

Lutheran Spokesman



“Watch and pray, lest you enter into
temptation. The spirit indeed is willing,
but the flesh is weak”
(Matthew 26:41)

Temptation and Appreciation

Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Thy holy wounds I find,
Every hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within
Tempt my treacherous heart to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me ere its first beginning.

The season of Lent is a good time to think about temptation, as we see Jesus steadfastly face horrible and unjust abuse. The first Sunday in Lent often directs our attention to Jesus' temptation at the start of His ministry: "If you are the Son of God..."

Jesus Christ knew temptation; He knew it well—Satan saw to that. In fact, the writer to the Hebrews states that "He was in all points tempted as we are—yet, without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Every day we encounter various lures, pressures, and stratagems of Satan, the world, and our own flesh "which seek to manipulate circum-

stances around us in an attempt to make us desert God's will" (*The New Bible Dictionary*: Temptation).

God makes His will known to us through His Word, particularly in the Ten Commandments. Every time we feel an urge to disregard, disobey, or even modify His will for us, there is tempting going on.

The Scriptures show how Satan entangled many in a variety of schemes: Eve, enchanted with the thought "you will be like God" (Gen. 3:5); Lot, taking his family into a godless environment (Sodom) because of the economic possibilities of the area (Gen. 12:11-13); Peter, tossing an obstacle before Jesus with his well-meaning "This shall never happen to You" (Mt. 16:23); Paul, suffering an unnamed "thorn in the flesh" which tested his patience and surrender to God (2 Cor. 12:7).

We need to "watch and pray, that [we] not enter into temptation" (Mt.

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26:41). Again and again, believers are warned to be alert to the birthing process of sin: "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jms. 1:14).

This watchfulness is in contrast to the rationalizing ("everybody's doing it!"), minimalizing ("with all the rotten stuff going on, who's going to care if I do this"), and compromising ("okay, but just this once...") that we encounter everyday.

Should some lust or sharp temptation
Prove too strong for flesh and blood,
Let me think upon Thy Passion,
And the breach is soon made good.
Or should Satan press me hard,
Let me then be on my guard,
Saying, "Christ for me was wounded,"
That the Tempter flee confounded.

"Away with you, Satan!" We may fall prey to temptation, but Jesus did not; armed with the Word, He exposed and defeated Satan's malice and guile.

This, too, is an important Lenten theme: Jesus' perfect obedience—His innocence in a corrupt world; His faithfulness where we have acted faithlessly. All this, because He was destined to be "the Lamb of God (perfect and spotless, as in the Old Testament ceremonies) that takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). His obedience is precious, because our redemption is based on His innocence.

In Roman times there were many victims of crucifixion, and perhaps many were crucified unjustly. Their sufferings and deaths helped no one, atoned for nothing. But Jesus' Passion—His "holy wounds"—mean the world to us, for in them we are

freed from the curse of sin; our very real guilt before God is washed away. His righteousness, His innocence before God, is credited to us—that is, to all mankind.

We often fall prey to temptation, but in Jesus we may still find peace: "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

The message of Lent begins with dark notes of temptation and failure, wickedness and judgment. But the end result in Christ is victory, joy, and comfort.

As we view Christ's journey to the cross and the grave, we are taken with a vast sense of relief and appreciation—the sort of appreciation that also finds courage and strength to resist and defeat temptation on our own part. It is believers in Christ whom James advises: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jms. 4:7).

Our resistance to temptation is closely tied to our awareness of the love of God—that steadfast, sacrificial, longsuffering love, which is so stunning to see as Jesus is betrayed, accused, executed—all without a complaint and all for our eternal salvation.

O my God, my Rock and Tower,
Grant that in Thy death I trust,
Knowing Death has lost his power
Since Thou trod'st him in the dust.
Savior, let Thine agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die, be my Protection,
Light and Life and Resurrection.
(all stanzas: TLH #144:1,2,5)

—Pastor Peter Reim
Loveland, Colorado

"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

Deny, Take Up, Follow

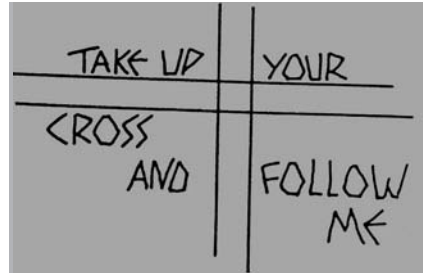
During the season of Lent it is customary for many people to give up something of value to them. The purpose, I suppose, is part of this concept of "deny himself" spoken of in the preceding passage.

Perhaps there is some value in "giving something up" if it assists you in remembering the ultimate sacrifice of your Savior, the giving up of His life for you. I suspect, however, that all too often this custom strays from its intended purpose.

One temptation may be to "give up" something that isn't of real value to a person in the first place. If it is something one really doesn't miss, then the intended reminder may not be very effective. Another shortcoming of the practice may be an overemphasis on what is being given up, which may detract from one's worship and meditation rather than enhance it. A third possible negative factor of the practice would be pride. "Look at what I have given up!" This happens especially when we compare ourselves (not to Christ but) to all those who have given up much less or nothing at all.

How then should we deny ourselves?

It is a matter of priorities. Denying oneself means placing the things of God above the things of man. The apostle John writes, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 1:15). This is God-pleasing advice not only during Lent but throughout the year. To this



end help us, dear Lord!

What does it mean to "take up his cross"?

A Christian is incapable of taking up His cross, that is, Christ's cross. Only He fulfilled the requirements necessary for an atoning sacrifice—a sinless life, the suffering of death and hell in our place, and the glorious resurrection as the prophets had foretold.

As Jesus' disciples we do, however, have an earthly, temporal cross to take up.

During this Lenten season may we be reminded that in following Christ we willingly accept tribulation crosses. Much of the world today looks on in ridicule of Christians just as they did of Christ at the foot of the cross. Let us boldly proclaim Christ crucified whatever the earthly consequences may be.

The text concludes with the words "and follow Me."

During His public ministry Jesus gathered several of His closest disci-

ples through the words "follow Me." He also attracted a large following of those who saw Him for something He was not. Many wanted an earthly king—one who would break the shackles of the Romans or one who would provide for their earthly needs without their having to work. When Jesus revealed to them that His kingdom was not of this world, many fell away.

Our following of Jesus does not guarantee a life of ease. In fact, it guarantees a life of unease. We will be persecuted for His sake.

To follow Him means to walk the road He walked. "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to

walk just as He walked" (1 Jn. 1:6). But He promises to walk beside us, and because of Him our destination is assured, our permanent home is in heaven.

"Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise'" (Lk. 23:42-43). May this blessed assurance be your Lenten peace!

Lord, in loving contemplation
Fix our hearts and eyes on Thee
Till we taste Thy full salvation
And Thine unveiled glory see. (TLH#155:5)

—Prof. Joseph Lau



A PRECIOUS GIFT: THE LORD'S SUPPER

Some time ago I read an account of a Jewish man and his Christian friend discussing their respective religions. Finally, the Christian made a comment to this effect, "Throughout the Old Testament, God required blood sacrifices of His people. The Scriptures even state, 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission.' As a Christian, I have the blood of my Savior, Jesus Christ. But I ask you, my friend, in your religion, where is the blood?"

The Bible does indeed present some very bloody situations among its various lessons. From animal sacrifices to wars and murders, suicides and slaughtering of innocents, it doesn't seem any story is too far removed from the letting of blood.

But the most important shedding of any blood is that of our Savior Jesus as He spilled out His lifeblood for the salvation of mankind. That sacrifice had been prophesied long before as the bruising of "His heel" which would crush the head of the serpent.

This wonderful act of salvation—along with the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word and Holy Baptism to assure our hearts of this fact—would be all we need in order to be saved. But God wanted to give us more. He gave us the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The Romans often accused the early Christians of scurrilous acts. When word surfaced of a Sacrament of eating flesh and drinking blood, it wasn't hard for the satanically misguided to

make accusations of human sacrifice and cannibalism.

Indeed, it may have sounded a bit strange to the disciples themselves when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper, stating "this is My body" and "this is My blood."

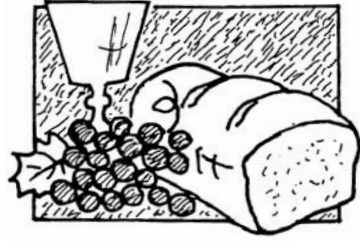
Then again, the disciples had previously heard Jesus speak of the eating of His flesh. "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn. 6:55-56). This eating and drinking of our Lord is symbolic of an inward digesting of His Word, making that Word a very part of our inner being and fiber.

The Real Thing!

In the Lord's Supper Jesus gives us the real thing—His body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine! You see, Jesus doesn't want to simply be in your life or a part of your life; He wants to *be* your life! After all, it is the "wearing" of Jesus' righteousness (by faith in Him) that gains us access to heaven. The good works that He has planned for us and that His Spirit gives us the power to perform are a confession to the world that we truly belong to Him.

When our loved ones die, we often say that they will be with us in our thoughts. However, Jesus means a whole world more when He tells us, "I am with you always." That means He is truly present with us—living in our hearts!

In the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, each believer receives Him into his heart, soul, and body. Jesus—present with us, transforming us (as at our baptism) from creatures of



this earth into new creations, dedicated to Him and living for His Kingdom work.

Along with the blessed communion of Christ's body and blood with the bread and wine, in this sacrament we also share a blessed communion with one other. As Christians we are the body of our Head, Jesus Christ.

Whenever we partake of this sacred meal, we are witnessing to the world Jesus' death for us and for all. We are showing the world that we are members of that Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints—the Family of God which surpasses all time, cultures, languages, and borders. All members of God's Family stand sanctified in Jesus' blood, righteous in the Father's eyes through the merits of our Brother, Jesus.

Truly, this is a most precious gift the Church has received! And as with all gifts of great worth there comes great responsibility that we take care to use it in a worthy manner. We do this, for example, by examining our own hearts and by continuing to instruct and teach our young people in confirmation classes to "examine" themselves so they are able to "discern the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29).

We also limit this sacred meal to those who are like-minded and of one fellowship with us. We do so in concern for others, lest any eat and drink

in an unworthy manner, thus becoming guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and bringing judgment to themselves (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

According to the story mentioned earlier, the Jewish man renewed his study of the Scriptures and, through a prayerful search of the New Testament, came to believe that Jesus was his Lord and Savior. He, like us—and countless

numbers of our Christian brothers and sisters gone before and yet to come—has been shown our Passover Lamb, the One who provides the blood that makes us whole.

Thanks be to God for the precious gift of His Supper that assures us of our forgiveness!

—Teacher David Bernthal
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin



"A Sinner's Prayer, A Savior's Response"

Lenten Meditations

(Adapted from "radio devotions" prepared by some CLC Minnesota pastors)



First Devotion:

"Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God"

(Psalm 51:10a)

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, as I ponder Your suffering and death, bless me with Your Holy Spirit. Grant that I may cherish the image of Your suffering and death first of all with deep sorrow, knowing that it was my sin which led You to the cross. Grant that I may also cherish the image of your suffering and death as my great rescue and a testimony of Your great love for me. Lord, I know my heart and its sin all too well. The good I want to do, I do not do, the evil I don't want to do, that I keep doing. Forgive me, create a clean heart within me, and never depart from me. Amen.*

(Please read Luke 5:4-10) "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" Can you imagine what it would be like to actually have Jesus depart from us? The forgiveness of our sins would be gone. If the forgiveness of sins is lost, then our eternal life in heaven would also be gone with no other hope of retrieval. If our sins are not forgiven, then they stand as an obstacle between us and the almighty, holy God. No longer would we be His children, and our status as heirs of His kingdom would be gone. If we still had our sin's guilt and were no longer children of God because of it, then we no longer could approach God as our Father and take our every need, wish, thought, and desire to Him—our ability to go to Him with our prayers would be gone. If Jesus were to depart from us, the confidence of having our Lord and Brother guiding all things would be gone. Can you imagine? It is enough to make us shudder.

Yet, "Lord, depart from me" is exactly what Peter said after the great catch of

fish. Peter wasn't seeking to lose Jesus and all of His blessings; rather, Peter had just witnessed an incredible miracle and through that miracle was convinced that this Jesus of Nazareth was more than an ordinary man. Peter understood his sins all too well and knew that a sinner such as he could not be in the presence of the holy Son of God.

Peter's conclusion that as a sinner he had no right to be in the presence of the holy Son of God would have been correct if not for one factor: God's grace. God's love for sinners moved Him to send Jesus to be our Savior. God's love and His plan of redemption was the very reason Jesus was there speaking to Peter, and it was the very reason He called Peter to be an apostle and fisher of men by sharing the gospel with other sinners. God's love demonstrated through Christ Jesus gives sinners such as Peter and each one of us the forgiveness of sins and cleanses our hearts from sin's guilt.

Day by day we sin. Day by day we go to our Lord with humble repentance, being confident of God's grace and knowing that our sins are forgiven. Each day, a repentant sinner's prayer is: "Create in me a clean heart, O God," and the Savior responds with grace, forgiveness, and strength to live for Him.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
Mankato, Minnesota



Second Devotion:

**"Renew a Right Spirit Within Me"
(Psalm 51:10b)**

Prayer: *Dear Father in heaven, as I come before You in prayer, I ask quite simply: "Renew a right spirit within me!" Help me, O Lord, to resist my sinful flesh and to overcome every temptation. When I fail, please lead me to repentance and grant me Your divine forgiveness.*

When others sin against me, move me to forgive them even as You have forgiven me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Matthew 18:21-22 - "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'"

Peter's question reveals an attitude that is so very typical. We so often want to establish limits to our kindness. Peter no doubt thought that he was being generous when he suggested forgiving his brother seven times. After all, many of the rabbis of the day suggested that three times was sufficient. Jesus' answer, however, suggests that Peter really needed a heavenly response to the prayer "Renew a right spirit within me," rather than an answer to his question!

Forgiveness toward others is not something we should limit, but rather it is to be limitless! That is the meaning of our Savior's response to Peter's question. Peter was not to forgive his brother a mere seven times and then consider himself justified in lowering the boom upon the repeat offender. Rather, he and we are

encouraged to forgive others every time they sin against us, even as our heavenly Father so graciously forgives us.

Imagine what would happen if God used Peter's "generous" thinking over against us! We would all fall under His just condemnation—for, as Luther points out, "We sin often every day and indeed deserve nothing but punishment" (*Small Catechism*, Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer). Yes, Peter and we need to be renewed by the Spirit impressing upon our hearts and minds the overwhelming fullness of God's forgiving love. When others sin against us, let us always remember the apostle's admonition: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Such an attitude reveals a "right spirit" within!

—Pastor Paul Nolting
Mankato, Minnesota



Third Devotion:

**"Do not Cast Me Away from Your Presence"
(Psalm 51:11a)**

Prayer: *Lord of Mercy, You could justly and properly cast us from Your presence and forbid us to come before You, but You have come into our midst to invite us to come to You. You draw us to Yourself with the cross of our salvation. You welcome us into Your presence with words of forgiveness and promise us help and comfort. Help us in our foolishness never to cast You from our presence nor to refuse the gift of Your grace! Amen.*

Matthew 16:21-23 - "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"

Nearly all people have a dread of being cast out. The rising executive may fear being cast out of the inner circle of decision makers. The struggling athlete may dread being cast out from the starting lineup—or even from the team. Celebrities fear the day they are cast out by adoring fans who have turned to some new performer. Children fear rejection from their parents, and too many spouses have reason to fear being cast aside by their mates.

Such rejections may spell personal disasters, but none of them rises to the seriousness of David's prayer: "Do not cast me away from Your presence." To be cast out by God is the ultimate tragedy.

David prayed thus because he knew that this was exactly what he deserved.

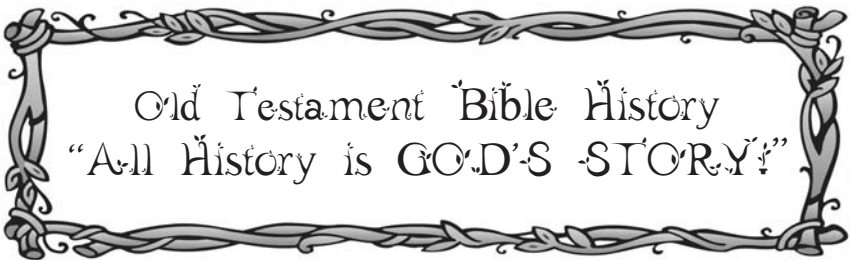
He had misused his God-given position as king to commit sins against innocent victims, to bring shame to the people of God, and even to sin against God Himself. God would be right to reject him as He had rejected Saul before him.

This prayer touches us so deeply because we also know that this is just what we deserve too. Though we have been made children of God and established as kings and priests before Him, we have misused our liberty, doubted our Father's governing of our lives, too often wandering about as bewildered sheep, and not prizing as we ought the gifts He has given us.

But when we pray this, we constantly learn anew that God does not at all wish to cast us out. He delights in restoring wanderers, in strengthening the weak, and in renewing the confidence of all who doubt that He loves them all with an everlasting love.

—Pastor Norman Greve
Eagle Lake, Minnesota

Series to be concluded next month



No. 10 in Series: Genesis 18-19

Sodom and Gomorrah—An Illustration of God's Justice and Mercy

"The LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice'" (Genesis 8:17-18).

The LORD and His two angels had just left Abraham's tent, having been

his dinner guests and having informed him that Sarah would soon conceive their long-promised child. They were now prepared to achieve their second objective—the just judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The LORD's thoughts, however, were focused upon His covenant with Abraham—a covenant of mercy.

He would make of Abraham "a great and mighty nation" and, more importantly, through one of his

descendants, Jesus, "all the nations of the earth" would be blessed. Should He inform Abraham of His intentions? Yes, for it would give Abraham an opportunity both to exercise his faith and be better prepared to instruct his descendants regarding their duties towards God!

"The LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it.... Abraham came near and said, 'Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous...'" (18:20,23-24a).

The LORD is just, and He is patient. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were serious and long-standing. They defied God and defiled men. The Scriptures assure us that the LORD has no "pleasure at all that the wicked should die" (Ezekiel 18:23), and that He sincerely "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Yet gross rebellion and presumptuous sin must be punished. Still, God listened to the prayers and pleadings of His believing child. He would not destroy "the righteous with the wicked." If even ten righteous people remained, Sodom and Gomorrah would be spared!

For our learning...

"The men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to

us that we may know them carnally'" (19:4-5).

In an attempt to justify homosexual-ity, it is claimed by some that the sin of Sodom was "inhospitality" or "homosexual rape." While it is clear from the Genesis account that these sins were involved, the Bible is also very clear that any sexual activity outside marriage, whether homosexual or heterosexual, is condemned by God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4).

Because marriage is defined and limited by Scripture to a life-long union between one man and one woman, homosexual activity of any kind is always wrong! It is apparent that this sin was pervasive in Sodom and Gomorrah, for it was practiced by "all the people," both "old and young...from every quarter" in defiance of God's will and design. God's coming judgment was just!

"While he (Lot) lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city" (19:16).

Peter describes Lot as a "righteous" man who was "tormented...from day to day by seeing and hearing their (the people of Sodom's) lawless deeds" (2 Pet. 2:7-8). Lot was obviously not thinking clearly upon the eve of Sodom's destruction.

The LORD, however, was ever so merciful! His angels, appointed to inspect the city and confirm its impentence, were also sent to rescue His few remaining faithful children.

"It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow"

(19:29a).

God is just...He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in view of their rebellion and impenitence.

God is merciful...He remembered Abraham's petitions, responding in a way that met all of Abraham's concerns.

Dear reader—the Holy Spirit has seen fit to include this account in the Bible for our learning! May we truly

fear, love, and trust in God above all things, for then we will stand in awe of His justice, avoiding all sin, seeking His forgiveness when we do sin; and we will rejoice in His mercy, recognizing that we are among those "nations" who have been singularly blessed through Abraham's descendant—Jesus!

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting
Mankato, Minnesota



PORTRAITS OF CHRIST

from the Gospel of John

Chapter Three - The Divine Teacher

"I just don't get it."

Many teachers have heard those words from their students, and just as many have struggled with how to respond. Perhaps it is a student who doesn't "get" the next step in that algebraic equation; or another who doesn't "get" the point the author is trying to convey in the literature assignment; or another who doesn't "get" those grammar rules when studying a foreign language.

Jesus too heard words like these from the mouth of one who was himself a "teacher of Israel" (Jn. 3:10).

The man's name was Nicodemus. He had come to Jesus by night with questions concerning things Jesus had been teaching. He knew Jesus was "a teacher come from God"—for, as Nicodemus said, "no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (3:2), but when it came to Jesus talking about how a person is "born



again...of the Spirit" (3:3,8), Nicodemus just didn't "get it." He asked Jesus, "How can these things be?" (3:9)

As the "teacher come from God," Jesus responded to Nicodemus in a way that is characteristic of His teaching. First of all, He was patient with Nicodemus. Yes, Jesus did take Nicodemus to task for his lack of knowledge—"Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" (3:10)—but still the Savior did take time to explain things further to him

(see 3:11-21).

Illustrations!

To illustrate what He was talking about, Jesus also used the effective teaching tool of giving an example, a picture. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (3:14-15). The Lord took that Bible account—from the days of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness (see Numbers 21)—and used it as a picture of Himself. Just as the Israelites were invited to look in faith at that bronze serpent on the pole and thus be saved from the deadly bite of the poisonous snakes, even so all are invited to look in faith at Jesus on the cross to be saved from the deadly bite of sin.

As Jesus says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (3:16). The gospel message of sins forgiven gives the antidote to the sting of eternal death. The Holy Spirit uses that Good News to create and sustain faith in the hearts of many.



—Pastoral Conference Devotion by Pastor Andrew Schaller, Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown, S. Dak.; Scripture text: James 4:1-3,6-10

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In the Name of Jesus Christ, who is near in times of conflict, dear fellow servants—

It's bound to happen. There are bound to be conflict, argument and hard feelings.

It happens in marriage. I'm sure they count me as a jaded married man,

How wonderful it must have been to sit at the feet of that Divine Teacher! Oh, to have been there to hear Jesus as He taught from the Scriptures "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mt. 7:29)! Oh, to have been there to listen in as Jesus "expounded" to those two disciples on their way to Emmaus "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk. 24:27)!

And yet, is it not true that this is exactly what you and I have today? When we open the pages of God's Holy Word which the Holy Spirit moved the holy men to write, are we not reading what the Divine Teacher says?

It is there, in those celestial lines, that God would still instruct us, as Paul writes: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word
And view my Savior here! (TLH #284:6)

—Pastor Paul Krause
Markesan, Wisconsin

but sometimes in pre-marital classes young couples look at me with disbelief when I suggest that there will be conflict with that perfect person they are about to marry.

Yes, I tell them, believe it or not, at some point the love of your life will say something purposefully hurtful,

and you—in the heat of the emotionally charged moment—will respond in kind. Yes, really, honestly! It's bound to happen, because we don't live in a perfect world, but a corrupt one. We aren't perfect beings, but sinful ones. Conflict happens...and that's not an excuse.

It happens in the workplace. It happens on the softball field. It happens wherever human beings gather or communicate. Oh, and there's one more place it happens: in the Christian congregation.

The Holy Spirit reveals why conflict often arises: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" (Jms. 4:1)

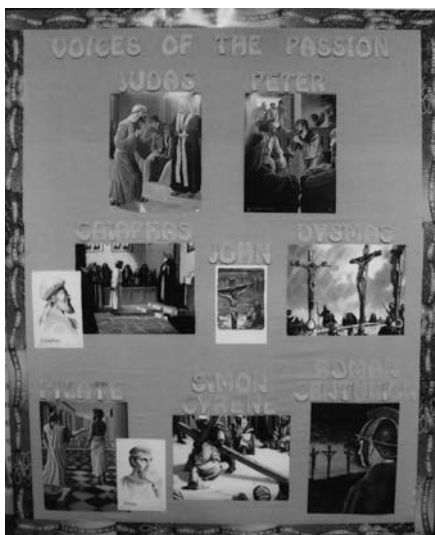
Conflict is often driven by individual pride and self-interest. It is seen when someone insists, for example, that his way is the only way. It is seen

when someone refuses to support the will of the group unless the group submits to that individual's demands. When factions or individual members seek their own desires rather than the good of all, personal animosity will arise even among Christians.

However, in the Christian congregation, it's not about what I want or you want, but about what we want.

Conflict may lead to a lack of prayer or selfish prayers. James writes: "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (Jms. 1:2-3).

These strong statements are meant to penetrate our hearts. Individual desire often runs strongest in the midst of conflict. It's then that we desire, but don't receive. We may go so far as to



Bulletin Cover and/or Display samples
for sermon series during the Lenten season.

hate—and whoever hates his brother is a murderer—and covet, but still can't obtain what we want. We can become like soldiers at war, constantly in a skirmish of one kind or another. We may stop looking at one another as brothers and sisters, but rather as enemies! We may refuse to talk with each other, even as we harbor ill will in our hearts!

Yet, we do not have the resolution we need...often simply because we do not ask, or we ask amiss.

God-pleasing prayer seeks that the Lord's will be done. What is often the first thing to evaporate when individual desire has taken the spotlight on center stage? That's right, God-pleasing prayer! In fact, in the midst of conflict we may pray improperly to satisfy our own desires.

It's not true prayer, Christian friends, if the resolution of the problem isn't left up to the Lord! It's a demand, not a request.

May the Spirit of God help us to be earnest in our prayers...especially in the midst of conflict!

Submitting to God

So, how can conflict be resolved when it arises in the Christian congregation? It is resolved by God's grace as the Spirit of God moves us to put away selfish desire and this world's attitudes and ideals, and moves us rather to repent and trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

The answer is in God's abundant grace: "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to

you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (Jms. 4:6-10).

God help us to be humble when conflict comes...for God opposes the proud, but is present with abundant grace for the humble.

Instead of seeking our own, we submit to God who offered up His Son for us. Instead of letting mouth and heart be used to further the plans of the enemy, we will oppose the devil, who will run from us because Christ stands with us.

Rather than draw closer to one another to fight, we draw near to God through His Word. He will never turn away from those who diligently seek Him and His will.

We will then also see the need to "cleanse your hands..."—to repent of what our hands have done and look to what Christ has done to free us from the consequences of sin and guilt.

"Purify your hearts..." Let the throne of your heart be dedicated to Christ alone. Clean out all those other things that fight for the highest place in heart and life.

"Lament and mourn and weep..." over sin...and look to Christ, who will lift us up to new lives here in time and to eternal life after the sleep of death.

It's inevitable—conflict is bound to happen! When it does, we will remember the source of conflict and, repenting of our sins, we will humble ourselves before the LORD. He will resolve the conflict, according to His grace, through repentance and forgiveness. Amen.

DIVINE LOVE THE GREATEST GIFT
DEVOTIONAL STUDIES ON
1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 13



"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13),



Second in a series:

"Love suffers long and is kind..."

It had been three years that the man had been coming, looking for fruit on the fig tree that was planted in his vineyard—and for three years there had been none.

"Cut it down," he instructed the keeper. "Why does it use up the ground?" The keeper responded, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down" (see Luke 13:6-9).

Who of us would be patient enough to give even one extra day to a tree that had proven to be unfruitful over several years? Who would be kind enough to "waste" the energy it would take to do the careful fertilizing described?

When our family was living in Clarkston, Wash., we had just such a fruit tree—in our case, an apple tree which had not produced a single apple for years. I finally cut it down!

How clearly we can see Jesus in the parable above! When it came to dealing with and living among His own people, He was confronted with persecution (John 15:18-20), hatred (John 15:22), and even death on the cross (John 19:18).

And yet He was long-suffering and patient despite difficulties. He did not rush to carry out judgment against the

people. He gave them year after year to repent of their sins and believe on Him for forgiveness. And along with His long-suffering, in His love He heaped kindness after kindness upon them—"The blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Mt. 11:5).

Incredible Kindness!

And it is not only in the Gospels that we find such long-suffering and kind love from God. How often don't we find His people in the Old Testament disobeying Him and leaving Him for other gods? Yet God showed incredible patience and kindness in lovingly chastising His people, again and again inviting them to return to Him.

God will soon come in judgment as He did with His Old Testament people and with the Jews of Jesus' time—but we remember that His reason for "postponing" His final return is not that He has forgotten. St. Peter writes, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us..." "The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation!" The Lord is "not willing that any

should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9,15).

It is due to God's love which is full of longsuffering and kindness that we have been saved! So it is that James encourages us to show patience in our lives, saying, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient" (5:7-8). And the apostle Paul encourages us as the "elect of God" to "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering..." (Col. 3:12).

What does all this have to do with our study of this brief section of 1

Corinthians 13? Much every way! Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, may our love for others be that which Paul praises in the verse before us: a love which "suffers long and is kind"!

O gentle Dew, from heaven now fall
With power upon the hearts of all,
Thy tender love instilling,
That heart to heart more closely bound,
In kindly deeds be fruitful found,
The law of love fulfilling.
Dwell thus In us;
Envy banish; Strife will vanish
Where Thou livest.
Peace and love and joy Thou givest!
(TLH #235:7)

—Pastor Paul Krause
Markesan, Wisconsin



CROSS PURPOSES

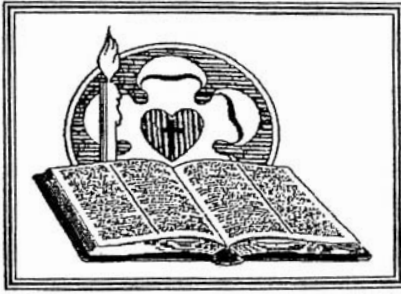
WHY THEN PRAY?

"In 1963, Supreme Court Justice William Brennan argued that some government-sanctioned activities, though religious in origin, had lost their religious meaning over time. Therefore our currency bears the motto 'In God We Trust' without violating the constitutional prohibition against the establishment of a state religion because, said Brennan, the phrase has lost much of its religious force. This line of reasoning helps explain why our republic, which goes to considerable effort to keep religion and governance separate, opens its congressional sessions with a prayer and provides for a minister to invoke the blessings of God at presidential inaugurations." (Editorial, *Corpus Christi Caller - Times*, January 2, 2009)

The lie that is promoted has been uncovered. It is said that these United States constitute a Christian nation. However, such is not and never has been the case. Because there are Christians living in this nation does not make it Christian. Because it was founded on so-called Judeo-Christian principles does not make it any more Christian than Jewish.

The source of the Christian faith and therefore Christianity is the Triune God who has made known His saving will in His Holy Word.

Christianity is not defined as an intellectual knowledge of Christ and His so-called "laws" for godly living. The foundation of Christianity is Christ Himself—the Christ of the cross, the Savior from sin. It is defined



as adherence to Him and His Word (Jn. 8:31,32). The central teaching of Christianity is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ—alone! True Christianity is a living faith which draws its life and breath from the love of God manifest in Christ and set forth in the gospel.

That is not the definition of "Christian" embraced by this nation or any nation. The inspired Word tells us the Triune God—our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—alone is God. "There is none other God but one" (1 Cor. 8:4). Is this the God that it is suggested should be acknowledged in our national life? Are they who insist on the acknowledgment of God in national life insisting that the only true God is the Triune God—or are they simply satisfied to see religiousness in societal consciousness and practice? Will the God of heaven be maintained in public consciousness by legal means and constitutional provision? The answer is "No!"

In the melting pot of this nation, theoretically we have religious freedom and the right to worship the God of choice. Any citizen has the constitutional right to believe in and promote whatever god he chooses—or the right to believe in no god.

Anti-Christian agitators object to any mention of God in public dis-

course. They are as adamant in striking God from any reference—including our coinage—as the pro-religionists (substance undefined) are about introducing a deity into every activity, if for no other reason than appearance (Though not unrelated, the fellowship issue is a subject of its own).

Well-meaning Christians notwithstanding, their fallacy is defined each time prayers are offered as "ceremonial rituals" which "have lost their original religious meaning." According to the editorial, in 1963 Justice Brennan "argued that some government sanctioned activities, though religious in origin, had lost their religious meaning over time." Consequently congress opens with prayer, and inaugurations do likewise.

"Therefore our currency bears the motto 'In God we trust' without violating prohibition against the establishment of a state religion" because, said Brennan, "the phrase has lost much of its religious force." While there are indeed individuals who honestly desire to see the supplication of the true God in public venues, the fact is that the only difference between those who want to expel reference to the divine and the majority of those who want to restore the divine is unbelief on one hand, and lack of understanding of true prayer and the nature of idolatry on the other.

What does it mean when prayer in the public square is offered to a god of choice—or in Congress where the members do not believe in the same God, if indeed some believe in any god? To address or invoke a god that is not a god is idolatry. To address God for the sake of ceremony, ritual, or merely for show is using His name in

vain (cf. Matthew 6:5).

Scripture says, "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17). Pray for the nation and for all in authority. The prayer of those who pray to the Triune God in the name of Jesus is a prayer that the Father hears. But let no one think that he who prays for effect or

prays to another god of choice will receive anything of the Lord.

Other than making the individual feel good, such use of the name of God does not bring blessing but invites judgment. If the prayer is empty rhetoric or ritual, why pray?

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*
Corpus Christi, Texas



From a Pastor's Desk—

THE BIBLICAL CASE AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY

The issue of homosexuality is a hot topic these days. From the uproar over gay marriage in California to a cover story on "The Religious Case for Gay Marriage" in *Newsweek*—and now the request by President-elect Obama to have Pastor Rick Warren give the invocation at his Inauguration—this topic has been all over the news.

This is very disheartening—not because people are talking about homosexuality but because the inspired words of God of the Bible are being twisted for personal ends/goals/purposes.

Let's get something straight right away: "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:20-21).

Many people—some who self-admittedly don't know anything about the Bible and others who think they

know everything—use passages out of the context intended by the Holy Spirit in order to support their own personal feelings, thoughts, or agenda. Homosexuality is currently at the top of the list.

Let's set the record straight.

Here are some of the faulty "Biblical" arguments given by supporters of homosexuality:

Argument #1: *The Bible has scarcely any examples of "traditional families" (that is, one husband with one wife).*

Supporters of homosexuality like to use the polygamist examples of Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon as proof for their thinking, but conveniently fail to mention the many godly examples that the Bible does give (Isaac and Rebecca, Amram and Jochabed, Elimalech and Naomi, Boaz and Ruth, Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Aquilla and Priscilla, just for starters).

Proponents of homosexuality fail to understand that there is a difference between "description" and "prescription" in the Bible. In other words, God does not condone ("prescribe") everything that is described in the Bible.

Argument #2: *The Bible never explicitly defines marriage as between one man and one woman.*

In addition to the passages from Genesis 2 and Matthew 19:5 which state "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh," there are several passages in the New Testament which show that "one man, one woman" marriage is exactly what God wants for human beings. Those who were called to serve in the church were to be "blameless, the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2,12).

Argument #3: *Objections to gay marriage come from tradition and/or*

personal discomfort with homosexuals but not from the Bible.

It is conjectured that the passages in Old Testament Levitical laws which condemn homosexuality don't apply since they are included among the ceremonial laws of the Jewish nation.

However, many clear passages also in the New Testament condemn homosexuality: "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

The Bible is emphatic that homosexuality is a sin and is contrary to God's will for us.

Argument #4: *Jesus showed love to all people no matter who they were.*

This is the worst argument of all because it misrepresents Jesus, His



The installation of Pastor Paul Krause (stole) on Nov. 23, 2008, Faith Lutheran, Markesan, Wis.: Pastors Mark Bernthal, David Lau, Michael Eichstadt, Prof. Em John Lau, Pastor David Naumann, Michael Schierenbeck



Pastor Krause and family:
Colette, Stephen, Dwight, Rebecca, Alyssa, Nathaniel

ministry and purpose.

While Jesus was known for eating with "tax-collectors and sinners" (and looked down upon by the Jewish leaders), He never condoned the sin of the people to whom He reached out.

He confronted the woman at the well with her adultery (John 4), and told another woman who was caught in adultery, "Go and sin no more" (Jn. 8:11).

The real purpose of Jesus' ministry can be seen in the life of Zacchaeus who repented of his sin and promised to give back what he had wrongly taken. To him Jesus said: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:9-10).

Because of their stand on the Word of God, some Christians are portrayed as haters of homosexuals. Other Christians are willing to ignore or twist parts of God's Word concerning homosexuality in order to fit in with the world. As for love, God says that true love points out sin for the purpose of leading the sinner to repentance. That is the kind of love that Jesus showed, and that is the love that true Christians show still today.

We are all sinful, and at times we all need help from those around us to be reminded that we are heading down a wrong path. James says: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jms. 5:19-20).

There is no Christian love in ignoring a sin that will lead a person to eternal death in hell. Religious leaders and

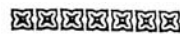
others who want to make excuses for homosexuality aren't doing anyone any favors; instead, they are deceiving many.

I realize that many people do not share my understanding that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God, but these journalists and "theologians" are making a huge mistake. On the one hand, they say that the Bible doesn't apply to us any more; on the other hand, they want to use that Bible to support their presuppositions.

You can't have it both ways! Either the Bible is the infallible Word of God—the Truth we need in this sin-filled world for guidance, strength, and God's plan of salvation from our predicament of sin—or it is just another book and it doesn't carry any more weight than some book written by Dr. Suess.

For the child of God, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

—Pastor Nathanael Mayhew
Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Georgia



**"PUT ON
THE FULL
ARMOR OF
GOD... AND
TAKE THE
SWORD OF
THE SPIRIT,
WHICH IS
THE WORD
OF GOD."
EPHESIANS 6:13 & 17**



———— SURVEYING CLC HISTORY ————
FROM THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET (1985)
"REFLECTIONS...PROJECTIONS"

*Number Three: IMMANUEL LUTHERAN
COLLEGE, "TORCHBEARER OF THE CLC"*

What a playwright said about life could be said as well about the light of Gospel truth: It is not a "brief candle." It is rather a splendid torch for us to keep burning brightly before handing it to future generations.

From early on, the CLC founders felt the absolute necessity of a school to "equip the saints for their ministry"—our own school, pray God, which could be free of the influences which had made the formation of the CLC necessary. Without such, it would be a "brief candle" matter. In 35 years or so the light would be out, so far as we are concerned.

Fortunately, a group of Christians of Immanuel congregation in Mankato, Minnesota, with the blessings of the congregation, had earlier made a very bold move. With little visible support but a high sense of purpose, they organized Immanuel Lutheran College. Though small, there was an instant enrollment that included like-minded students from other independent congregations. An old school building had been moved to a lot on the eastern edge of Mankato. The school was born. In September of 1959 the first term began with 28 students in the high school, 14 in college, and 2 in seminary.

Five months after the organization of the CLC in 1960, the new school was given to the care and keeping of this parent body. The support group was now larger, but the resources to expand that campus and provide dorm housing were simply not in sight. But then a miracle of Providence took place. The beautiful 75-acre Ingram Estate in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was offered to us for only \$85,000. In the summer of 1963 ILC took leave of its Alma Mater and made the move. Some of its character, some of the pioneering spirit of its youth stayed on in Mankato. The manner and the mission, however, carried on and soon blossomed in its new locale. That purpose was well stated in the motto of the school's twenty-fifth: "One generation shall praise Thy Name to another" (Psalm 145:5).

Immanuel Lutheran College has served us well. The congregations which now enjoy the ministry of its graduates will surely testify to that. There is, by the Lord's gracious provision, a new generation of leadership with the same commitment to the undimmed light of Gospel truth. They will, in their turn, hand it on....



*—Pastor Rollin A. Reim
(Emeritus, Redwood City, Calif.)*

From a Pastor's Desk—

THE MISSION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

What is the mission of the Church? This appears to be unclear for many in our day.

Is the mission of Christ's church to promote the social welfare of mankind or to right the social injustices of our day? Is the mission of the Church political? The answer is obviously a resounding NO!

But it appears that for many in our day this is what the Church is seen as—a political or social machine. This ought not to be. The mission of the Church from the beginning until this present day is and always will be to proclaim Christ and Him crucified for the sins of the world.

Out of Spirit-worked love, Christians will be concerned with the temporal needs of mankind, and we will want to help any way we can, but this is not the primary focus of the Christian Church; it never has been.

The primary mission of the Church is now and always shall be to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ—to proclaim forgiveness and salvation in Jesus' Name, "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

We need to keep one question in mind: Which is more important, this life or the life to come? "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk. 8:36-37)

To feed the hungry and house the homeless are admirable goals, and if we can help those around us, we should do so; yet this will be done out of love for our Savior and not in place of proclaiming the gospel.

If the mission of Christ's Church is replaced with the "social gospel," then all that is left is a religion of and by man—a religion which places earthly needs over spiritual needs, something which may alleviate the suffering of people in this life, only to see them suffer eternally in hell because of unbelief.

What kind of love would that be? No love at all! The primary focus and mission of the Christian Church is now and always has been to proclaim Christ and Him crucified for the sins of the world.

*—Pastor James Hartmann
Fairbanks, Alaska*



Meet Pastor Scott Schiermeister

Scott Schiermeister is pictured here along with his wife Peggy and their first child Lydia.

Scott graduated in May, 2008, from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He is also a graduate of Immanuel Lutheran College



(ILC) where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in pre-theological studies.

Scott gained valuable pastoral experience with stints as vicar in two of our CLC congregations: Ascension Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Wash., under Pastor Paul Naumann; and Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minn., under Pastor John Hein.

The new pastor met his wife while she was attending ILC (where she received her Associate of Arts degree). They were married in October, 2006. The Lord blessed Scott and Peggy with Lydia in September, 2008.

Scott is the son of Myron and Leota Schiermeister, who are members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bismarck, N.Dak. Peggy is the daughter of Alan and Joy Heise, members of Luther Memorial Church, Fond du Lac, Wis.

Scott has an older sister, Tracy; Peggy has two younger brothers, Jay and Forrest.

On January 4, 2009, Scott was installed as pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Wash., and Peace Lutheran Church in Orofino, Idaho. Pastor Terrel Kesterson of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane conducted the installation services.

May the Lord Jesus, the only Head of His Church, be with His servant, blessing his ministry and his faithful preaching of God's Word of Truth.



Announcements

Corrections

A Book Review of *Apologia* by Prof. John Lau appeared in our January 2009 issue. First of all, the sidebar note from the



editor (p. 18) indicated that the Review had appeared in the synod's *Journal of Theology*. That was not the case. It had first appeared on the webpage of CLC pastors. Secondly, the Review itself contained a mistaken e-mail address (p. 19). The correct e-mail for contacting the author is: johnhlau@sbcglobal.net.

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, ILC Seminary Graduate Scott Schiermeister, who was called by Peace Lutheran Church, Orofino, Idaho, and St. John's Lutheran Church, Clarkston, Wash., to serve as their pastor, was ordained and installed in separate services (10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. respectively) on Sunday, January 4, 2009.

—Pastor Terrel Kesterson
Spokane, Washington



Send Change of Address to :

Lutheran Spokesman
2750 North Oxford Street
Roseville, MN 55113

Cover: John Fox