

TABLE TALK

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25 YEARS OF TABLE TALK

News and Viewpoints of the Student Body
of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

FROM THE EDITORIAL STAFF

If you wish to express your views in Table Talk, please do so. We request that you type your articles single-space in columns 3 1/2 inches wide and 8 1/2 inches long with justified margins. Proposals for monthly columns are also welcome. Poetry and art will be considered along with letters, book reviews and feature articles. Nothing will be published without the author's name. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the staff.

TABLE TALK is published monthly by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. Opinions reflected are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or editorial board, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

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From The President

I hope you will excuse the very secular - even economic - language I have used for the title of this column this month. Frankly, I know of no better way to write about the quantitative needs in the church for ordained leadership or the availability of graduating seminarians to fill such needs.

At the most recent meeting of the ELCA Conference of Bishops the number of potential first call congregations/parishes for graduating seminarians totaled 342. The number of candidates approved for ordination is, however, only 278. That's a supply shortage of 64. Second career candidates (163) substantially exceed first career graduates (115). 63 per cent are male; the group is predominantly married.

This is the second consecutive year when the supply of first call situations far exceeds the number of graduates. The seminarian shortage last year, for example, was twice as high. The near future promises more of the same, with anticipated retirements jumping from 281 in 1990 to 418 in 1996. (These numbers could be affected by premature clergy deaths and by pastors who retire earlier or later than age 65).

First call situations are often those where there is a minimum compensation package. This may mean multiple church parishes in rural settings or in communities with declining memberships. Dr. Mary Paula Walsh's recent research suggests a growing feminization of rural clergy, beginning with the entrance of women into first call situations. Mobility for pastors who are seeking second, third and fourth calls is restrictive generally, especially so for women.

Do these facts suggest desirable changes in the ELCA system. I believe so, in the following areas:

1. The ELCA candidacy process is probably the most sophisticated and rationalized in American Christianity. But, are the costs and redundancies justifiable? Has the time come to review this process to assess whether it may militate against candidate recruitment in general and against women and multicultural inclusivity in particular?

2. Who are the proper ones to help lead others into a consideration of a vocation in ordained ministry? Most synods say, "every ordained minister shall seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the gospel." Churchwide, synod and seminary recruitment should increasingly direct recruitment in this direction. We may also want to encourage students to participate in this process.

3. Regional church planners should give increasing attention to church structures historically derived from a past era when the supply of pastors was greater than now. Are all parishes institutionally viable?

4. New attention needs to be given to the theological education of the laity, some of whom may be needed -- as has already been discovered among Roman Catholics and others -- to perform tasks previously reserved for the ordained. If such a cadre is identified and trained, how shall they function in a church with poorly articulated tasks and status for lay volunteers?

5. What about associates in ministry? Most tell me that they often feel "second class" in both seminary and church. Should we consider new offices in the church with appropriate status, appointment and deployment, and recognition? What might a Lutheran "ordained diaconate" (if appropriate theologically) look like?

As Bishop Donald J. McCoid (Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod) recently wrote in Echo:

The Holy Spirit and the Church calls... the Holy Spirit and the Church can also use our words and witness in the calling of pastors. We need to give witness to others about our own call and about what it means to be an ordained minister in Christ's Church -- sharing the Word and administering the Sacraments; caring for God's children and sharing a ministry of witness, learning and service.

Amen.

J. Russell Hale, Acting President
3/90



From the Parish

When your editor requested this piece we decided that it might be best to take the "seminary in retrospect" approach and try to address the question: "what are your reflections on your seminary education, now that you have eight months of parish experience?" We both realized that this approach would, more than anything else, reflect a conception of what parish ministry is. The question is one of theology, insofar as "theology" is the word which describes the general practice and goal of a seminary's task of preparing parish ministers for their ministries. Though it's starting to become a nasty word, a seminary education is still called "theological." My answer to the questions posed above will simply reflect my conception of what theological education should be, tempered now by eight months in a parish. And like it or not, answers to those questions today tend to put a person into one of two opposing camps, camps that are reflected in our seminary's own division of faculty and curriculum, and, at a deeper level, camps that seem to have begun a battle for the soul of the church. A drastic diagnosis? Shades of the polemical editorials of dialog or Lutheran Forum? (Does anybody even read them anymore??) You decide.

In eight months of parish ministry, in a mid-sized, blue collar, somewhat elderly congregation, I have not found the job to be described by the two traditional categories: practical and theological, or, as the divisions of faculty so baldly put it: Bible, History and Theology vs. "Ministry." Oh, I have done the occasional job which might be truly described as practical -- fixing a door lock, painting my study, typing a bulletin, etc...but this much-loved distinction is not helpful in describing or deciding what I must do as a pastor. Rather, I find almost every working minute preoccupied with a question or a problem or a duty which stems from the call to be a speaker and guardian of the gospel among these people. As I struggle with this task, it has invariably been theology which inspires or sustains me. Some may argue that this is simply a self-fulfilling prophecy; that theology sustains me because I have chosen to conceive of myself as a theologian. This is certainly part of the truth. But I chose to see myself and prepare myself as a theologian in seminary because certain people convinced me that this indeed is

what the faithful I would eventually serve would both need and expect. The question then becomes: were those people right? Or was it a waste of time auditing theological loci and seminars, struggling to keep up my Greek, and trying to familiarize myself with Luther, Lutheranism, and the historical shape of theology? As far as I can detach myself from myself, as they say, and look objectively at my parishioners and their expectations of me, I have to say it seems that those people were most decisively right, and that my time in seminary spent trying to augment the established "theological" curriculum was well spent. Some highlights may be helpful to illustrate.

First, the most obvious field in which pastors are subjected to their congregation's expectations, approval, and disapproval has to be the pulpit. We are expected by our people to be proclaimers. And, except for the lucky few that find themselves relieved of this (often more than) weekly challenge by a team situation, preparing the Sunday sermon can quickly become a task that strains the limits of human creativity and expression. One is occasionally surprised by a favorable reaction to an obviously lousy effort (the Spirit of Christ blows where He wills). But far more often it is clear that the people's expectations are met and their hunger fed by sermons which are scripturally based and theologically informed, tell them something they haven't heard before (or at least within the last month), and probably most importantly, remind them of something that is all too easily forgotten: their utter dependence on the grace of God which is theirs in Christ. How to do this without a strong background in exegesis, and a theological foundation based on the centuries of interpretation of Christian faith and life and it's continuation today? How even to begin? And then, how to sustain such efforts week after week, without feeling like a broken record? A truly theological education is needed: constant references and allusions to "daily life" are dry and quickly exhausted. For most in Beaver Falls, daily life is a grind, and the gospel's theological interpretation of that grind is what is needed both to inspire and tolerate the grinding!

Second, few if any seminarians are graduating these days without being convinced (though sometimes reluctantly) →

of the urgent need for liturgical reform aimed at reclaiming the full celebration of the eucharist -- word and sacrament -- as the center of congregational life. Many "first call parishes" have yet to be led through such liturgical reform. Interpreting the local situation, planning such reform, and leading a congregation through it in a pastorally sensitive way is an enormous challenge in most places. In my own experience, and in the experience of most of my colleagues, congregations see this as a battle between the pastor's subjectively held opinions and their own. Transcending these battle lines and bringing the issues under the authority of scripture and tradition often takes years of thoughtful, informed catechesis. Again, there is no substitute for the study of the classic theological loci, both historically and systematically, and a strong knowledge of the church's liturgical traditions (and heresies!) and their biblical and theological underpinnings.

Lest one mistakenly infer that other sorts of knowledge and learning -- such as sociological, multi-cultural, demographic, psychological, therapeutic, communication-theoretical, and all the others miscellaneous which are taught at seminary -- are unnecessary, think again. The interpretation offered here is an attempt to illustrate that the parish pastor must first and foremost be a competent theologian. The gospel is a promise which by its nature interprets all of life, and so all of life indeed is its necessary possible object, both in the gospel ministry itself and in education for that ministry. But priorities must be set, both in ministry and theological education. This article has been a suggestion that augmenting the required theological component of the "theological education" offered at Lutheran Theological Seminaries could only benefit future pastors and the mission of the church.

Pastor Steve Verkouw
Christ Lutheran Church, Beaver Falls, Pa.

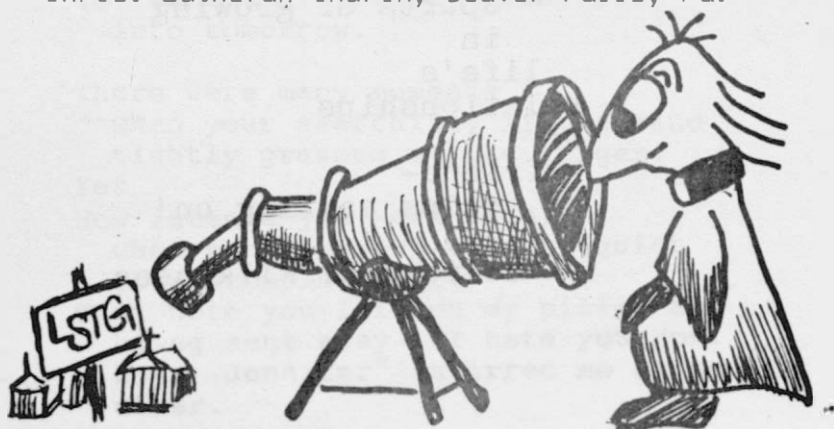
Review: Romero

March 30, 1990, the Social Action Committee showed the film "Romero" in the coffee shop. Although everyone knew how this would end, the film held the audience spell bound. This movie was very graphic and difficult to watch at times. I was left with the thought of how awful to have to live this on a daily basis. In truth, things have not changed appreciably in El Salvador.

What this film revealed, however, was the development of a hero on a journey. He had been elected Archbishop because he was felt to have been a safe choice. He would not make waves, they thought. We witnessed a man on a journey from noninvolvement to being the spokesperson for the poor. We watched as a few committed priest were tortured, murdered, or lost friends. The high point for me was a confessional scene when a priest confessed to Oscar that he had been judgmental and had felt that the Archbishop would be ineffectual. Then he followed the confession by saying, "I was wrong".

A few weeks ago in chapel, someone read the words of Bishop Gomez saying, "Assassination does not harm the church, assassination strengthens the church". This was an extremely engaging production which left me feeling sad that the murder occurred. It left me proud to be a part of that same church. But mostly it left me in doubt whether or not I could ever pay the price Romero paid. I was really lift shaken by the whole experience.

Phyllis Pelletier



Poetry

CHANGE

CHANGE

grabs me
unaware
leaving its touch upon my life.

Unwanted
IT escapes my push
away,
forever never in my life.

Needed
IT captures me quickly
quietly,
stirring growing signs of life.

Feared
IT hears my laugh
crying,
reaching within the depths of
my life.

Loved
IT battles my soul
searching,
piercing the closing of my mind's
life.

Risked
IT speaks through Christ
unchanged,
giving faith, love, hope to new
life.

Change
changes me
thankfully
leaving its touch upon my life.

-- Solveig R. Wilkinson

SOON TO BE GREEN AGAIN

The unsowed seed has time still standing,
Of resurrection ever dreaming,
Taking root, its rude awakening,
Nature now begins its tolling.

Spring sapling sits in slowest silence,
Conceiving not cool consequence,
As nature rains ambivalence
Upon its future sequence.

Such potential atmosphere
Negates its nature's absent care.
The upstart sees no need to fear
And green, green garbs begins to wear.

- Viking Dietrich

FRIENDS

Laughs,
crys,
cheers of sharing
give
joy,
expectations
of
new
spurts of growing
in
life's
relationships
of
friend-
ships sailing on!

-- Solveig R. Wilkinson

Little One

To you my child I speak, my dear.
 What could I tell you,
 you for whom I am but a temporary
 assistant,
 you who are a living treasure.

Would I share the boundless love and
 joy that overflowed on my face at
 your birth, when I whispered,
 "Thank you! Thank you!"
 That has propelled me to tuck you in
 and bless you these nearly
 four thousand nights.

Should I tell of the sudden,
 crushing fear that overwhelmed me
 the night I thought your life
 would pass from this earth.
 You were so tiny then, and my silent
 screaming plea was heard.

Could I tell of the wonder in your
 eyes, as you toddled through the
 garden after the hopping toad.
 What of that shock when you were
 first greeted with a dog kiss.

You delighted when your brother
 cut your long locks--
 "to make you pretty."
 Do you remember the Christmas when
 at age four, he spent ALL HE HAD
 to give you the real china tea set.

I recall the day you carried
 flowers at your cousin's wedding.
 Would I see YOU
 someday standing tall or kneeling
 at the altar?

I have a glimpse of who you are,
 and you are becoming you.
 I wonder--what is your destiny?
 You seem to literally somersault
 into tomorrow.

There were many moments
 when your searching, little hand
 tightly grasped my one finger.

Yet
 How intense you were once,
 when sent to your room to quiet
 your stomping feet.
 That note you left on my pillow at
 being sent away--"I hate you Mom.
 Love, Jennifer"--stirred me as no
 other.

Truly, we share our life and time,
 memories, feelings, experiences,
 hopes, and more.
 Can you see wisdom and mercy here
 and there?

You were the one dreamed of for so
 long.

You were the apple of your Creator's
 eye and still are!
 This, my dear, is what I would like
 you to know.

Joanne Trowbridge, 1986

Japanese Translation of the Twenty-third Psalm

The Lord is my pace-setter,
 I shall not rush;
 He makes me stop and rest at
 quiet intervals.
 He provides me with images
 of stillness, which restores
 my serenity;
 He leads me in the ways of
 efficiency through calmness
 of mind.
 And his guidance is peace.
 Even though I have a great many
 things to accomplish each day,
 I will not fret, for his presence
 is here.
 His timelessness,
 His all importance
 will keep me in balance.
 He prepared refreshment and renewal
 in the midst of my activity
 By anointing my mind with his
 oils of tranquility,
 My cup of joyous energy overflows.
 Surely harmony and effectiveness
 shall be the fruits of my hours,
 For I shall walk in the pace of my
 Lord, and dwell in house forever.

(This was located by Joanne
 Trowbridge in the historical
 journals of the North Brewer-
 Eddington United Methodist Church,
 North Brewer, Maine. Misspellings
 are quoted correctly from the
 original.)

A Time of Preparation

Here we are in the middle of Lent, and I was feeling as if I were in the middle of the Sahara again. Isn't something supposed to be happening? Am I not supposed to be feeling something? What is this all about? Am I supposed to be resting for the growth spurt that is to follow? Will it follow? In the past of my childhood, every Friday during Lent, we were made to go to the Way of the Cross as well as morning mass. It was tedious. Isn't tedious better than nothing? It seems that here of all places, Lent should be experienced differently. Shouldn't it be deeper and more meaningful?

I think I felt that, once in seminary, our relationship, God's and mine, would be different. It hasn't been. Is my desert experience so different from Christ's? Forty days of fasting must have seemed tedious, many times. We read of the baptism of Jesus, followed by the temptations, and finally Passion Sunday. We don't read about those many days in between when tedium was in all probability the norm. Was that how Christ was prepared for Passion week? What did he do with all those hours? He probably didn't sit around complaining about the tediousness of his desert experience. But I want to get on with it. Let's get to the big stuff. Let's forget about walking through the desert sands. I want the church year to move faster. I want Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter all in the same week. Then Lord, I could do great things for you. I'm just cooling my heels here, wasting time.

Then I felt sure I heard a reply. "The time I arrange for preparation is never wasted. You're so impatient. How do you think I would have faced Passion week, if I hadn't worked my way through the desert? Examine the metamorphosis of the butterfly. It lays dormant in its cocoon for

a time and then starts to break out of it. For three days it struggles to emerge. In that time, it uses its wings to stretch and pull and tear at the cocoon, and if someone wanted to help it out and take a razor blade and cut the covering, the butterfly would not be able to fly. It would be prey to any and all predators, because it is in the struggle that its wings become strong enough to fly. I want you to fly."

I have lost sight of the price Jesus paid for my gift. Salvation didn't come cheap. I don't live in the desert anymore, at least not the Sahara. Today I live in a desert called complacency. I have taken this gift for granted so much that I have lost sight of Christ's preparation time and focused on the resurrection. I have to learn to walk through the day to day tedium to reach my goal. Jesus had to walk through it, but I felt I was different. I felt I could skip the preparation. I could get on with the issue at hand. But the issue at hand was preparation. I have to learn to be a chrysalis before I can be a butterfly. Yes, I am impatient; but fortunately, God isn't.

Phyllis Pelletier

Isn't it funny...

Concordia College maintains an intense but friendly rivalry with our cross-town foes at Moorhead State University. The tension was high a week before the big football game when their campus chaplain spoke at one of our daily chapel services. The subject of his message was prayer. He said that prayer was not like a Christmas "wish-list". He illustrated this point by saying that it wasn't fair for both teams to pray to God for a football victory. We would be backing God into a corner. The only solution that God could offer would be a tie. The final score of the game? 3 to 3.

Miriam Nicholson

Mistaken Identity

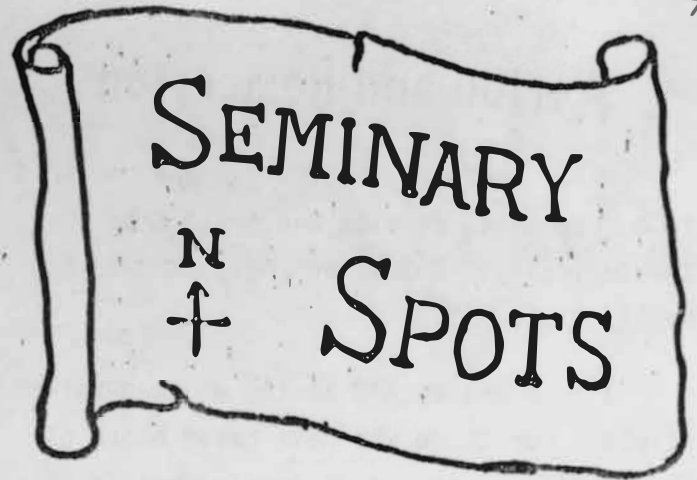
I completed a quarter of clinical pastoral education in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Although only one of our group was ordained, all of us chaplains were advised to wear clerical garb when we were on call for emergencies. On my first on call day I arrived late for lunch at the cafeteria. After scanning the room for a familiar face, I made my way to the table of a student nurse I'd met on my rounds. "Oh my God!" he exclaimed as he looked up at me. "No," I replied, "just a pastor."

submitted by the Rev. Beth B. Folkemer

FOCUS: Linda Cipriani

Linda Cipriani has been working for the Gettysburg Seminary for twelve years this August. Linda has a very diverse and important role within the life of the seminary. In fact, much of the daily business of the seminary hinges on her particular job. Linda is the director of the mailroom; she distributes the mail to the seminary community, as well as gets all of the seminary's daily mailings out. She does all of the bulk mailings for the seminary too, last year over fifty bulk mailings occurred out of the mailroom and over one hundred thousand labels were sent out. The mailroom has its own postmark, and essentially does everything to prepare the mail to go out. The post office then, picks up the mail and it is ready to be distributed.

In addition to all of the mailroom duties, Linda is also responsible for the seminary handbook, Table Talk, the syllabi for classes, and assorted copying and printing that



How many times have you walked past the statue of Martin Luther? I figure that I have passed by it about 750 times but I knew nothing of its history so it is the victim of my latest quest for information about a Seminary spot.

Our statue is an original work of art, cast in bronze and dedicated on May 8, 1947. There had been some discussion about copying some other portrait of Luther but this new interpretation of "Luther as Teacher" prevailed. Luther is shown reading a Bible, surrounded by other books and expounding some significant point of knowledge. If you are ambitious enough to climb up the pedestal you can see that Luther's right foot is stepping on a papal ticket of indulgence.

To the best of my knowledge this is the only statue of Luther in a sitting position. "Here I sit. I got tired from all that standing."

Miriam Nicholson

the seminary needs done. She also does auxillary orders for the development office.

Linda is a native of Gettysburg. she has two children from a previous marriage, and two step children. She is married to Larry Cipriani, who works for the maintenance department of the seminary. Linda contributes much to the life of the seminary with her "behind the scenes" kind of work. We appreciate her. Thank you Linda!

kris bell

Action and Reflection

While studying in D.C. you are required to do community service and reflect on this theologically. Sounds boring, I know. But really it is not.

I am doing my A/R at the Whitman-Walker Clinic. For those who have never heard of the clinic, it is one of the leaders in the testing and treatment of persons who are HIV+ or have AIDS. Yes, there is a distinction. Not everyone who is HIV+ will develop AIDS. With new treatment and early intervention the chances for a long life is becoming possible. Quite a change from just a few years ago.

My work at the clinic has thus far been in medical support services. In other words I register persons for the test and usher them in for the test. I am in training for HIV counseling, which means that I will be giving persons there results in a one-to-one counseling session. Sound scary? Well, once you have gone through the training, you are as prepared as you can be.

I have spent many hours learning what it means to be HIV+, consequences of having AIDS and non-judgmental counseling. There are few people who do not know someone who is HIV+ or has AIDS. It is quickly becoming a fact of life. And this is a fact many of us will be dealing with in the parish.

And please do not think that only gay males have the disease. Did you know that the virus is spreading the slowest now through the gay community. They have learned a very hard lesson and safe sex is now a way of life. Our heterosexual community is not learning as quickly. And as long as we see

AIDS as a gay disease it will continue to spread quickly and to newborn children. Women of color and children constitute the fastest growing population of HIV+ persons.

It is time for our church to take a new look at its position on AIDS. Does it have one? Jesus' ministry was to the outcasts of his society. Who can think of someone more outcast today than a person suffering with AIDS? They do not even receive a decent burial in most states. Jesus' ministry was one of touch. We need to reach out and touch these people and help them find the love of God present in their lives.

There are many good books out today to help us deal with most difficult topic. Most of them are available in the bookstore. I especially recommend Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' book: AIDS The Ultimate Challenge and AIDS and the Church by Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sutherland. Both of these books deal with AIDS in a different way--but each very helpful.

I know demands on reading time are great but hope you can find some time for these timely books. You may be surprised how helpful having a handle on this disease can be.

Nancy Ruckert

