

Table Talk

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Table Talk

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
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Contributors, The Students, Staff, and Faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

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From the Editor

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

God's grace and peace to you all! We find ourselves, one more time, entering the home stretch of the semester. For some of us, our approach to the end of the year marks the coming end of our first year as seminary students with the prospects of CPE or summer jobs fast approaching. For others, it marks the end of our second year at seminary with building excitement for upcoming Internships or plans that will make next year our last year of seminary thanks to fourth year Internships. For still others, the coming end of the semester heralds the coming end of Internship and the challenge of returning to seminary for a final year. And for others of us, it marks the end of a seminary career which brings with it the myriad of emotions, thoughts, concerns, and prayers that come with leaving this community of faith for first calls and/or other new opportunities for ministry.

Each upcoming Spring semester's end brings with it prospects for the same trials, tribulations, hopes and victories that face our seminary community year after year. Yet each Spring semester's end is met differently by every class of students. Each class meets, copes, and rejoices with those challenges, each in our own unique way.

So too we all meet the end of Lent, the journey of Holy Week, and the joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday year after year. The story we share year after year of Jesus' passion - his life, his death, and his resurrection - may be the same, but the way we meet, cope, and rejoice with it varies from year to year as we move ahead, each of us, in our journey of faith.

May your encounter with Lent, Holy Week, and Easter this year be a new and inspiring encounter with a God and Savior whose story of love, grace, and peace never changes.

Mark Olsen

(Mark is a first year student from the Metro DC Synod)

Lenten Devotion - I

"Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God." - Luke 13:10-13, NRSV

Lent is a time of sitting quietly in the presence of God and asking God to reveal to us what it is within our own spirits that keeps us bent over and crippled, unable to stand tall and be the people God calls us to be. During Lent I like to spend time with this passage from scripture. I imagine myself as a bent over person and I pour out my heart to Jesus, asking him to remove from me whatever it is that keeps me locked in bondage to myself, what it is that keeps me crippled and bent over. Then I image Jesus laying his hands on me and saying to me, "You are set free from your ailment." During this season of Lent let us ask God, in God's time, to heal our spirits of every affliction that, filled with the Holy Spirit, we might more completely and more faithfully serve God and one another.

*Elaine Morin
(Elaine is an STM student from the New England Synod)*

Lenten Devotion - II

GOD!

Is destiny a road where God meets us, despite our thoughts and plans?

Is God instead the plan, mapping the journey, and marking the way?

Or, perhaps, is God the very essence of our being, fully within us, yet fully without us,

And mysteriously containing us, while we yet are not contained?

And COULD God be love's gentle fix on our lives so pulled from its desire?

Lives that once turned and posed another choice

Determined that OUR way would be NO way entwined in another,

As here we are, torn from those carefully mapped journeys drawn by our human will?

Where, I pray, IS God? Where, I pray?

If a road, we must be walking it.

If a plan, then we're its pawns.

If an essence then, within and without, it surrounds what'ere we choose...

And mysteriously captures us in this love...

That WE can't explain...

God's surprise...

Free and gracious gift...

God!

Pat Tharp

(Pat is a second year student from the West Virginia - Western Maryland Synod)

Lenten Devotion - III

"In many cultures there is an ancient custom of giving a tenth of each year's income to some holy use. For Christians, to observe the forty days of Lent is to do the same thing with roughly a tenth of each year's days. During Lent, Christians are supposed to ask one way or another what it means to be themselves.

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most despise?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last forty days of your life, what would you do with it?

To hear yourself try to answer questions like these is to begin to hear something not only of who you are but of both what you are becoming and what you are failing to become. It can be a pretty depressing business all in all, but if sackcloth and ashes are at the start of it, something like Easter may be at the end."

- Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC.* New York: Harper & Row, 1979 (p. 74-75).

"...Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle." Isaiah 55:13, NRSV

*Nancy Gable
(Nancy is a Diaconal Minister and Director of Admissions,
Financial Aid, and Diaconal Ministry Preparation for LTSG)*

Lenten Devotion - IV

Mark 15:1-39 & Psalm 22

An image both heavy and hopeful: Jesus, taking upon himself all the pain of this world, and yet, somehow in the middle of that agony, still showing us the compassion of a God who dares to suffer with us, even to the point of death. No, we are not alone, not even in the final moment of loneliness. There too Jesus travels with us, and gives us a voice.

This assurance that Christ is with us even in what seems to be the most God-forsaken moments of our lives is powerfully portrayed in a shocking, but profound story told by Elie Wiesel in his first novel, Night.

"The SS seemed more preoccupied that morning, more disturbed than usual. To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadows over him...the three victims mounted together onto the chairs. The three necks were placed at the same moment within the nooses.

'Long Live Liberty!' cried the two adults.

But the child was silent.

'Where is G-d? Where is He?' someone behind me asked. At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over. Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon the sun was setting. 'Bare your heads!' yelled the head of the camp. His voice was raucous. We were weeping.

'Cover your heads'

Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive...

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look at him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him, his eyes were not yet glazed. Behind me, I heard the same voice asking: 'Where is G-d now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him: 'Where is he? Here he is — he is hanging here on the gallows...'"

Jesus' cry from the cross reminds us that no place in this world is bereft of God's presence. God is there for us and with us, in life and death. No matter how God-forsaken we may feel, no matter how lonely or hurt we may be, Christ has been there for us. He gives voice to our pain and meaning to our suffering. His cry is not a cry of resignation. It is a cry of hope, and with Christ, we too will see a day of promise and peace again.

Bill Gohl

(Bill is a second year student from the Metro New York Synod)

"The Fallacy"

"Read Philippians 1:12-18"

Once we resolve to obey God completely, it's easy to assume that life will go more smoothly. When it does, we think this proves that we're in God's will. If we run into obstacles, however, we're apt to conclude that both we and what we're doing are out of God's will. Rather than question our measuring stick, we question our dedication, and sometimes even God.

A mature Christian once said, 'It's a fallacy to believe that if we obey God, everything will go well. Being dedicated to God means going with [God] even when things go wrong. In fact,' he said assuredly, 'the gospel advances on disaster and suffering.'

Although Paul was imprisoned when he wrote to the Philippians, his hardships didn't alarm him. His goal was to preach the gospel, and he didn't question that goal just because he had been arrested. He made the most of the circumstances and proclaimed Christ to his captors. His chains had furthered the gospel (Phil. 1:12-14).

Consider your spiritual gifts and goals. Do you believe they're from God when they flourish but question them when they lead to difficulties? Don't be fooled by the fallacy that life will be easy if you obey God. God doesn't remove difficulties: [God] uses them for your good and for [God's] glory - J.E.Y."

- The March/April/May 1998 Issue of Our Daily Bread,
1997 RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan

*Elaine Morin
(Elaine is an STM student from the New England Synod)*

Recreation

Amidst the academics
We need to set aside
Some time for recreation
A thing we can't elide.

Rest also holds a bearing
In our course to educate
For as the word informs us
We need to re-create.

To recreate our spirit
To recreate our soul
To recreate ambition
To once again feel whole.

God, calm our troubled minds
And lose all our frustration
Help us find our peace in life
Through your gift of recreation.

Don Costlow
(Don is a second year student from the Allegheny Synod)

Knowing Who We Pray For

During the first semester, the community became accustomed to including the names of seminary interns in weekly prayer petitions. That practice will continue during the second semester, but will expand to include all candidacy track students undertaking the focused field experience through LTSG: those preparing for commission as an associate in ministry or consecration as a diaconal minister or deaconess. Like M.Div. students, each of these individuals is endorsed. For diaconal ministry candidates the equivalent of internship is the diaconal ministry field experience project. Associate in ministry candidates call it the focused supervised field experience and deaconess candidates call it supervised pastoral education.

Who are those people for whom we pray this Spring Term?

Community members are well acquainted with associate in ministry candidate Jenny Hubler, senior seminarian in the MA-MS, Track A program. Jenny completed her Teaching Parish at St. John's Lutheran Church in Littlestown and, after endorsement, continued there for her focused field experience in the area of educational and youth ministries.

Less known to you are five diaconal ministry candidates who are affiliated with LTSG: Ordice Gallups, P. Morgan Gordy, Lake Lambert, Jennifer Mirabella, and Karen White.

Ordice Gallups, earned his MAR from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in 1992 and his MTS from Spring Hill College (Mobile, AL) in 1997, with a major in theology. In the

professional world Ordice is a program analyst with the Social Security Administration. Ordice, a member of All Saints in Bowie, MD, is a specialist in worship and liturgy -- and he has a passion for social justice. He believes the life of the faithful revolves around, and flows from, the baptismal font and that liturgy nourishes individuals for the daily living of baptism. Those who joined the Reformation Service worshipping congregation at the National Cathedral (October 1997) tasted Ordice's abilities at liturgy development and action. The project Ordice has undertaken is "Deepen Our Worship Life to Prepare Us for Our Daily Ministry." Dr. Oldenburg serves as his project director.

P. Morgan Gordy, from Ocean Springs, Mississippi, is a registered nurse who holds her bachelors in nursing from the University of South Alabama (USA) and her masters in nursing from USA in the area of community health, with an emphasis in congregational health nursing. A candidate with the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA she is also a candidate with the Graduate Theological Foundation for a doctor of ministry in pastoral care and health care ministry. Morgan's project involves increasing congregations' awareness of Congregational Health Ministries and exploring with congregations (from a multi-disciplinary perspective) the vocational opportunities for service through health and healing ministries. Her project director is Dr. Richard Wallace from the faculty of LTSS, and director of the Lutheran Theological Center in Atlanta.

Lake Lambert, an instructor in religion and chair of ethics at Wartburg College, earned his BA and MTS at Emory University (Atlanta, GA) and his PhD in Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, NJ) in 1997. A candidate with the New Jersey Synod, Lake's area of specialization is the area of social ethics. His project creates, and utilizes, an adult learning curriculum in the area

of social ethics and religion for members of his congregation. Lake's project director is Dr. Fred Strickert, Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Wartburg College.

Jennifer Mirabella, whose specialization is in the area of bereavement support, is a candidate with the Rocky Mountain Synod. She earned her Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry (concentration in pastoral care) from St. Thomas Theological Seminary in Denver, CO, and serves as Director of Bereavement Support for Horan & McCotnaty Funeral Homes in Denver. Jennifer's project involves learning opportunities for congregation members in bereavement and the development of litanies, prayers, and brief liturgies to be utilized (by individuals, groups, and the congregation) in the weeks surrounding All Saints Day. Her project director is Dr. Balas.

Karen White, a candidate with the Southern Ohio Synod, is a 1991 graduate of Trinity Lutheran Seminary with her Masters in Theological Studies (concentration in biomedical ethics). A registered nurse serving at the Ohio State University Hospital in Columbus, OH, she undertook the study of theology in order to integrate theology and nursing in her area of specialization: neonatology. Karen's project focuses on the use/misuse of medical technology and how the church is addressing such issues, particularly in the preparation of rostered leaders. One aspect of her project is the development of a brochure that reflects possible strategies for use by healthcare team members and rostered leaders when involved in healthcare decision making. Karen's project director is not yet assigned.

Nancy Gable

(Nancy is a Diaconal Minister and Director of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Diaconal Ministry Preparation for LTSG)

Calendar of Events

Spring Term

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| <i>Feb 2</i> | <i>First Class Sessions</i> |
| <i>Mar 23-27</i> | <i>Spring Recess</i> |
| <i>Apr 17-19</i> | <i>Prospective Students Weekend</i> |
| <i>Apr 28-29</i> | <i>Seminary Days and Spring Convocation</i> |
| <i>May 15</i> | <i>Close of Spring Semester Commencement</i> |