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My dear Brother:

Yesterday morning I awoke somewhat earlier than usual. The first touch of light was on the tree beyond my window, and the street was still with the grateful quiet of dawn. I suddenly realized that it was the first Sunday of the new academic year. Since no one in the house was stirring (not even Stephen, age three, who thinks 6:00 a.m. is a good time to sing a hymn of praise in a monotone which only the angels can appreciate), I lay quietly for a while thinking of the uncounted thousands of words which would be said this morning, in uncounted pulpits, about the great monosyllables of life: God—Christ—man—life—hope—faith—love. I thought of our own preacher who today was beginning a schedule of four services, every hour on the hour, every Sunday until June. Two thousand students and eleven hundred local communicants have made this schedule necessary. I said a small prayer for his strength of body and mind

Idly my thoughts wandered around the kingdom — to the brother in Minnesota who was preaching yesterday against a dark background of personal sorrow — to the brother in Michigan who received a call at the age of 63 and is now very happy in a small parish as autumn comes for him and the world — to the brethren in the Far East for whom it was already Monday — to all the weary, bewildered and lonely souls for whom one hour this Lord's Day in our churches would be rest and peace and joy. What an awesome thing the Church of God is at any given moment in its march toward the last consummation! So many souls already in, so many, many souls still out — still to be reached and touched by the breath of the Spirit, moving over the dark waters of our human confusion and weakness. A good subject for meditation at dawn on a Sunday morning

By this time you are undoubtedly in the full swing of another year of organized congregational life. The classes have begun, the societies meet, the telephone rings, the sick must be visited, the lost must be found, whether they live on a gravel road or in a walk-up apartment. It is a strange life the modern pastor leads, and not all of it, I suspect, is good. Last month I spent a happy and profitable week with some of the brethren in North Carolina. Several times, in the course of our discussions, we talked about the great need for a continuing, constant recovery of the essence of our ministry, its center of gravity in the Cross, its nearness to God, its glory and its power. All these do not lie in meetings and suppers and building programs, but in meditation and prayer and the maintenance of that inner quality of stillness and strength which has always been the mark of a great and dedicated ministry. A few days ago I read again Isaiah's words which might well be written on the walls of our sacristies throughout the land. They sum it all up: "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." In 1955 it is probably more true than ever before that the world will not listen to another voice from the world. It will listen only to men who have been touched by the eternal Christ, made manifest on the Cross and living now in His Church — men who have been on their knees and received the royal knighthood — men who are partakers of His immortality, His light and His heaven.

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University notes: Have you noticed any marked and sudden change in your "screw-ball" mail during the past year? It seems that mine has trebled and quadrupled. (I confidently expect that some good brother will find a personal reason for this.) I refer to the epistles, usually long and anonymous, which are clearly the product of "tetched" minds, not sufficiently deranged to be put away, but clearly off the trolley. Happily, they are usually harmless. There is the gentleman who recently wrote as follows: "I used to support the University, but now that you are hanging dormitories from the clear blue sky I quit." Another wrote a long letter in reverse alphabet — for "a" he used "z", for "b" he used "y", for "c" he used "x". One of the faithful unsung heroes in the office spent some weary hours trying to decipher the epistle, just on the long chance that he might be offering to give us a million dollars. He was not. Another correspondent wants "the names of the five men who have made millions out of Valparaiso University in the past thirty years." So do I. Still another wants to have the names of the Catholic priests who are teaching on our campus. So do I.

And so on . . . Then there are, of course, always the "professional haters" — the men and women who have a demonic phobia about something — communism or anti-communism, Romanism or anti-Romanism, women's bathing suits, Eisenhower, Truman, votes for women, income taxes, etc. Some of these, I must admit, are more than a little frightening. Years ago one of our professors at St. Louis said solemnly again and again: "Beware of the one-track mind." To that I would add these thirty years later: "Beware of the man or woman whose life and thought are built on hate." They are dangerous to themselves, disastrous for the world, and fatal for the Church.

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Our new men's dormitories . . . Housing 322 men, Dau and Kreinheder halls represent a new type of construction which has already attracted wide attention. The major reason for building as we did is, of course, financial. The cost of the individual units in these halls is considerably lower than we could possibly achieve in any traditional building. Severely functional and yet beautiful they are, I believe, a good reflection of the efforts of our Board of Trustees to get the most out of every dollar our friends entrust to us. If you should be driving along Highway 30 at any time, be sure to stop off long enough to look closely at these buildings as well as at the new Valparaiso Union. They are interesting and exciting.

I hope you will permit me to say a word about the "Building for Christ" collection. We are deeply grateful to the brethren who have loyally supported an effort which was quite unique in our circles. Present reports are somewhat confusing. The prognoses of the trained observers at 210 North Broadway differ. Most of them seem to feel that with a little effort, especially in congregations that have done nothing until now, the full amount of \$5,000,000 could be reached by January 1, 1956. Certainly the need is greater now than ever. Our enrollment here at Valparaiso University now stands at 2,230. More than 90 per cent of the students living on our campus are our own Lutheran boys and girls. An investment in them for the long and uncertain years ahead is certainly good, lasting and God-pleasing. I hope, therefore, that the brethren who have not yet taken part in the "Building for Christ" effort will do so within the next six months.

One of the things that has interested me about the entire project is the wide and astonishing spread between congregations. Here is a small struggling mission in Kansas that averages \$24 per communicant; there is a large wealthy congregation in a neighboring state that averages \$1.92. Whence the difference? As always, not in the pocketbook and the bank, but in the heart and the pastor. Also in financial matters (as well as all others) the ancient axiom holds: "No church ever rises higher than its ministry." With all our emphasis on lay leadership and lay activity we may as well face the inexorable and unavoidable fact that in the long view a parish always reflects the attitude, devotion and vision of the man in the pulpit. There are occasional exceptions, of course, but not many and not for long. Under the forgiving eye and heart of the great Shepherd the responsibility is still ours whom the Holy Ghost has made overseers. It is evident, of course, that in any specific project, such as the "Building for Christ" effort, there may be very special and good reasons why a given parish could not do what one might expect in the ordinary course of events. I know that that is very true in a number of instances. However, the general rule concerning the central importance of the attitude of the pastor is still valid.

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Which reminds me of two conferences of "overseers" which I attended during the summer of 1955 — the Visitors and Fiscal Conference at Concordia College, St. Paul, and the Triennial Professors' Conference at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, in August. After thirty years of meetings and conferences in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (my sainted grandfather, a country parson in Perry County, used to tell me "Ihr versammelt euch noch in den Himmel hinein.") I am inclined to look at such gatherings with a suspicious and jaundiced eye. Too often they are considered an achievement rather than a promise of achievement, an end rather than a means to an end. Gathered in a great hall with hundreds of like-minded, devoted brethren it is easy to forget that the Holy Spirit really operates in a little white church on Sunday mornings or in the quiet routine of a classroom at one of our Concordias. Pentecosts are rare, but Sundays are not.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding, I must report that the conferences of the summer of 1955 were really worthwhile. The program of the Visitors and Fiscal Conference at St. Paul was well-planned, well-organized and well carried out. Some of the lectures at the morning sectional conferences reflected much thought and prayer. The final unanimity with which the visitors adopted a whopping budget for 1956 was encouraging. Organizationally The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod is in very good health.

PERSONAL NOTE: During the course of the St. Paul conference I met an unusually large number of brethren who were at Springfield with me thirty-odd years ago. Some of them had even lived through my classes and had turned out well despite everything. It was a melancholy, and yet warm, experience to see that they are now visitors, grandfathers, weighty and important citizens. For a few irregular hours we remembered the cold winter mornings when we tackled Greek at 7:00 a.m., the hot summer after-

noons when they wrestled with physics and biology under the guidance of an instructor who was only five pages ahead of them in the textbook, the baseball teams that cleaned up in Illinois for a number of years — and so on. I must confess that few things interest me more than the appearance of a graying brother with a splendid bay-window who wanders up and opens the conversation by saying: "Do you remember?" Suddenly the years drop away, the curtains of time open, and I am a part of all that I have met. This, I believe, will be one of the great and splendid things about heaven — the remembrance of things past — but only the good and the holy and the happy things — the things which God has done for us and the few little crumbs which we were able to return to him during our small journey between the eternities.

The Triennial Professors' Conference at River Forest was also exceedingly well planned and executed. Some of the discussions were as intellectually and spiritually exciting as anything I have seen and heard in years. Never before in the history of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has there been such a united, intelligent effort to make Lutheran doctrine relevant to Lutheran life on every level — intellectual, social and spiritual. More and more our Concordias are being manned by men who know just what to take from the fleshpots of American education and — the more important — what to leave. Perhaps our only weakness is that we do not give them enough time for study and research. I heard a half-dozen ideas at the conference which under ideal circumstances would have justified a year's leave of absence and a grant-in-aid in order to pursue a line of inquiry which would be immensely valuable in the embattled years ahead.

FOOTNOTE: A special salute to the brethren at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, the faculty and the administration for an extraordinarily efficient job of handling the Professors' Conference. After fifteen years as a college administrator I naturally go to another campus with a sharp and roving eye. I must say that our Teachers College at River Forest impressed me deeply. It is a first-rate institution. The work of an intelligent administration, an outstanding business manager, a cooperative faculty is evident wherever you turn. River Forest has become a school of which all of us can be justly proud

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Back to Valparaiso for a moment: Even though we now have 2,200 students, we are still very much interested in the quality of the young men and women who come to our campus. At the close of our opening convocation I was very much pleased when approximately two hundred and fifty valedictorians, salutatorians and members of honor societies came forward at the request of our admissions officers. In the maintaining of the high quality of our student body our pastors occupy a central position. There are few things that you can do for the University which are more important than giving us the name of a boy or girl who will be a good investment for the long years. It is evident, of course, that we do not stress merely the intellectual qualities of a student. We are equally interested in a good character and a first-rate personality.

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OTHER MATTERS: Have you paid any attention to the German language lately? I know that some of the brethren still handle it well even though it is a language which was permanently frozen in our pulpits about a hundred years ago. I must confess that my speaking of it has become "holperig", but I still read it with much joy. A few days ago I received a mimeographed letter from Pastor H. Katterfeld of Munchen who made several trips to America during the past few years and visited many of our institutions. I am sure that some of you met him here and there. I would like to quote one paragraph, perhaps more for the language than the content. If you can read it without a desperate dash for the German dictionary, you are still at the head of the class.

Die klare Grundlage des lutherischen Bekenntnisses, die solange klar und fest ist, als wir unter ernster Prufung von der Schriftgemassheit dieses Bekenntnisses uberzeugt sein durfen und mussen. Wenn ich die theologische und kirchliche Lage in Deutschland, aber auch daruber hinaus, ansehe, dann mochte ich sagen: wir durfen die Gemeinden nicht uber ein bestimmtes ertragliches Mass hinaus auf den schwankenden Boden einer subjektiven, allen Zeitströmungen und zeitbedingten Einsichten unterworfenen Theologie und eines entsprechenden Kirchenverstandnisses hinausfuhren. Das mussen wir Theologen und Pfarrer, auch wenn es uns schwer fallt, bei uns selbst ausmachen, in einer notwendigen Stellvertretung. Ich lebe der Uberzeugung, dass wir, wenn all die Schwankungen der letzten Jahrzehnte irgendwann und irgendwo einmal zu einer Klarung gekommen und auf ihren tatsächlichen Sachverhalt zuruckgefuhrt worden sind, wieder des Glaubens der lutherischen Reformation, d.h. des Glaubens der ersten Christenheit werden froh und dankbar sein durfen, ganz abgesehen von vielleicht sehr wichtigen Fragen im Einzelnen, die anders oder breiter als vor 400 Jahren beantwortet werden mussen. Bei der grossen Bedrohung unseres geistlichen Lebens durch die Not und Seuche der Unsicherheit und Fragwürdigkeit tut unseren Gemeinden klare Bezeugung der gottlichen biblischen Wahrheit not. Gott hat uns klare Verheissungen, Taten und Pfander seiner Gnade gegeben.

End of German lesson During recent months several brethren have been kind enough to say that an occasional reference to a book which has crossed my horizon always interests them. One honest brother writes: "Mention a book now and then. I may not have the money to buy it or the time to read it, but I can at least look intelligent when somebody mentions it." Which reminds me—few investments by a congregation are more fruitful than ten or fifteen dollars a month to buy their pastor some books. Much is being written these days which can enrich our ministry. In fact, I sometimes feel that I should like to start a small and humble campaign for book allowances in all congregational budgets.

Perhaps the most stimulating volume to come across my desk for a long time has been Alexander Miller's "The Renewal of Man," a twentieth century essay on justification by faith. It is one of the first volumes in the Christian faith series under the general editorship of Reinhold Niebuhr.

It is somewhat difficult to convey the flavor of the entire volume. Like all stimulating things it is spotty. There are entire sections at which all of us will nod our heads approvingly. There are others where the author is inclined to overstate his case. By and large, however, I feel that the volume is a remarkable restatement of the doctrine of justification by faith in terms which are relevant to modern thought. The first chapter, "Man at the End of His Tether", is a remarkable overview of the despair in which man has found himself for several decades.

Perhaps a paragraph or two will give some idea of the nature of the volume.

"The articulate self-consciousness of our generation begins to ask questions which scream for Christian answers. Yet the first comment out of the Christian complex of faith must be that the questions cannot be answered in the terms in which they are asked, nor can an answer be found among the available religious — which is to say human — options. For it is intrinsic to the Christian understanding of things that life and history do pose questions for which life and history do not provide the ingredients of a solution."

A paragraph which gave me a good deal of pause was the following:

"The *sola gratia, sola fide*, at which Luther arrives is not a solution to the religious question: it is the establishment of a new stance in which the religious question is set aside as irrelevant and impossible of answer in religious terms. What Luther finds in the Gospel is that, not only is the religious question posed with such rigor that it becomes humanly and finally unanswerable, but it becomes finally and forever irrelevant. The self-offering of Jesus as the Christ is for him the stooping of the divine Charity to our necessity. It carries the assurance — 'while we were yet sinners Christ died for us' — that our dilemma is totally comprehended and compassed by the love of God. Our self-love pales and fades before the love Christ has for us."

There are many more like that. I know that several of our brethren have already studied the book thoroughly and have been persuaded to return to our Confessions for a more thorough study of the very heart of the Lutheran interpretation of the Gospel.

So much for this time. I bespeak the continued blessing of God upon your work for the Kingdom during the coming year. As time rolls by, perhaps we realize more and more that our own works are always ambiguous, wrought out of insecurity, and marked with a tragic sense of incompleteness. That is a part of our living in the Church Militant. Our aspirations, however, must always be beyond our achievements. We see more clearly today than ever before that the essence of this world is always the atmosphere of Belshazzer's feast. There is handwriting on the wall. Change and decay are in the air. As the voices of the Church Militant we are forever crying to all the Babylons and Romes of time, "Remember the end." The evidences of dust and returning to dust are all about us. What is now left and will always be left is God and His Gospel and the touch of heaven upon the work of our feeble hands.

Fraternally yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

President