of the Formula of Concord deals with the teaching of God's eternal election, rejecting any thought of the Calvinist teaching of double pre-destination and pointing out that the fault for rejecting the gospel lies not with God but rather with man.*]: "That one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.—in these and similar questions Paul fixes a certain limit to us how far we should go, namely, that in the one part we should recognize God's judgment. For they are well-deserved penalties of sins when God so punished a land or nation for despising His Word that the punishment extends also to their posterity, as is to be seen in the Jews. And thereby God in some lands and persons exhibits His severity to those

that are His in order to indicate what we all would have well deserved and would be worthy and worth, since we act wickedly in opposition to God's Word and often grieve the Holy Ghost sorely; in order that we may live in the fear of God and acknowledge and praise God's *goodness*, to the exclusion of, and contrary to, our merit in and with us, to whom He gives His Word and with whom He leaves it and whom He does not harden and reject....[*Consider, for instance, how God used the examples of Pharaoh, the Egyptian people and Egyptian charioteers, to illustrate His power in bringing to judgment those who rejected Him. The plagues upon Egypt and the destruction of the armies of Egypt at the Red Sea served as a warning both to Israel's enemies and also to Israel itself, and in turn to God's children of every age.*] And this His righteous, well-deserved judgment He displays in some countries, nations, and persons in order that, when we are placed alongside of them and compared with them (*quam simillimi illis deprehensi*, i.e., and found to be most similar to them), we may learn the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure, unmerited grace in the vessels of mercy....[*Lest His*



Old Testament people become proud and complacent, the LORD reminded them that He did not choose them to be His people because of their greatness, but rather in view of His love and His promises to their fore-fathers (cf. Deut. 7:7-8). In the same way, we today should not look within ourselves to find the answer as to why we believe, but rather we ought always look to the grace and mercy of God! **When we proceed thus far in this article, we remain on the right way, as it is written, Hos. 13:9: ‘O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help.’** However, as regards these things in this disputation which would soar too high and beyond these limits, we should with Paul place the finger upon our lips and remember and say, Rom. 9:20: ‘O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’” *The Formula of Concord* describes the mystery which confronts us here not as a mystery in man’s heart (a “psychological” mystery), but teaches that, when we try to understand why “one is hardened, blinded, given over to a reprobate mind, while another, who is indeed in the same guilt, is converted again,” we enter the domain of the unsearchable judgments of God and ways past finding out, which are not revealed to us in His Word, but which we shall know in eternal life, 1 Cor. 13:12. *[Isaiah reminds us that God delights in those who “tremble” at His word (cf. 66:2b). As God’s believing children, we want to recognize the limitations of our own understanding and simply submit to the revealed truth of Scripture.]*

16. Calvinists solve this mystery, which God has not revealed in His

Word, by denying the universality of grace; synergists, by denying that salvation is by grace alone. Both solutions are utterly vicious, since they contradict Scripture and since every poor sinner stands in need of, and must cling to, both the unrestricted universal grace and the unrestricted “by grace alone,” lest he despair and perish. *[The Brief Statement ends its treatment of conversion by pointing to the most important application of the proper scriptural teaching—the care and comfort of souls. The penitent sinner, who is left to question whether or not he has been included in God’s plan of salvation, can easily despair. The misguided sinner, who believes that he plays a role in his conversion, in reality denies God’s grace and may well perish. Neither situation should be taken lightly. Both situations can be avoided, if only we listen attentively to Scripture!]*

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting
Mankato, Minn.



Showing the new pipe organ at Messiah,
Eau Claire

INTRODUCING the Books of the Prophets

Malachi

“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (3:2) Those who will remain standing in the fire are certainly not the ones who have put their trust in their own character, their own riches, their own knowledge; rather, only those whom the Lord has refined in the fire will remain standing.

Malachi, a prophet and the author of the last Old Testament book, was a contemporary of Nehemiah and most likely penned his work between 432-425 B.C.

The name “Malachi” means “My Messenger.” He was the last known messenger to God’s people until John the Baptizer arrived on the scene over 400 years later.

As was the case with other messengers of God, Malachi felt the burden of the words he was to deliver. Much of his message was critical of the Israelite people, a warning against continuing in behaviors that displeased God.

Several problem areas addressed by Malachi were spoken of also in the book of Nehemiah: the corruption of temple workers, the intermarriage of God’s people with pagan wives, and the neglect of required tithes for the work of the church.

In Malachi’s day the Israelites seem to have grown weary of awaiting the promised Savior. They begrudged the fact that their outwardly ungodly neighbors seemed to be prospering, while they were not: “It is vain to serve

God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the LORD of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; yes, those who tempt God go free” (3:14-15).

In this day and age are we not tempted to offer the same complaints to our God? We may ask: “Why do the heathen nations prosper?” “Why does the Christian suffer?”

Words of Comfort

Our God presents a word of comfort for believers in Malachi’s day as well as in ours. “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the LORD of hosts” (4:2-3).

Malachi also prophesies about “the Messenger,” John the Baptizer, who would announce Christ’s coming: “Behold, I send My messenger and he will prepare the way before Me” (3:1).

Outline of MALACHI

- I. The Privilege of the Nation (1:1-5)
- II. The Pollution of the Nation (1:6-3:15)
- III. The Promises of the Nation (3:16-4:6)

(From *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*—1993)

In our day, is it not proper also for us to be the messengers of Christ, preparing those around us for Christ's second coming?

“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (3:2) Those who will remain standing in the fire are certainly not the ones who have put their trust in their own character, their own riches, their own knowledge; rather, only those whom the Lord has refined in the fire will remain standing.

These days of trials for believers on Earth are to make them stronger, truer, more tested, and more malleable to the

Lord's will. “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22b).

Thus, as the Old Testament closes, the people of God are awaiting their Savior's coming. So we, over 2000 years later, also await our Savior's coming.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Should Thy mercy send me
Sorrow, toil and woe,
Or should pain attend me
On my path below,
Grant that I may never
Fail Thy hand to see;
Grant that I may ever
Cast my care on Thee.

When my last hour cometh,
Fraught with strife and pain,
When my dust returneth
To the dust again,
On Thy truth relying
Thro' that mortal strife,
Jesus, take me, dying,
To eternal life. (TLH #516:3-4)

—Prof. Joseph Lau
Eau Claire, Wis.

With this study of Malachi we bring to conclusion our Spokesman series of articles which has given a broad-brush overview of the law/gospel content of the books of God's prophets in the Old Testament time period.

We thank the serial writers for their offerings; we pray that you, the reader, have had your spiritual appetite whetted to a renewed appreciation for, and study of, these divinely inspired books of Holy Scripture. —The Editor



CROSS PURPOSES



The Iniquities of the Fathers

(Second of two)

There is a subject to which we have previously made reference but which remains a matter of agitation and concern. We were reminded of it again

when we read in Numbers 14:33. “And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms (“bear the brunt of your infidelity”—NKJV), until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.”

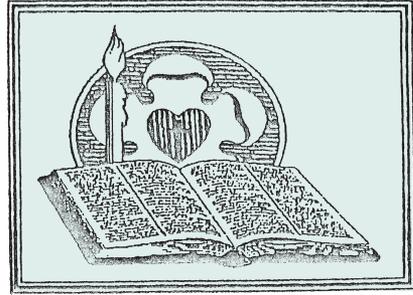
Last month we spoke of this passage in the context of parents who are unfaithful and indifferent toward the spiritual welfare of their children. But it surely has application to the Church through the ages, and especially in our generation.

Why our generation? Because a case can be made that the apostasy of which the Lord speaks through the apostle Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:3,4) is proceeding at an accelerated pace.

Even within formerly confessional Lutheran bodies error has progressed beyond gaining a foothold to becoming firmly entrenched. Even as this is happening there are those who do not care. To be charitable, we will grant the dubious notion that this lack of concern is born of ignorance. Some—and this is probably the majority—recognize the problem, but lacking commitment to the whole Word of God, they are willing to negotiate with errorists in order to save the “beloved church.”

At the same time, others are still trying to stem the tide. They are not willing to make accommodation or negotiate with errorists; nevertheless, they believe that if they protest loudly and long enough, they can still overcome. Consequently, within many heterodox denominations, movements or “churches within churches” have arisen in the name of defending the truth.

This makes mockery of the Scriptural doctrine of church fellowship. We recall again the 1932 LC-MS *Brief Statement* to which lip-service is



still rendered by some, though in practice it is forgotten or rejected by most. “*The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications*” (*Brief Statement*, 1932, para. 29).

When error is not just a slip of the tongue, but is recognized, defended, and promoted, faithful Christians are to leave even the “beloved church.” Such God-pleasing action is a service to the truth as well as for protection of one’s faith.

Once again, the *Brief Statement*: “*All Christians are required...to have church fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them, Rom. 16:17. We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God’s command, as causing divisions in the Church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9:10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21.*”

Hard Sayings

On one occasion when Jesus spoke a “hard saying,” we are told “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (Jn. 6:60,66).

When the Lord, in turn, challenged the twelve whether they would also leave, Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (v. 68). Put it together. If Christ has the words of eternal life—and error involves the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely—well, you draw the conclusion!

Some people, to their loss, left Jesus, because He told them the truth. Scripture tells us, to our good, to leave heterodox teaching and teachers because they don’t tell the truth.

This brings us to our point of agitation. If pastors, teachers (leaders of the church), as well as parents do not steadfastly confess Scripture and live in obedience to it, avoiding the acknowledged false teaching and teachers, they are endangering their own salvation as well as that of the children under their care in home and school and church.

They may well perpetuate the corpse of the “beloved church,” but of what benefit if truth has departed? What is the glory of the church we knew, if the glory of God has departed? What is the benefit of saving past memories, if doing so means sacrificing the future?

Are we—the older generation of pastors, teachers (leaders of the church), as well as the parents—ready to sacrifice the spiritual welfare of the children through pious inaction in the face of established heterodoxy?

The argument is frequently heard: “I know everything is not right, but as long as I can believe what I believe, or preach what I want to preach, I am not going to make waves.” This argument does not wash! It is, in fact, a selfish argument. What happens to the under-

standing and the faith of undiscerning children while discerning fathers and the shepherds are too weak, fearful, or compromising to bear the “burden” of confessional integrity? Why must the children suffer the consequence of the father’s infidelity?

“And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms (“bear the brunt of your infidelity”—NKJV), until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.”

That God in His grace fulfilled His promise and brought Israel into the Promised Land did not exonerate a generation of adults who left Egypt but did not enter into Canaan. That our Father in His grace in Christ will preserve a remnant unto Himself and give victory to the Holy Christian Church which is His body does not excuse false teaching, indifference to it, or lack of action where action is called for!

For this generation to deny the truth or refuse to take a decisive and uncompromising stand for the truth for whatever perceived good reason—or lousy excuse—is beyond comprehension. Why should those who come after us be put at risk through the infidelity of the fathers?

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Tex.*



**Learning crochet: Sarah Kruse, Mankato;
Kris Schreiber, Eau Claire; Traci Thurow,
Inver Grove Heights
(Women’s Retreat, p. 21)**

Studies in Second Thessalonians—

“...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

Chapter 2: 1-12

Solving the Mystery of the Antichrist

It has been said, “Everyone loves a mystery.” Many have been fascinated with fictional mystery stories because they present an intriguing, entertaining challenge to uncover and solve what lies hidden and unknown.

Besides fictional mystery stories, there are true-to-life mysteries which transcend the entertainment factor. And the most important mysteries in need of being uncovered are hidden, divine truths which have a direct bearing upon our spiritual and eternal welfare.

Prime examples of this are the wondrous truths of the gospel of Christ and the many precious teachings of the kingdom of God. These have been described as mysteries (cf. Mt. 13:11; Lk. 8:10; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 2:9). Of major consequence, that which lies hidden to the vast majority of people are the gracious, saving truths of our Savior God—namely, that on account of Jesus’ vicarious life and death and His victorious resurrection from the dead, God has declared the whole world forgiven of all their sins; at the same time He extends to sinful man the gift of eternal life in heaven (cf. Rom. 4:25). All this is purely a matter of God’s grace; it is received alone through faith in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph.

2:8,9; Rom. 3:22-24; 5:1).

Satan, of course, does not want anyone to discover the saving truths of this divine mystery. He will use all manner of lies and deceptions to keep them concealed. And he does not want any of us to solve the mystery of the true identity of the Antichrist, because the latter is one of Satan’s effective agents in keeping the pure gospel of Christ hidden to those within and outside the external church.

In the section of 2 Thessalonians before us, the Spirit of God supplies us with all the clues necessary to solve the mystery of the Antichrist. As is the case with any mystery solving, it is important to pay attention to all the clues in order to come up with the right solution.

A common misidentification made over the years is the notion of the Antichrist being a menacing political leader such as Adolph Hitler or Saddam Hussein—whereas the Bible clues reveal the Antichrist as a leading figure within the visible Christian Church (for example, he sits “in the temple of God” [2 Thess. 2:4]).

Another important, fascinating clue is the fact that the Antichrist is not limited to just one person in human history. The apostle gives the following

clues concerning the Antichrist: 1) He, “the mystery of lawlessness” was already at work in Paul’s day; 2) the Antichrist would be revealed during the New Testament era; 3) the Antichrist will continue until Christ’s return on the last day when he shall be destroyed “with the brightness of His coming.”

These clues—taken together with the other clues in 2 Thessalonians—help us to understand that the Antichrist encompasses many individuals who hold a leading religious office in the external church.

With the Spirit’s help, our Lutheran church fathers in the period of the Reformation could see that all the clues pointed to the pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Our church fathers included this interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions found in the *Book of Concord*. This confession was repeated in the *Brief Statement* of 1932 (the anniversary which the *Lutheran Spokesman* is noting with a series of articles).

Nullifying the Gospel!

Unfortunately, many do not understand the scriptural clues which expose the Antichrist; they fail to see how the teachings of Roman Catholicism are opposed to Jesus Christ and how those false teachings nullify the gospel of salvation. Consequently, they shake their heads in disbelief that the pope is the Antichrist, questioning how anyone could claim that such a religious, upright man could be spoken of as one who “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God...showing himself that he is God” (v. 4); or that the pope is “the man of sin,” “the son of perdition,” and “the lawless one” (vv. 8,9).



Over centuries, the popes have indeed played the role of a god, claiming for themselves the divine right of speaking for God by establishing new doctrines which are not found in the Bible. They have been consistent in insisting that no one can be saved without acknowledging the pope as the head of the Holy Christian Church.

As far as being opposed to Christ and His gospel, the popes have led the way in teaching that Jesus did not atone for all sin and the punishment that sin deserves; therefore they have set up a whole system of doctrines and religious rites which are supposed to take care of those remaining sins and divine penalties. Examples of this would be 1) the so-called repeated bloodless sacrificing of Jesus in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper to atone for more and more sins; 2) that man can make satisfaction for his sins by his own works or by acquiring the extra good works of departed saints through the saying of masses; 3) the elevation of Mary to the role of an intercessor in heaven and even a co-redeemer to help remedy human sin.

By upholding the false doctrine which teaches that man is saved through faith in Jesus *plus* human good works, the popes are guilty of grievous

“sin” and “lawlessness” which lead to the “perdition” of hell. Down through the centuries popes have upheld the decree in the Council of Trent which invokes condemnation to hell for anyone who believes a person is saved alone through faith in Jesus’ redemptive work without any cooperation on the part of man.

The teaching of the popes being the Antichrist is a meaty teaching which many have choked on and have not been able to spiritually swallow—much to the delight of Satan. However, through the Biblical clues the Spirit of God has revealed the Antichrist to us

so that we have not been deceived and do not lose the precious, saving truths of the gospel of Christ (who alone has redeemed us unto God, blessing us with eternal life).

May God the Holy Spirit help the many souls whom Jesus died to save discover the saving truths of the hidden mystery of the gospel of Christ! May He also help them and us to solve the mystery of the Antichrist, so that they and we are not deceived by Satan, but ever retain saving faith!

—Pastor Mark Gullerud
Eau Claire, Wis.



CHRISTIAN WOMEN’S RETREAT

What is the Christian Women’s Retreat? It is a retreat for Christian women sponsored by Immanuel Lutheran Church (Mankato, Minn.) and held each year over a weekend during the spring.

This year the retreat was held April 20-22 at the Days Inn Conference Center just off Interstate 90 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Over ninety women were in attendance for the three-day event, an increase of over twenty from 2006.

What is the Christian Women’s Retreat? It is an opportunity to study God’s Word and apply it in a variety of personal ways with special reference to the lives of women.

This year’s retreat focused on St. Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were



Attentive to a “small group” presentation

bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

The retreat began with a Friday evening hour-long discussion of what the apostle meant by saying: “You are not your own!”

Saturday morning provided an option—four presentations on “Honoring God Outside the Family” or four presentations on “Honoring God Within the Family.” Saturday afternoon featured further options. All participants were asked to choose four of nine possible sessions. The sessions ranged from the serious

(“Maintaining Family Purity in the Face of TV and Video Violence, Poker, and Pornography” and “Developing a Time Management Strategy for Optimal Goal Realization”), to the practical (“Make a Crocheted Washcloth”), to the hilarious (“He Who Laughs, Lasts!”).

After a banquet on Saturday evening, the assembly was encouraged to “Be Satisfied with What You have Received from the Lord”—a superbly written essay accompanied by an effective power-point presentation.

Sunday morning began with a final discussion: “Honoring God with Your Spiritual Gifts” followed by a closing worship service. The women of the retreat were delighted to welcome to that service the members of Peace With God Lutheran Church, our CLC congregation in Onalaska.

What is the Christian Women’s Retreat? It is a time to laugh and a time



Kendra Ahrens, Byron, MN; Annette Kottke, Fond du Lac; Rhonda White, Eau Claire

to cry; a time for serious discussion and a time for light-hearted conversation; a time for good food for the body and even better food for the soul; a time for a glass of wine and piece of cheese while sitting together on a patio under the night sky; it is a time of reunion and rejuvenation; it is a delightful blessing from God!

—*Pastor Paul Nolting
Mankato, Minn.*

(From the *Immanuel Home Messenger*)



Dedication service, Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, April 1, 2007—

New Worship Facility

“It’s bigger and better” could be a motto for Messiah’s newest worship facility, dedicated to our Lord’s service on Palm Sunday at a special 3:00 p.m. service. Anyone can see that it’s bigger—three times larger than the building that served Messiah congregation for forty-five years (dedicated in June, 1962—then enlarged and amplified by four more building projects during those decades).

Messiah congregation has grown in membership over those years—reflected by the 165 attendees at the dedication service of June, 1962, in contrast

to the 527 seated for the dedication service this past Palm Sunday.

And if someone says “it’s better,” that might refer to the cushioned seating throughout or to the refurbished pipe organ, to the HVAC system, the new chancel furniture crafted by Messiah members, the upgraded PA and AV systems, the improved handicapped access, or even to the enlarged parking areas.

But enough already! Anything and everything that pleases the eye (or suits our physical and emotional needs) is peripheral to the central mission and



Altar area of the new church

theme of Messiah congregation.

Let me press this point just a bit. The cover of the dedication service bulletin reflects Messiah congregation's concept of our place in this world: "The Church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord....From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride...with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died."

Further (in smaller print): "Thus saith the Lord God: 'Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ...'" (Isaiah 28:16).

Now open the service folder, where you find the centerpiece of every worship service—the sermon—as Pastor David Lau validated with his exposition of 2 Corinthians 6:16, "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"

The sermon was arranged this way: "The Temple of God—The Temple of

God—The Temple of God"...1) The glory of God filled the Old Testament temple (God's Old Testament preview of His Church)...2) Christ's body is the temple of God (the foundation of the Holy Christian Church)...3) We believers in Christ are the temple of God (product of the Spirit, as per Ezekiel's vision, chs. 34-37).

This theme of Christians being the living stones of the Holy Christian Church on Earth was carried out in the Rite of Dedication, as congregants confessed, "O Lord God, we acknowledge that the greater building project is Yours. Through Your Spirit You have made each one of us living stones built together with countless others into Your household, the one Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints."

Then, interspersed with pastor's and congregants' prayers, the assembly joined in verse after verse of "Built on the Rock the Church doth stand" (TLH #467).

The sermon and dedicatory rite were far superior to any "bigger and better" motto, even as far as the heavens are higher than the Earth, for we acknowledged that if a church building, a congregation, or an individual Christian is not built on the solid Rock of the Savior and on faithfulness to Him in word and deed—it's in quicksand.

You may be interested in the supporting cast:

The ILC Brass Band accompanied the organ and assembly in "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," the ILC Tour Choir raised Alleluias, the children's choir and congregation joined in "The Lord's my Shepherd," and Messiah's Adult Choir adored the Savior in selections from Handel's *Messiah*.

Former Pastor Keith Olmanson



Prof. D. Lau delivers the sermon

served as liturgist; former pastor David Lau delivered the dedicatory sermon; Pastor Mark Gullerud served the Scripture readings, and Pastor Paul Tiefel II led the dedicatory rite. Former pastor Arvid Gullerud was unable to attend but sent a personal message, read by Chairman Fred Radichel, and former pastor L. W. Schierenbeck joined the officiants for the accompanying photo (see p. 9).

Much more can be said about Messiah’s new worship edifice, but I wish to convey to you the feeling of reverent thankfulness that marked the entire dedicatory service and to bring into your focus the admonition that we remain faithful to Him who has made us to be “His house of living stones, builded for His habitation,” for we realize that “His truth doth hallow the Temple.”

Following the worship service and appropriate comments by President Radichel, the assembly was favored by Mr. Marty Beekman (one of the few remaining founding and charter members of Messiah congregation) presenting a poignant review of the historical origins of Messiah congregation, emphasizing the Scriptural (doctrinal) reasons behind its members’ emergence from local ELS congregations, and some of the miracles whereby the

Lord of the Church enabled this congregation to survive, to flourish, and to establish its own parochial Christian school (K-8) during its first years of existence.

Another early, notable service by Messiah congregation was its hosting of the Jan. 1963 CLC Convention, the one that decided to relocate Immanuel Lutheran College (high school, college, and seminary departments) from Mankato, Minn., to Eau Claire. Remember?

We cannot help but reflect upon the meaning of all the blessings our Lord has bestowed upon this small remnant of the Good Shepherd’s flock; may He invigorate us by His Word and Spirit to remain faithful to Him, for we acknowledge that the “bigger and better” edifice is His Church, built of living stones as His habitation. Amen!

—Reporter: Paul R. Koch
Photos: Scott Wuerch

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