

Table Talk

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A Note from the Editor:

I was recently thinking of the prayer so often prayed during November and Advent, "Come, Lord Jesus." Our college touring choir program my senior year included the motet "Komm, Jesu, komm" (BWV 229) by Johann Sebastian Bach. The text of this funeral motet speaks of the pain and weariness of the fleshly life, the desire to yield to Christ, the acknowledgement of Christ as "the way, the truth and the life," and finally a peaceful resignation. Bach's treatment of the text is emotionally powerful as the lines of music reach up only to fall again, and the pleas of "Come, Jesus, come" echo and repeat each other, entreating the Christ.

Such a marriage of music and text stayed with me during my three years of work at a long-term care facility in Lancaster. In a place of illness, confusion, and weariness, the pleas of many residents for Christ to come and "take them home" were not always audible but always were palpable. But just as in the text of the motet, their best response to suffering was not despair and attempt to wrest themselves from this life, but a desire to place themselves in the hands of God. That, to my mind, is an Advent response to suffering. It is the response of Anna and Simeon, who awaited God's Messiah, the King of Israel, and were given the presence of Christ in the temple before their earthly deaths. It is our response as we die daily to sin and rise in the joyful hope of resurrection.

As I took my CD of Bach motets down from the shelf to listen once again to "Komm, Jesu, komm," I realized that the preceding track (BWV 226) contained Bach's meditation on Romans 8:26-27, which just happens to also be the subject of one of Louise Reynolds' poems in this issue. The joy to be found in that realization of Scripture is certainly evident in both works of art. Enjoy the Advent 1998 issue of Table Talk!

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A Day for Thanksgiving

by Mary Swick

You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 14a, 16)

As a youth minister, I often struggle to find activities, projects, and even sometimes words to help kids to live out their role as baptized Christians. Too often, I grow frustrated with their inability to see the larger picture - to step outside of their own tragedies of bad grades, big pimples, and the like. Sometimes I just want to tie them to their chairs and explain that having a date for the prom is not such a big deal in the face of the crisis of the Middle East, world hunger and global warming. Sometimes I fear that they will never understand that being a Christian means more than sleeping through the sermon and having lock-ins. And then sometimes, my kids will amaze me...

Several weeks ago, as the community here was on the verge of breaking up and returning to their families to share the holiday, I was in a typical "I'm a youth minister with a huge project tomorrow" panic. I was spending my Thanksgiving at work. My kids and I had volunteered to prepare the Thanksgiving dinner for the Gettysburg Soup Kitchen. And so, I dragged myself too early from bed to make it down to St. James by 9 am - at which point all hell was going to break loose. By the time I arrived at 9:02, I could see the chaos had begun - kids running all around (why are they always early?), food everywhere (two turkeys and fifteen pounds of potatoes is

really too much first thing in the morning), messages on my voice mail, the phone ringing off the hook and everyone wanting to know what they should do. The teams were organized: peelers and mashers of potatoes, pickers of turkeys, makers of un-lumpy gravy, designers of decorations and pourers of coffee. And all morning, the kids kept coming with their smiling faces: "Happy Thanksgiving, Mary. We came to help." And all morning, they brought their families with them: "We decided this might be a better way to spend the morning than sitting on the couch." And I was amazed.

In little less than two hours, this rag-tag army had made enough food (all donated by members of St. James and the wider community) to feed the Egyptian Army, had smiled and laughed, and had given thanks for the chances to do something helpful. So, we packed up all the food, all the decorations, and all the helpers and headed to Prince of Peace Episcopal Church (a congregation gracious enough to host the Soup Kitchen every day).

I have to admit, this was the part of the project that I was most concerned about. I knew that, no matter what, there would be enough food (loaves and fishes, anyone?), that with good direction all the kids would be helpful, and that people would be fed. I worried how (and really, *if*) my kids would speak to those who would come to eat, if they could be the kind and sincere little people I know them to be, if they would be able to overcome their fear of the 'other' - if they would learn about discipleship and love of the neighbor.

Our guests began to arrive promptly at 11:30, and the games began. And as these young people (the youngest at 13 and the oldest at 19) carried plates, took orders for drinks and served their community, I saw the Holy Spirit. I saw Christ in our midst, flowing like milk and honey out of the smiles, the words and the deeds of these kids. I never suspected that without prompting three of the youngest would sit down and listen to the life story a lonely older woman. I never dreamed that these kids would overcome their classism, racism and fear to hold the babies of high school dropouts. And I never dreamed that they would give thanks for the opportunity to have done it. I spent my Thanksgiving holding back tears, hugging my kids and giving thanks for the work of God in the world and in the lives of these young people.

There are many days when I am at my wit's end - when I am convinced that all the bad things that people say about kids are true. There are days when I never believe that these young people will understand the powerful workings of God in their lives and in the lives of those around them, when I don't think that they will understand that they are the bearers of the Good News of salvation and grace to a sometimes horrifying and dreadful world. And then, sometimes my kids will amaze me, for they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. And so are we.

Blessings and peace to you as you strive in your calling that the works of your hands and the words of your mouth may give glory to God. Amen.

Poems in Dialectic

"Break our Hearts"

and

*"Revelation: Romans 8:26
'The Spirit also Intercedeth' "*

by Louise L. Reynolds

Two poems are offered together for the dialectic they represent. Intense experience of personal relationship with Jesus Christ and with God the Father, in the person and work of the Holy Spirit, is deliberately balanced with the opposite pole of communal ecclesial response to the work of the Spirit in a congregation, as inspiration for and empowerment of works of mercy and evangelism. Luther speaks of God's work in Christ as being *pro nobis* AND *pro me* - for us and for me. In Christian life, both kinds of experience and expression have a place and stand side by side as illumination and corrective for each other.

Break our Hearts

Lord, break our hearts.
Open them, as you opened the grave.
May Jesus be found within.
From our broken hearts, roll away the stones,
and bring forth Christ alive
and risen;
life walking in your world.

Lord, heal our hearts.
Make them pure and fitting
to hold the love of Christ.
Give us hearts of flesh, take our hearts of stone.
In our humbled hearts,
let love's light find home.
And send us out.
And send us out.
Amen.

Louise Reynolds
1997 Lent
Trinity, Avis, PA

**Revelation: Romans 8:26
The Spirit also Intercedeth**

In all my thinking,
all my days,
the Spirit hath come down.
The Dove descendeth,
accompanied
by rays:
arrows shot from heaven,
falling,
tending,
rending open sky,
blessing earth,
giving birth to inspiration;
bending
from the Father's throne
with messages
thrown us-ward.

Yet, today,
Scripture speaketh
new to me,
in words of Paul
addressed to Rome.
"The Spirit intercedeth."
Hence,
in my mind's eye,
from now,
I see dear Spirit rising.
Inspiring One,
who blows at will,
wills also my contentment.
The paraclete, descendant Dove,
who for my strength
doth visit
this clay and fleshly temple,
dwelling as Christ,
with me
ALSO intercedeth.
Christ descended,
Christ arose.
The Spirit's inward weal comes down,
searching heart and mind,
knowing all of my intention.
Then, for my sake,
for me, doth take
my deepest needs to God.
Rising as our Lord arose,
the Spirit intercedeth.

O Comforter, bright gift divine,
Thanks and holy praise.
My joy it is, to be thus thine
And Love Thee all my days.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Louise L. Reynolds
12 November 1998
For my brothers in the faith
Paul of Tarsus, Martin Luther, and John
Wesley

What We Learned in 2.400

by Chip Frontz

Culled from my copious notes in "Early Church and Creeds"

The apologists were people that went around saying "I'm sorry I'm a Christian" to whomever would listen. Justin Martyr was one of the most famous apologists. In a weak voice, he tried to tell the Roman government that Christ was really just a word. They killed him. Later, a teacher, Origen, won the Battle of Hermeneutical Gap and made the world safe for apologists.

Constantine became famous as the first post-Ascension man to have both God and the army on his side. God helped him out by sending an angel to whisper in his enemy's ear, "Leave the high ground!" When Constantine had consolidated his reign, he moved the capital to a city which, by an incredible coincidence, was named "Constantinople." His mother Helena began a thriving tourist and trinket trade in Palestine.

The Council of Nicea was so named because everyone there was so nice to each other. However, they set the study of mathematics back for years by declaring that three equaled one and one equaled three. To convince themselves and others of the "new math," they wrote down their theory and made everyone repeat it for several centuries. This was known as the "symbolic method." It was left for Islamic scholars, who had no problem deciding that three did not equal one, to later revive mathematics, confusing theology in the process.

The Cappadocian Fathers were a highly organized mob-type

group knit by ties of blood and common theology. They terrorized the Arians at the council of Nicea by making them "an offer that they couldn't refuse," namely, that three equaled one and that one equaled three. Macrina (the Don of the family), Basil "the Rat", and the brothers Gregory were members of this elite group.

Moving on to the Christological controversies (which, incidentally, had nothing to do with logic): The Nestorians put forth the idea that Christ was not nailed to the cross, but fixed there with a new kind of fast-drying Roman glue. This is why their theology is sometimes called "Crazy-Glue Christology." Some scholars, operating from an socioeconomic view of history, believe that they argued this to increase sales of their own product, "Nestor's Glue," but the evidence is inconclusive.

Augustine was a man in bondage to his mother. He later took action and was baptized. The shock killed her and effectively solved the problem. Augustine is widely known as a lover of fresh fruit and for his lengthy confessions which wore out several priests. He also wrote the travel brochure "City of God." Augustine debated with the Donatists, who claimed that only sacraments administered by a man named Don were valid. We certainly hope not.

Warning: this article should not be used in conjunction with final exams or candidacy committee interviews. Thanks to Dr. Christiansen for teaching us all this good stuff!

Pamela
by Debra Avery

"It's impossible to sleep here," she said.
Every 2 or 3 hours they come
With questions
With needles
With packets of liquid.
"How am I supposed to get any rest!"

What can I tell her?
Simplistic platitudes are not enough.

"They don't really know what's going on," she
said.
Every day another test
More tubes
Different scans
And needles.
"I just want to go home."

How can I help her?
Her fears overtake me.

We're becoming friends now
So we wait together
And we talk.
Girl talk.
Kids and husbands.
Bill Clinton and who knows what else.
We pass some time together
Waiting for some news.

"I need you to help me," she cried.
And every day we pray.
And miraculously God is there
Amid the tubes and needles
In the questions
In the frustration.
"I'm glad you came."

The Vigil
by Debra Avery

I see two figures
Hunched over
Gripping her hands.
The son's tears
The daughter's determined look.
"Mama, blink twice if you hear me."
"Mama, blink once."
"Mama." And they cry.

Just holding on.
Holding her hands,
Holding her life,
Barely holding on.

I see Mama
Propped up on her side now
Fluttering unfocused eyes.
Talk of car keys
Braided hair
"Mama, can I borrow your car?"
"Mama, let me drive your car."
"Mama." And they laugh.

Just holding on.
Holding her hands,
Holding her life,
Barely holding on.

I see an empty room
And Mama
Barely there
No one's holding on anymore.
Just the quiet sounds of machines
"Mama, let us tell you when to breathe."
"Mama, we'll beat your heart for you."
"Mama." And there is silence.

No more holding on
Not this way
Hold her hands
Her life is gone.

Internet Resources for "the Surfing Seminarian"

by Connie L. Havir

Surfing the net I have found many websites of interest for information, research, and entertainment. I've listed a few of my favorites below.

Church Sites:

To begin, I would mention the ELCA web site that is just jam-packed with a wealth of information:

<http://www.elca.org/>

In addition one of the best church sites I've found is the UCC home page that also has lots of information, RCL citations, sermon seeds, and a Prayer Chapel that posts prayer requests.

<http://www.ucc.org>

Try this for a sample:

<http://www.ucc.org/believe/small.htm#TOP>

Or you may just wish to browse the Catholic Encyclopedia:

<http://www.knight.org/advent/cathen/>

Spiritual Gifts

This site provides an on-line questionnaire that is a Spiritual Gifts Discovery tool. It was developed by a Lutheran Church in Texas (Missouri Synod). It will tabulate and score your responses and gives a printout of your most prominent gifts:

<http://www.cforc.com/sgifts.html>

Bible Searches:

The World Wide Study Bible is the place to begin with many different resources and options available:

<http://ccel.wheaton.edu/wwsb/>

Then link up with Goshen and the Bible Gateway for additional databases and to search the Bible in different languages:

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?>

Reading Books On-Line:

One of the best I've found is the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, with a wealth of writings in the public domain from Anselm & Augustine to the hymns of Watts & Wesley. Be sure to check out the additional sites & resources available at the very END of this document!

<http://ccel.wheaton.edu/>

Here is a sample of other resources available there:

Catholic Encyclopedia

Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary

Easton's Bible Dictionary

Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the
Whole Bible

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the
Whole Bible

Nave's Topical Bible

Original Commentary on Acts by J. W. McGarvey
The Fourfold Gospel by J. W. McGarvey and Philip
Y. Pendleton

People's New Testament by B. W. Johnson

The New Testament Commentary: Vol. III--John
by B. W. Johnson

Torrey's New Topical Textbook

Books & more books:

Want to find an out of print book or get the best
price on a current tome?

<http://www.amazon.com>

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com>

<http://www.powells.com>

Other options:

What might you do while surfing all these sites?

Go straight to the Virtual Vineyards site

<http://www.virtualvin.com>

Or gourmet food sites at

<http://www.greatfood.com>

Travel:

If you simply cannot afford to travel this year--go
to Israel via the wonders of the net:

<http://www.infotour.co.il/>

Finally, when you want a real out-of-this-world
experience try:

<http://www.startrek.com>

NB: If you have favorite sites you'd like to share or would like an email
of this article so that sites will be clickable and you don't have to
bother with typing it all in, email me at clhavr@wideopen.net

Precious Experience

by Janka Pacigova, International Student from Slovakia

My Grandpa once told me that life is the best school and all life experiences are precious. Now, as I grow older, I get to know better and better how right he was. This fall semester I spent here at Gettysburg Seminary does surely belong to my unforgettable experiences. I found the teaching-studying system here very different than it is at our seminary in Bratislava, where I think our classes are much more lectures than discussions as it is here. Small classes at this seminary were very enjoyable to me and it was also very interesting to listen to the various opinions of students during the class discussions. But, on the other hand, I sometimes felt that these classes sometimes missed more of the teacher's monologue that might be in certain cases more helpful than just the discussion of that issue.

Before I got to the USA, I heard many people speak about the strong individualism. But now, just before I depart, I am very happy that I didn't find much of this individualism here, at this campus. Of course the single-rooms in the dormitory and the lack of a special room for gathering in the dorm caused, it seems to me, a kind of separation among the students, but let me say that I've never and nowhere felt unwelcome because I was a foreigner. Just the opposite. Everybody tried to make me feel here almost like at home. Those were just little things that made me feel that I am not alone - nice smile, invitation to the "back row," taking me for shopping... I want to thank you all, especially to those who gave me a

ride when I needed, to those who allowed me to use their E-mail, took me for the tour around the battle field or invited me for dinner or lunch. My thanks belong also to my teachers for their personal advice and help. Now I am going to try to pick up many of my personal experiences, adapt them to our Slovak culture and put them together like a puzzle so I can use them later in my church-work. I know that one semester is too short a period of time to get to clearly see all the things in the right light, but in spite of that these three months spent among you gave me an unforgettable, precious experience. Thank you for all! May our God bless you in your whole life.

Janka Pacigova, student from Slovakia

Next Issue's Topic:

Well, due to the plethora of responses we received for this issue's topic (exactly one; thanks, Brent!) we will repeat this issue's topic for next issue:

What has been the most memorable (poignant, humorous, shocked, etc.) reaction to your informing someone that you were entering or are attending seminary?

Submissions for this topic should be short (under 100 words) so that we may include several people's stories. We know you're out there! Tell, tell! Yeah, YOU!

The due date for submissions for the February Table Talk is **Friday, February 12, 1999.**

Ridge Reflections

by Brent A.R. Hege

As I lounge on my bench situated at the bustling intersection of ARW Library and Valentine Hall, I am alone with my thoughts. It is growing colder, and the moaning winds sweep over Seminary Ridge from the Blue Mountains, scattering the fallen leaves before me like technicolor rapids. The sun is tired now, finding its weary way to rest behind the western hills, and the hushed wonder of evening in Gettysburg throws its mantle around my shoulders and beckons me to participate in the silent vigil.

The smoke from my cigarette rises before my face in a curious cloud of pellucid filaments, seizing the fading rays of warm sunlight. Out of the corner of my eye the Singmaster cannon attracts my attention. With only a little imagination, I can envision the smoke from my cigarette consumed by blackpowder smoke and the smell of saltpeter and smoldering wheat. Quickly my thoughts turn from the impending snows to the horrors of war. I make my way to the cannon, brushing away the decades of passed time as I walk. Right here, right where I now stand, stood a terrified young man, clinging to his fleeting dedication "to honor and country," praying for deliverance from this hell.

I remember visiting Gettysburg as a child, and the stories my grandfather told of family members long dead (but not forgotten) who fought and died at this very place. I especially remember now his tale of a cousin who died on Seminary Ridge. A maternal cousin, several times removed, served with an artillery unit attached to Buford's cavalry. His unit was here on July 1st, 1863, the first day of the battle; for my cousin, it was his last day. He died on Seminary Ridge, protecting his home state and his home soil (his own home lay just over the mountains to the north). Generations have passed, and yet the memory remains, so that, although he is gone, I remain, reliving his struggle, remembering his death.

And through it all, the Seminary has stood undaunted, unconquered, ever-strong. The Seminary had stood before the possibility of battle even presented itself to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed - the gospel of faith, love, and peace. The Seminary endured the raging chaos of death and destruction which engulfed the very place where we now live and learn. And the Seminary still stands, defiant of the forces which threatened to devour it, refined by the pangs of growth, and strengthened by the gospel it proclaims. And even while the Seminary was temporarily closed for a few days in 1863, it has survived to instruct hundreds of men and women in the Word, always remembering those few days when the wheel of life ground to a bloody halt. And yet the wheel continues to turn, life and hope spring eternal, newness from emptiness, hope from despair, and life from death.

I am jostled into present reality by a warm sensation in my fingertips - my cigarette is almost finished. The sun has set, and night has fallen on another day. Darkness shrouds the monuments in the fields, and one can almost forget that Gettysburg is unlike any other rural central Pennsylvania town. The cannons are silent and hidden in the shadows, and the meadows rest in hushed silence. And yet one light shines atop Seminary Ridge. The chapel steeple is brilliantly illuminated, shining for miles with the message of hope - Christ is victorious! Death is defeated! The light is the beacon on the hill, shining its light for the world to see. A fitting place for theological reflection. *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum.*

Staff Spotlight: Lisa Stouch, Administrative Assistant

So you've decided that ordination, the diaconate or an associate in ministry position is right for you, or at least is worth looking into. So you've decided to give Gettysburg Seminary a ring and get an application; maybe you've made an appointment for a tour and interview with Nancy Gable. Once you've been accepted, you are pulling your hair out about financial aid and the like. If the above is true, then you've met and worked with Lisa Stouch - our Administrative Assistant for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Diaconal Ministry. Read on to get to know a little bit more about her!

Lisa has been employed at Gettysburg Seminary for four years. She has been a lifelong resident of Gettysburg. Before coming to the Seminary, she worked for the local telephone company in Carlisle for fourteen years as a customer service representative. The position at the Seminary opened as she was looking to stop commuting a long distance and work closer to home in order to spend more time with her two sons, the elder of which was just beginning kindergarten. Eric is now nine years old and Andy is six years old. They attend James Gettys Elementary School.

Lisa is the initial contact for all LTSG applicants or for anyone interested in beginning theological education, usually setting them up with applications or fitting them into Nancy Gable's busy schedule. She processes all applications for admission, and for the past four years has also maintained and kept current all financial aid files. Lisa is also heavily involved in the Diaconal Ministry Program, doing legwork for the Summer

Formation Event and keeping in contact with affiliate students doing their classwork by distance learning. In addition, she does a lot of behind-the-scenes work in production and publicity for Seminary Weekend.

Outside of her work at the Seminary, Lisa's main pastime is spending time with her sons. When she gets the time, she also enjoys shopping! Lisa and her family attend Chestnut Grove United Methodist Church in Dillsburg. She spends various weekends through the year working with the Habitat for Humanity community in Gettysburg. In fact, Lisa's family is a "Habitat family." She was involved with the work on her own home and the family moved into the home in the summer of 1998. The community, called "Carpenter's Village," is west of Gettysburg on the Fairfield Road (the western extension of Middle Street, bordering the Seminary to the south.) Currently nine families live at Carpenter's Village, and room for three more families is planned.

As Lisa tells it, she was a bit nervous before beginning her employment about preconceived notions of a seminary as an "ivory tower" and was pleasantly surprised to find the people at LTSG very "down-to-earth." She has developed friendships with many of the students with whom she works, and takes joy in seeing their step-by-step progress through their education. In a community of ordained and rostered ministers and those preparing to be such, Lisa sees her own ministry as "helping and working with people."

Thank you, Lisa, for your role in our education, in the work of this Seminary and the Church!

Contributors to this issue:

Debra Avery is a second-year M.Div. student from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Her poems are reflections on her Clinical Pastoral Education experience.

Chip Frontz is a first-year M.Div. student from the Lower Susquehanna Synod.

Connie L. Havir is a first-year M.Div. student from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

Brent A.R. Hege is a first-year M.A.R. student from the Lower Susquehanna Synod.

Janka Pacigova, of Slovakia, studied at LTSG in the fall of 1998 and continues her studies next semester at the Lutheran Seminary in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Louise Reynolds is a fourth-year M.Div. student from the Delaware-Maryland Synod.

Mary Swick is a first-year Diaconal Ministry student from the Lower Susquehanna Synod. She currently serves as co- Youth Minister at St. James' Lutheran Church in Gettysburg.

Thanks also to the following individuals who aided with production this fall: Celia Billman, Stephanie Eichhorst, Mindy Hoffman, J.R. Sassaman, and Linda Sheets.

Table Talk

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The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the editor, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

Chip Frontz, editor, 1998-99

Contributions to Table Talk may be submitted to the Table Talk mailbox in Valentine Hall.