

A FIRM FOUNDATION

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?*

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A FIRM FOUNDATION

A couple living in the Pacific Northwest was upset that the cost of building their new home had increased.

The cost increase was due to reinforcements made to the foundation. These reinforcements would help absorb the shaking caused by an earthquake. Years later they returned to their home after a magnitude 6.8 earthquake. They found that the cost of reinforcing their foundation had been worth every penny. The wife was a collector of teacups. Despite the violent shaking from the earthquake, not one of the teacups had fallen off the shelf. Their house and their possessions were safe.

Most of us never give a thought to the foundation—unless there is a problem. If the foundation of the building is poorly constructed, the entire structure is in danger. If the foundation is soundly constructed, the structure will be able to sustain most of the shaking, wind, and rain.

Jesus would have us compare the

foundation of a building to the foundation of our lives. In Matthew 7:24-27 He compares two men constructing homes. One man is wise and the other is foolish. The wise man built his house to last. He laid his foundation on a rock. On the other hand, the foolish man laid his foundation on sandy soil.

Which home would you like to live in?

Jesus says of the foolish man, "the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." On the other hand, listen to the result of the wise man's work: "...the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."

What was the difference? The foundation!

Jesus says it is the same with each of us. Whoever hears the sayings of Jesus, and does them, is like the wise builder. But everyone who hears the

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sayings of Jesus, and does not do them, is like the foolish builder.

What a difference in foundations! Those who hear the Word of God and keep it, are building their lives on a rock. The rock that is God's Word is the proper foundation needed for the "natural disasters" that come upon us in this life. No matter how high the flood waters may come and no matter how hard the winds blow, we can stand when we are built on God's Word.

It is in God's Word that we are told of His undeserved love. It is in His

Word that we are reassured that the price has been paid in full for our salvation. Look at Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

God showed just how serious He was about saving us. He took care of our biggest problems—sin, death, and the devil. Having overcome them all by delivering up His Son, we know He can and will take care of much smaller—by comparison—problems.

Are the flood waters rising? Is the wind howling? Hear the word of your Savior. In His Word is our solid foundation.

Yes, the fragile teacup of the life of each one of us is safe by the grace of God!

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?
(TLH 427:1)

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer



A Father's Day Devotion—

Happy Patriarch's Day

The word *patriarch* occurs only several times in the Bible. It comes directly from the Greek and means the chief of a family, the first father, or the oldest representative of a group. The twelve sons of Jacob specifically are called patriarchs, as are Abraham and King David.

Can it not also be said that the other Genesis patriarchs, each in his own way, were the first fathers of all that

followed them?

Adam was the first father of the entire human family and its representative. Sad to say, death came into the world through his rebellion and disobedience. But thanks be to God—Christ Jesus came as the second Adam! Through His perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice on the cross, Christ destroyed the power of death and brought life to Adam and his family.



Father's Day

Hence Adam is the dying but redeemed father of all.

Noah can be called the righteous father who was invited into the ark because "I (God) have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." This is the first use of the word *righteous*, and a few verses earlier we find the first use of the word *grace*, for it is written that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). The Lord found Noah to be loyal to Him and bestowed His favor upon this patriarch.

Abraham might be called the believing father, for "he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). This is the first use of the word *believe*. Thus Abraham is a first father of all those who trust God and His great salvation and are justified by their faith.

Although Cain before the Flood was obviously a farmer and tiller of the soil, the first specific mention of sowing is in connection with Isaac, whom we will call "the sowing father." "Isaac sowed in the land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him" (Gen. 26:12).

The Lord Jesus Himself used sowing as a symbolic picture of witnessing the precious Seed of God's Word. "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Mt.

13:24). By His commission, all who are the spiritual sons of Isaac are privileged to labor in the kingdom-field of the Lord, sowing the gospel in the hope and promise of a great harvest of souls for the Lord.

Jacob was by the Lord renamed Israel, for he "struggled with God and with men, and he prevailed" (Gen. 32:28). Jacob had been a former heel-grabber (Esau's) in their mother's womb. In his later prayer struggle with God, Jacob showed himself to be a never-give-up fighter who clung to God and won His blessing legitimately. Is not Jacob the persistent father?

David was neither the first shepherd nor the first king, but perhaps the first shepherd who became a king. He was certainly the first king of Israel from whose family the Messiah would be born, and he served as a type of the Lord Christ. Even as a youngster David was courageous in battle, and he served the Lord by protecting and leading his people as a shepherd king. Perhaps we can call David the shepherd father.

These are the honored patriarchs—the first fathers "from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, Who is over all, the eternally blessed God" (Rom. 9:5).

As we celebrate fatherhood, may all who are Christian fathers be like the first fathers: redeemed by Christ, believing, righteous-before-God fathers, sowing fathers, persistent-with-God-in-prayer fathers—fathers who rule their families well by loving, protecting, providing for, and leading them in the paths of righteousness.

Happy First Father's Day!

—Pastor David Fuerstenau

THE IMPORTANCE OF GODLY CHARACTER!

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:1-2).

In Christ Jesus, who would have us understand the importance of a godly character, dear students and faculty of Immanuel School:

There are Christians in our world today—you no doubt know some of them—who go about their business without a lot of flash and glory, but who are rock solid and steady individuals upon whom you can always depend. They are good people—low maintenance, highly motivated, always ready to get a job done and always doing a good job. Cornelius was just such a person—one whose example of godly character we ought strive to follow. Let us examine what Scripture tells us about this godly man.

We are told, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment." Caesarea was the residence of the Roman governor of Palestine. Cornelius was a name used by many of the famous and influential families in Rome. It has therefore been suggested that Cornelius was a member of one of these families—a man who would typically serve as an army commander in the provinces, before returning to Italy

to play a role in the imperial government. He commanded other ethnic Romans, who were members of the "Italian Regiment," which provided personal protection for the governor and oversight for other regiments composed of non-citizens. Cornelius was a prominent professional, using his God-given gifts to serve his country.

Next we are told that Cornelius was "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household." The Romans were traditionally polytheists, that is, people who believed in many gods. They often worshiped the gods of Mt. Olympus and almost always participated in emperor worship. This was socially acceptable and considered a requirement for advancement within the imperial government. Yet Cornelius had converted from these man-made religions to Judaism. This was socially unacceptable in Roman circles. Beyond that, he worshiped the LORD God with great sincerity and practiced many of the rituals of the Old Testament. He took his faith seriously, which made him a better soldier, commander, citizen, and even husband and father, for his family also shared his devotion to God!

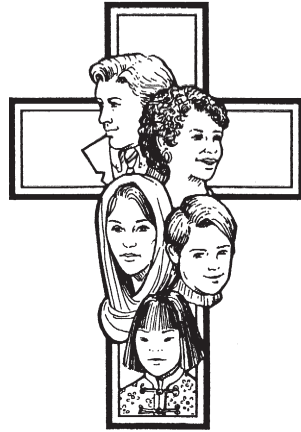
Then we are told that Cornelius "gave alms generously to the people." This demonstrated the extent of Cornelius' faith, for in Roman imperial times charity generally took the form of a government dole or welfare type payment, rather than the charitable

gifts and actions of private citizens. God's Word had touched this man's heart, and he was bearing wonderful fruits of faith by showing concern for individuals he did not know and who were of another race.

Finally, we are told that Cornelius "prayed to God always." Cornelius' inner spiritual life was just as active as his outer spiritual life. He was a man of prayer, doing what God called upon him to do—to come at any time, about any thing, in prayer to a God who was always there!

As we consider Cornelius, therefore, we see a man who sought to live his faith in all aspects of his life, which resulted in a calm strength and the Lord's distinct blessing.

Dear students and members of the faculty—is Cornelius someone you would like to have as a friend, a co-worker, or a father? I think so, for when a man's or a woman's heart has been touched by the Word of God—and that man or woman has drawn close to God—wonderful things hap-



pen! Such individuals become more productive, more confident, a greater source of blessings, and indeed are even more greatly blessed.

What is more important than having a Cornelius near you, however, is to be a Cornelius yourself! May God grant each of us true faith, hope, and love so that our words and works may be guided by our God and so bring great blessings to those around us. Amen.

—Pastor Paul Nolting



SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

Tenth in a series

**“The cure for every curse
is obedience”**

This is another church sign that is full of meaning for the person who understands the law and the gospel, but it can be completely misunderstood by the person who knows little or nothing of God's Word.

This should be taken into account by the pastor or congregation when deciding what message to display for consumption by every passer-by. What a difficult task it is to come up with something that is brief and is not hard to

grasp—but still stimulates one to think about spiritual things, and perhaps to take some action to find out more.

If you were a non-Christian, what might come to mind when you first see or hear the message of this church sign? I can imagine that many people would relate the word "curse" to things they have seen in the movies or on television, namely, the infamous voodoo curse or witches and medicine men. In that context the message would be, "If someone puts a curse on you, the best thing you can do is to follow whatever instructions that person gives you, lest the curse be carried out and bring you great harm."

We know this could not be the message on the sign of a Christian congregation, because God's Word specifically forbids a dabbling in witchcraft. "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31). Rather, the curse about which the church sign speaks is no doubt the curse of sin—of which the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This includes temporal death, and spiritual death which is eternal separation from God.

But there is an obedience that has cured the curse of sin! That is the obedience of Jesus Christ. We speak of the active obedience and the passive obedience of Jesus. The active obedience consists in this that during His earthly life Jesus always followed the law that God had given to man, and He did this for us.

This aspect of Jesus' work was prophesied throughout the Old Testament. For example, Isaiah wrote about the coming Messiah, "Righteousness shall be the belt of His

loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist" (Isa. 11:5). So when the unbelieving Jews objected to Jesus' words and works, He told them, "The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him"—and then asked them, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?", implying that He had no sin, (Jn. 8:29,46). This is exactly what the apostle says about Jesus, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

The passive obedience consists in this that Jesus willingly gave Himself into death to pay for the sins of the world. This aspect of Jesus' work is perhaps best summed up by the apostle Paul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery (something to be grasped) to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Php. 2:5-8).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus again and again stressed that He had come to carry out His Father's will, saying, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (Jn. 4:34). "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn. 6:38).

On the night of His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the heavenly Father several times in words such as these, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup (of suffering

and death) away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). And from the cross, "He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit" (Jn. 19:30).

Paul sums up the real significance of this church sign: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is

written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Gal. 3:13).

May we continue to cling to Jesus Christ as the cure for the curse of sin. And may we spread the good news of redemption through Christ to others as we have the opportunity.

—Gene Rutz



The Christian Citizen —First in a Series—

CIVIC RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Despite some world opinion to the contrary, it is a great blessing to be a citizen of the United States. As a child of God, you have a citizenship that exceeds the citizenship of any country on Earth. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Php. 3:20). Although we claim a heavenly citizenship through the work of Jesus, we are still pilgrims on this Earth and also temporary citizens of an earthly nation. God's Word provides counsel to you, His child, as you live as a citizen of heaven on Earth.

The government of our country exists by God's will. The government is

God's servant and His representative to maintain civil order in our country. God says through the apostle Paul, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God...the governing authority is God's servant to you for good..." (Rom. 13:1,4).

The apostle Paul reminds us to pray for those who are serving in earthly governments, because we have an interest in how they rule. "I exhort... that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.

Editor's note: In 2004 some of our CLC pastors in a southern Minnesota Study Club composed a series of bulletin articles on Christian citizenship for their local congregations. Beginning this month, we intend to run the series of nine articles in the *Spokesman*.

2:1-4). When earthly governments rule well, the citizens enjoy a peaceable life and have many opportunities to freely spread the gospel. As the gospel is spread, it brings salvation to sinners and thereby accomplishes God's will. Old Testament history repeatedly demonstrates how the nation of Israel was blessed by the rule of a good king and how the land suffered at the hands of poor leadership.

When the Children of Israel chose their leaders, they were instructed by God to "choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes..." (Deut. 1:13). The tribal leaders of that time were the earthly government through whom God provided civic order. God provides civic order for us through our government. His direction to choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable leaders applies to us today. In our system of government we enjoy the privilege of being involved in the choice of leaders through the election process.

As children of God who understand God's purpose for government, we will rightly take an interest in our government. We demonstrate this interest by exercising our privilege to participate in it. The child of God's interest in government will not always lead him to serve in a government position.

"...To be lethargic about the leadership and government of our land is to be lethargic about God's appointed authority."

However, we also participate in our government by being honorable citizens of our country and exercising our right to vote. Do not let Satan tempt you into believing that your role as a citizen of the United States is unimportant, hopeless, or of no consequence. Children of God praying for their government and exercising their privileges as citizens make a difference! Children of God are the salt of the earth (cf. Mt. 5:13) and shining lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (cf. Php. 2:14-15). To be lethargic about the leadership and government of our land is to be lethargic about God's appointed authority. May it never be so among us!

Faithful citizens of the heavenly country are the most valuable citizens of earthly nations. Faithful citizens in Christ's Kingdom serve their Lord and not themselves (cf. Col. 3:23-24). Faithful citizens of Christ's kingdom seek to show love to their neighbor (cf. Mt. 22:39) and are led by the light of God's Word (cf. Ps. 119:105). Peter encouraged his readers, "Submit your-



**Zion Lutheran Church
Ladies, Atlanta, Georgia**

selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish

men" (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

When we are honorable earthly citizens reflecting our heavenly citizenship, we become lights and witnesses to our Savior. What a privilege we have to be able to serve our Savior in this way!

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt



475th Anniversary of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1530-2005)

The Means of Grace

The teaching of justification by faith was spoken of in a previous *Spokesman* article as the heart of the gospel. As Christians we would say "yea" and "amen" to that and would even join in saying together with the Lutheran confessors of the Reformation that this teaching is the most important doctrine of divine revelation and the very life of the Church. This wondrous teaching gives us the blessed assurance that we are forgiven children of God and heirs of eternal life and thereby also makes us alive in Christ Jesus.

An important consideration that follows and needs to be rightly understood is "how is justifying faith obtained?" How does a grown person, who by nature regards the gospel of Christ as sheer nonsense, acquire a childlike faith that humbly embraces and rejoices in Jesus' redemptive work? Or how can a little baby who can't even say the name of Jesus—let alone know what He did for us—come to believe in Jesus Christ?

As Lutherans who grew up learning Martin Luther's Catechism truths, we answer these questions from memory by saying, "I believe that I cannot by my



own reasoning or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in true faith."

A part of our Lutheran heritage that we continue to enjoy is the Christian teaching concerning the "Means of Grace," which is set forth in the Lutheran Confessions. The Means of Grace—which we have come to know as being the gospel in Word and sacrament—is the very means through which the Holy Spirit works to create faith,

WE BELIEVE & CONFESS

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
A CONFESSION OF FAITH PRESENTED IN AUGSBURG
BY CERTAIN PRINCES AND CITIES TO HIS IMPERIAL
MAJESTY CHARLES V IN THE YEAR 1530

Psalm 119:46

*"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall
not be put to shame."*

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

V. The Office of the Ministry

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.

XIII. The Use of the Sacraments

It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith.

whether it is through the spoken or written gospel (for an adult) or through the gospel found in the Sacrament of Baptism (for a little baby).

In order that the gospel of Christ might be publicly proclaimed and the Sacraments administered in the Church, and thus serve as the power of God unto salvation, the Lord instituted the public ministry. The apostle Paul writes of this ministry that "He (Jesus Christ) Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers..." (Eph. 4:11) for the purpose of employing the powerful Means of Grace through which the Spirit of God works to create and sustain faith.

From the day of our baptism at infan-

cy, we have enjoyed the spirit of peace, joy, and hope that comes from being justified by faith. But to God's great dismay this was not the case in all the churches in Christendom at the time of the Reformation (and even to this present day!).

Faith—The Spiritual Hand

The forebears of the Reformed Church, known as the Anabaptists, rejected the Biblical teaching of the Means of Grace. They believed that the Holy Spirit "comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works." They rejected the belief that the Holy Spirit instills faith in the heart of a baby through the Sacrament of Baptism. Consequently,

they did not baptize infants.

What Word of God could be used to help our Baptist friends realize that God wants them to baptize their babies in order to provide the Holy Spirit with the means to work faith in their hearts?

We could point them to the Great Commission where Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations—which includes little babies—by baptizing them in the name of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). Also, Jesus was speaking of water baptism when He informed Nicodemus that those born with a fleshly nature are spiritually reborn of water and the Spirit, thus entering the kingdom of God (John 3:3-6). There is also the Scriptural promise which extends to little children, assuring us that through baptism they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who works faith in them for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38,39).

The Lutheran confessors of the Reformation also found the need to address the faulty teachings of the Roman Catholic Church as to how sinners were personally justified through the Sacraments.

Roman Catholics—both then and now—have taught that the Sacraments justify by the mere outward act and that faith, which believes that sins are for-

given, is not required. If this were the case, communicants could mindlessly go through the motions in receiving the Lord's Supper and expect to obtain God's forgiveness in this way.

However, faith which the Holy Spirit works in us through Baptism and sustains in us through the Lord's Supper is the spiritual hand that lays hold of the gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation offered in the gospel. We cannot receive the wonderful benefits the gospel promises without the presence of faith in our hearts. Holy Scripture bears this out when it declares, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

Praise be to God for the precious Means of Grace through which the Holy Spirit creates faith and sustains faith so that we are personally justified in the sight of God! May God grant us the grace to faithfully make use of this means so that we can enjoy both now and forever the priceless treasures of forgiveness, life, and salvation which Jesus, our Savior, has purchased and won for us.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud



FROM A PASTOR'S DESK--

A POPE DIES — AN INSTITUTION LIVES ON

For the young among us, the death of Roman Catholic Pope John Paul II may be the first such experience and remembrance. Perhaps the most surprising

aspect is the widespread response and outpouring of prayer and acclaim—occupying headlines world-wide.

No other world religious leader

begins to command that kind of attention—in life or in death. Part of it is the sheer size and universal nature of the religious empire over which the Pope presides; part of it is also the papal claim of divine authority not only over the church but also over all earthly governments and rulers, as well as his involvement in world peace efforts. By all accounts this Pope John Paul was a beloved, principled, and effective leader of the world's one billion Catholics.

Under pressure from a number of more modern influential nations (especially the United States) and voices, he upheld traditional Catholic doctrine, including scriptural positions on abortion, homosexuality, and human life issues. Unfortunately, this also included rigid adherence to those unscriptural beliefs that led to the Reformation and the birth of Lutheranism and Protestantism in the sixteenth century. These Roman Catholic teachings remain core concerns of faithful Christians: salvation by faith and good works (Ephesians 2:8-9), worshiping and praying to Mary and the "saints" (Matthew 4:10), purgatory (Mark 16:16), indulgences (1 John 1:8-9), errors regarding the Sacraments (Hebrews 10:18), elevation of church rituals and relics to divine favor-gain-

ing status, and forbidding marriage of priests (1 Timothy 3:1).

Yet undergirding these false and soul-damaging teachings is the belief that papal word and decree represents the ultimate authority in the church and is infallible. According to Catholicism, the Pope ("papa"—holy father) alone is the true vicar of Christ, the direct representative and voice of Christ, alone able to determine divine revelation and interpretation. And while there are many Catholics who reject this level of papal authority—as well as some of their church's false teachings—yet this papal view remains to this day a foundation of official Roman Catholic teaching and confession.

And so, even as a pope dies, the institution of the papacy lives on—a product of Middle Age claims by the bishop of Rome. And according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11 (please read), the papacy will continue until our Lord's return. In view of this apostolic prophetic warning, Luther(ans) in our confessions have identified the office of the Papacy as the "Antichrist." As one described as "sitting in the temple of God" (part of the visible Christian church), he "opposes and exalts himself above all that is God" ("exalts" with his papal claims and "opposes" the gospel of Christ with work-righteousness). In one of the most important and timeless Roman Catholic Confessions (the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent), it is said: "If anyone says that he is saved by justifying faith in Jesus Christ alone, let him be anathema (accursed, damned)."

Such an institution remains a serious threat to the faith of God's people. While we cannot determine the personal faith of any Roman Catholic (even of the pope



himself), it is ever our fervent prayer that members of the Roman Catholic Church will, in spite of their church's errors, cling humbly in faith to the simple, saving truths of the gospel of forgiveness and life found in Christ alone. We have only one Savior (Acts 4:12), one Master, one

Head of the Church (Ephesians 2 & 5), one Good Shepherd, whose voice calls us to faith and to life eternal in Him (John 10:27-28).

—From the April 3, 2005, Sunday bulletin, Berea Ev. Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota; David Schierenbeck is pastor.



CROSS PURPOSES



RESPECT FOR HOLY THINGS

The Ark of the Covenant (a visible expression of God's presence among His people) had been taken by the Philistines in battle with the people of Israel (See 1 Samuel 4:11). By the permission of God the Philistines prevailed, because Israel had turned from Him and gone its own way. A judgment had fallen upon Israel, which was at the same time God's call to repentance.

There is a way back, if the sinner or a church will acknowledge the sin and turn to the Lord in confession and faith. To such He says as He said to David through the prophet Nathan, "The Lord also has put way thy sin" (2 Sam. 12:7).

But how did it go with the Philistines? They took the Ark of God and set it up in the temple of their idol god, Dagon, which defiled the name of the true God. One morning upon entry into their temple the people found Dagon fallen on his face before the Ark of the Covenant. The head and hands were broken off so that only the torso remained intact. The Philistines feared, "The ark of the God of Israel must not

remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and Dagon our god" (1 Sam. 5:7). They sent the Ark from Ashdod to Gath. Judgment followed. Subsequently they sent it to Ekron, which rejected it saying, "They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people" (5:10). The hand of God was very heavy there.

In all this there is a lesson—if people, including ourselves, will only listen! God is not to be trifled with, either by those who claim His name or by those who hate Him with a passion. God the Father does not take kindly to hypocrisy on the part of those who claim to follow Him—or to rejection on the part of those who make no pretense to do so.

The Philistines were determined to return the Ark. They did so, hypocritically accompanying its return with a trespass offering. This is typical of the world today, which respects neither the Lord nor His Word. Yet when things go badly for them, they try to appease God with a little bit of "religiousness." Nevertheless, the Philistines were not

quite sure whether or not their misfortune was due to the God of Israel, so they set the Ark upon a cart with their trespass offerings, yoked it to two milk cows and pointed the cows in the right direction. After the cows had pulled the cart up the road to Israelite territory, the Philistines felt more sure that the God of Israel approved the return of the Ark.

Upon its return, sacrifices were made by the people of Israel. Some among Israel in curiosity did what they had no permission to do. They opened the Ark, and we are told that the Lord "struck the people with a great slaughter."

God's Holy Word

Today the chest that assures us of God's abiding presence is His holy Word. It is the vehicle of the grace of God to us. If we would reap blessing, we will hear it, learn it, and treat it with respect, for when we are in the presence of the Word, we are in the presence of God. The Lord has blessed us with it in order to comfort our hearts with forgiveness and instill in us the confidence of eternal salvation. On the other hand, it is disrespectful to neglect it or to "handle the Word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. 4:2). Surely we should not desire anything but the whole counsel (Word) of God from those who shepherd the sheep, and they who shepherd the sheep are to preach the Word of God faithfully (Jer. 23:28).

Through all this, Israel was brought—for the moment at least—to its senses. Samuel said to the people, "If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts



unto the LORD, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only" (1 Sam. 7:3,4).

The people said, "We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah." (v. 6-7). Nevertheless, the Philistines again arrayed themselves against Israel, and Israel feared. They asked Samuel to pray for them to the Lord. "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel" (v. 10).

The God who will not be trifled with is a God of compassion to all who turn to Him in repentance and faith. The nature of God is love. Even the burdens and the afflictions that He sends or permits are intended to accomplish His earnest desire to save. Therefore, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:5-6).

The world can array itself against our God and will bring down sure judgment upon itself. Yet God may use the world—and events in it—to bring us to our senses. Woe to those who will not listen when God speaks, whether in His Word or through events ("acts of God," as men call them). The ungodly and despiser will not escape eternal wrath; but how tragic if they who claim to be the children of God—as well as

the church in our age—should by reason of indifference, neglect, and compromise, suffer the fate of the Philistines.

The Lord has prepared better things for Christ-believers after the afflictions of this world. Repent therefore and believe the gospel, the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



VBS at Nya, Nigeria, Pastor Udo; 335 total children attended. These are part of the children with 15 pastors and institute students who conducted it.



The nine children in the NCLC Children's Home in Nigeria. Each got a new (sewn) outfit with Christmas money from people/groups in the U.S.

FROM A LAYMAN'S PEN—

MINISTERING TO THE YOUNG IN HELPING THEM STAND AGAINST THE TEMPTATION OF PRE-MARITAL COHABITATION

(Part Two, Conclusion—Part One appeared in last month's issue)

(From a paper presented to the Minnesota Delegate Conference in September 2003 by Mr. David Aymond of Berea Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, and condensed by Pastor Paul D. Nolting for inclusion in the 'Home Messenger' of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato.)

The sin of "living together" often involves all of the above. Many of our CLC youth end up dating or going steady with individuals outside of their own faith, individuals who may be spiritually inactive, or non-Christians. While they may be outwardly very good, decent, and respectful young men and women, their attitudes toward "living together" can easily be those of the world, and they in turn can negatively influence our youth.

Young Christians may use poor judgment and reason that "living together" is more important than anything else in their lives. If so, we must show them that their priorities have shifted. A short review of Luther's comments regarding the First Commandment is appropriate. The Lord says, "You shall have no other gods." What does this mean? Luther writes, "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." Our Lutheran Catechism asks: "When do we love God above all things?" It responds, "We love God above all things when we regard Him as our dearest treasure and wholeheartedly devote our life to His service." Clearly the First

Commandment requires that God (not our girlfriend or boyfriend) be our highest priority. Jesus, after all, affirmed, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind....This is the first and greatest commandment" (Mt. 22:37-38).

Our young adults need to be reminded, as do we all, that trusting in God's guidance in all matters of life is extremely important. God gave us the Sixth Commandment to provide us guidance in this area of life: "You shall not commit adultery." What does this mean? Luther writes, "We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor one another." The catechism asks: "What is marriage?" It responds, "Marriage is the union of man and woman rightfully living together as husband and wife." It continues, "How does God regulate the holy state of marriage? "God requires that marriage be a life-long union of one man and one woman, and that man and woman live together only according to this holy ordinance." It goes on to ask, "Of what must we be mindful in order to lead a chaste and decent life?" "We must be mindful that, as children of God, our body is the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost." The Bible says, "Do

you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

The Bible is clear in its teachings that a man and woman "living together" outside of marriage is sinful. God ordained, regulated, and blessed the holy state of marriage. People that 'live together' in defiance of God's Word are living in an overt, unrepentant sin that endangers their souls. By rejecting God's Word, they are in affect "living without God." The apostle James writes, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4).

Let us review another challenging situation for young adults. A man and woman get engaged. Rather than living in separate housing until after the wedding ceremony, they move in together but live in separate bedrooms. Such a situation exposes them to severe temptations. Despite the commitment of engagement, they are not viewed by God or by our laws as married until the wedding ceremony is completed. The marriage ceremony makes the mutual consent public. People that "live together" even when they are engaged, set a bad example for others and could lead them down the wrong path.

Young men and women may find that their relationships suddenly heat up and turn into romantic love sooner than

. . . The Bible is clear in its teachings that a man and woman "living together" outside of marriage is sinful. God ordained, regulated, and blessed the holy state of marriage. People that "live together" in defiance of God's Word are living in an overt, unrepentant sin that endangers their souls.

expected and prior to emotional maturity. Parents should be mindful of their children's dating activities and keep an eye on fast-moving relationships.

Dr. James Dobson in his book "Life on the Edge," quotes Desmond Morris: "The quality of the bond made during courtship is the key to successful marriages.... Couples are most likely to bond securely when they have not rushed the dating experience. Time is a critical ingredient." Two young adults may think their commitment to each other is strong. They may feel that God has brought them together and their romantic feelings are real and genuine. Dr. Morris continues, "Romantic love sometimes fails to deliver on its promise....If you expect to live for months or years on a romantic mountain top, you can forget it."

Couples that do end up "living together" often find it difficult to remove themselves from that situation. Making other housing arrangements can be difficult. The status of the couple's relationship will come into question. A whole web of concerns and questions may need to be considered. Most importantly, a couple needs to realize that the living arrangement was sinful and repentance is necessary. Pastor L. D. Redlin states that even



**Create in me
a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and
right spirit within me.**

—Psalm 51:10

when the couple finally removes the open sin of offense through marriage, "Something has been approved which God has disapproved. Without repentance the attitude of the heart is not right with God. Unless repentance comes about, an impenitent heart remains. This will seriously affect their marriage and may result in the total loss of faith."

COUNSELING OUR YOUNG AND STRENGTHENING THEIR RESOLVE TO RESIST THIS TEMPTATION

Let us say you become aware of a couple that is "living together" in your congregation. What should you do? Immediately call the "expert," your pastor, so he can deal with the situation? No. There is no reason to involve your pastor at this point. While it may be difficult, we as individuals should (if at all possible) speak to the person or couple involved directly. We may not be perfect in our approach or what we say, but as Christians we should,

out of love for our fellow Christians, speak to them respectfully and show our concern over the situation.

Young adults are entitled to their own space and do not need parents unnecessarily meddling into their private affairs. As stated in a recent parenting seminar, you should "pick your battles." Teenagers and young adults do not respond well to constant criticism or correcting. There are some areas in life that young people have to experience on their own. In the case of spiritual and moral concerns, a parent should, however, provide guidance whenever possible. A few choice words at times may be all that is necessary. There are so many bad influences in the world that can pull young people towards immorality.

It seems that many young adults who become inactive in their church are more apt to drift away from the moral high ground. We should make every effort to keep our youth involved as much as possible. Set a good example for them to follow, and again, let them know what your expectations are.

What further actions can we take to educate our youth and better prepare them for handling these temptations? Certainly number one is providing educational opportunities and a proper home environment that will nurture good Christian values. Let them know what your expectations are in regard to their conduct when dating and going steady. Young people need to be reminded of Jesus' words when He said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:18).

Finally, we should do our best to pro-

ject a positive image towards marriage as God intended it. Young Christian men and women should demonstrate respect for each other when dating or in times of courtship. Remind them that they should honor and serve God in all they do. May this closing thought of the

apostle Paul remain in our hearts and those of our children, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" (2 Tim. 4:18)



Fourteen Bible-centered devotions for the person who wants to know more about God and life with God.

#6: Why is it always about Jesus?

Dear friend, we cannot discuss religion without bringing Jesus into the conversation. Why is Jesus always standing in the middle of God's religion?

Because Jesus belongs there. It is His rightful place, for Jesus is God's Son, and Father-God has very deep feelings about His Son. Jesus is not just another good fellow and a smart person, but the eternal Son of God. Jesus is not just another professor of religious ideas or a great Rabbi. The wonderful truth is that God's own Son came down from His throne in heaven to give us His Father's word on religion and Truth.

This was Jesus' mission in life—"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows . . . the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Mt. 11:27). When you read your Bible, you are reading God's Word, and the more you read it, the more you will see Jesus (God's Son) as your Savior.

Here is how God in the Bible speaks to us about Jesus: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. . . Listen to Him!" (Mt. 3:17; 17:5) "When the fullness of the time had



come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). "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" (Jn. 3:16).

Jesus emphasizes this very deliberately: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (Jn. 5:24). "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.... You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these

[Scriptures]...testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39).

You will find, over and over—especially in the New Testament part of the Bible—that Jesus is the center of all God's plans for you. "The Savior Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own

special people..." (Titus 2:14).

God has so much to tell you yet!
Stay tuned!

Abiding steadfast, firm, and sure,
The teachings of the Word endure.
Blest he who trusts this steadfast Word;
His anchor holds in Christ, the Lord. Amen!

—Paul R. Koch



Pastor Paul F. Nolting (1923-2005)

A man who for many years walked tall among us within our synod—theologically, even more so than his imposing physical stature—walks among us no more. Pastor Paul Frederick Nolting has left us for his heavenly home.

On March 22, 2005, Pastor Nolting passed away in an Eau Claire, Wisconsin, nursing home, with loved ones all around. Six days later (March 28) a memorial service was held at his home congregation, Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, with Pastors Paul Tiefel and Mark Gullerud conducting the service. A number of the extended Nolting family lent God-given musical talents to the service. Regarding that funeral "Victory Service," those who spoke to us mentioned the dominance of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the service—that gospel which assures all Christian believers that death is truly an entrance to glory with the Savior.

Born April 28, 1923 in Brooklyn, New York, the second son of Pastor Karl and Lucy (Plage) Nolting was reborn through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism on May 20 of that year. During his childhood Paul moved with



Pastor & Mrs. Paul F. Nolting

his family to Frontenac, Minnesota. He was confirmed in the Christian faith at St. John's Lutheran Church there. He attended Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) in New Ulm, Minn., graduating from the high school department in 1939 and the college itself in 1944. Paul continued his Christ-centered education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, Wis. from which he was graduated with a theological degree in 1947. (Lifetime student that he was, later in life—1969—he earned a Masters Degree in Political Science from Mankato State University, Mankato, Minn.)

After serving briefly as tutor at DMLC, he accepted a call and was ordained and installed as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pelikan

Lake, Minn. on March 21, 1948. That began a public ministry which was to last a full fifty years. It included service to the Lord in Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod (WELS) congregations in Pelikan Lake and Sleepy Eye, Minn. In 1959 Pastor Nolting left WELS for conscience reasons; he became instrumental in forming a new church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Within this synodical fellowship Pastor Nolting served congregations in Sleepy Eye; West Columbia, S.Car.; Ketchikan, Alaska; Austin, Tex.; Dallas, Tex; Alexandria, Va.; Loveland, Colo.; and Rochester, N.Y. A number of these congregations were served while Pastor Nolting was CLC missionary-at-large (1979-1985). During retirement in Eau Claire, Pastor Nolting served as vacancy pastor in Sister lakes, Mich. and Fridley, Minn.

While serving his Lord and Savior in an obviously busy pastoral career, Pastor Nolting served the church body as a whole as well. He was CLC Secretary for many years, serving in that capacity at synod Conventions and pastoral conferences. He was Editor of the *Ministry By Mail*, which went into the homes of scattered ("isolated") CLC Lutherans as well as to others who requested his weekly sermons and accompanying bulletins which contained biblical commentary on a host of timely issues confronting the church militant. In addition he was a regular contributor—his writings always reflecting biblically solid, orthodox Lutheran theology—to the *Lutheran Spokesman* and the *Journal of Theology*. Nolting's biblical studies in the area of prophecy (including books like Daniel and Revelation) found him

also writing about prophecy or speaking on the subject at various church-sponsored seminars.

We trust that these words are more than enough to explain our opening comment that here was a man "who walked tall among us...theologically." Talk to any active member of the CLC in the first four decades of its existence, and you will likely find agreement that Brother Nolting's Spirit-honed talents were truly a gift from God to the Church. While his biblical, orthodox Lutheran witness and testimony will be missed in person, we are confident that this same witness and testimony will continue to speak within—and even outside of—this fellowship via the written word for years to come.

In July 1991 Pastor Nolting's devoted wife Eva—to whom he was married in June, 1948—preceded him to heaven's glory. In June 1992 he was married to Betty Oster. Pastor Nolting is survived by his wife Betty; by children: Ruth (Dennis) Ahrens, Valentine, Neb.; Susan (Steve) Lentz, Eau Claire, Wis.; Pastor Paul (Sara) Nolting, Mankato, Minn.; and Beth (Mark) Kranz, Eau Claire, Wis. He is also survived by eight step-sons, twelve grand-children, 21 step-grandchildren, 2 step-great-grandchildren; by two brothers: Carl (Nita) Nolting, Pompano Beach, Fla., and Albert (Marie) Nolting, Burnsville, Minn.; by nieces and nephews.

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions

July, 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Text</u>	<u>A leading thought on the text</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	Numbers 16:1-11	We're just as good as you are	377,5
2	16:12-19	All the congregation against them	377,6
3	16:20-30	A new judgment for the oldest sin	377,7
4	16:31-35	You shall not tempt the Lord	377,9
5	16:36-40	A permanent warning against self-assertion	377,10
6	16:41-50	A great type of Christ's intercession	371,1-4
7	17:1-11	Everything depends on Jehovah's choice	371,5-7

After thirty-seven years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel was brought once more to the border of the promised land, and there God proved again that He alone can be trusted to keep His promise.

8	20:1-9	History repeats itself: sin and pardon	373,1-3
9	20:10-13	Even Moses and Aaron rebel	373,4-5
10	20:14-21	A new test for new pilgrims	373,6
11	20:22-29	The priesthood must go on	373,7
12	21:4-9	Come to the cross, trust Christ, and live	373,8

Though many contests were over, Israel must learn that heathenism was an enemy of the Kingdom of God. No alliance was to be tolerated—a painful lesson learned with Balak and Baalam.

13	22:1-14	To curse or not to curse is the question	383,1-2
14	22:15-20	A sugary "please" does not budge God	283,3
15	22:21-30	God sends an unlikely messenger	383,4
16	22:31-41	The word of God with no "ifs"	385,1-2
17	23:1-10	1500 years before Judas	385,1-5
18	23:11-24	Oh, what God has done!	385,6-10
19	24:1-9	Blessing for blessing; curse for curse	99,1
20	24:15-25	A Star and Scepter out of Jacob	99,2-3

Deuteronomy: Was Israel now ready to cross the Jordan and possess the land? Moses naturally desired to do so, but since he represented the Law, a new leader was chosen to cross over Jordan.

21	3:23-39	Instead of passing through, seeing into	410,1-2
22	5:1-25	Farewell! Blessing and Judgment	410,3-4
23	6:1-9	To discipline is to educate: do it in Christ	630,1
24	6:10-19	Remember! Remember! I forgot, I forgot.	630,2-3
25	6:20-25	When children ask, tell the Truth	627,1-2
26	18:9-14	Let others have their magicians	627,3-5
27	18:15-22	Your Jehovah will give you a Prophet	353,1-2
28	30:11-20	The Word is very near you	353,3-4
29	31:30-32:43	The song of Moses praising the Lord	463
30	33:1-29	Moses' blessings on the tribes of Israel	427
31	34:1-12	Moses passed on; Joshua brought forward	293



Announcements

CLC General Pastoral Conference
June 14-16, 2005
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Agenda:

1. New Testament Exegesis, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12—Pastor Philip Matzke
2. Old Testament Exegesis, continuation of Joel 2ff—Pastor Roland H. Gurgel
3. Promoting the Sanctity of the Divine Call in Our Midst—Pastor David Schaller
4. Effective Preaching in an Era of Short Attention Spans—Pastor David Povolny
5. Equipping the Saints for the Work of the Ministry (Ephesians 4:12, involving a wider range of members in the congregation)—Pastor Delwyn Maas
6. Review of the Canonicity of Scripture (What are the facts that determine our assurance of canonicity)?—Pastor Dennis Rieken
7. Encouragement to Evangelism (cf. Luke 14:15-24)—Pastor Todd Ohlmann
8. Flee Sexual Immorality: Godly Counsel for the Shepherd and His Flock (sexual abuse, perversion, addiction, etc.)—Pastor Mark Gullerud

Minnesota Delegate Conference
June 12, 2005, 3:00 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota

Agenda:

1. Maintaining an Evangelical Approach in Our Application of the Doctrine of Fellowship — Pastor Paul D. Nolting
2. The Use and Benefit of Individual Church Record Keeping—What Data to Keep and How Long? — Mr. Tom McLaughlin

3. Bible Study (text is presenter's choice)—
Pastor James Albrecht
Chaplain—Pastor Bruce Naumann
—*Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Secretary*

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Matthew Hanel, who was called by St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas, to be its pastor, was installed on April 3, 2005.

—*Pastor Luke Bernthal*



Traveling Vacation Bible School (TVBS) display at last summer's synod Convention