Septuagesima Sunday
Rolling Meadows - 1964

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IN NOMINE JESU

2 Corinthians 4: 5,6 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

THE HOLY MINISTRY

There are some 450 vacancies in our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It is estimated that if the present trend continues, that number will double by the year 1980. It has not been very long since this congregation experienced the hardship of a 16 month vacancy. If we are going to meet the challenges which God has set before our church, it means that we are going to have to encourage more of our young men and women to enter the full time work of the church. At the present time our congregation should have a minimum of 4 young people attending our preparatory schools - at least 1 for every 100 communicants. It is not unreasonable that we should have 8 - 1 for every 50 communicants. The fact is that we have one boy preparing for the holy ministry - and he began his preparation before his parents transferred to our congregation. In passing let me say that Ken Haydon is among the top honor students at our Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

One can not help wondering, however, what has happened to the concept of the ministry in our day. A little over a year ago Post magazine published an article about a young man who resigned from the parish ministry and sought employment elsewhere. He could not cope with the problems and strife of his congregation. While I cannot agree with his reasons for quitting the ministry, the questions which he raises are imperative. What has happened to the office of the ministry in our day? When I announced my desire to go into the ministry, I was regarded by friends and relatives alike as though I had suddenly lost my senses. You're just not the type. Why not be a lawyer, or doctor, or engineer - why a minister? It is not uncommon today to see a minister presented in books or films as a hypocrite, a cad, a heel, a deadbeat, or a plain incompetent. A good many people look upon the ministry as unnecessary and quite unimportant. The pastor is nice to have around in times of extreme emergency or death, but most of the time he is quite irrelevant. People often speak of him as a one-day-a-week man. There is, of course, the other side. When my four year old son was asked whether he wanted to be a pastor like his daddy, he was quick to reply, No, I don't want to be a pastor; they have too

much important business. Our seven year old came up with much the same answer: No, he said, I want some days off once in a while.

People often look upon their pastor as some special kind of Christian, They seem to think that he has some special immunity to the problems and pains of life. They imagine that he leads a sheltered life, out of touch with the world, and unaffected by its temptations. They somehow feel that he belongs to some third sex - normal in every way, you understand, but different. I wonder how often some well-intentioned person has grabbed me by the arm in a motherly fashion, and said: Come along, pastor, and I'll show you how the other half of the world lives. It'll do you good, and give you something to preach about. A fellow pastor writes about his experiences: Many people, he says, believe that clergymen are covered with some such material as cellophane at birth. Sometimes I think that if one more person comes to talk about his moral, spiritual, sexual, economic, or ethical problems and says, 'Of course, you have never been through this,' I'll have a mental breakdown. Why does any man assume what I have experienced or have not experienced. He goes on to say: I went to a wrestling match once with a friend who said he thought it was good for a preacher to see real life now and then. I recalled some of my recent pastoral experiences. I had conducted a funeral service and tried to comfort a young mother and two children who had been left without means of support. I talked with a young man who had been drunk for a week trying to forget a girl with whom he had been living, and who had finally walked out on him. I remembered the lonely boy in the army whose fiancee had written a letter breaking off their engagement. And my friend could say that at a wrestling match I would find a chance to see real life! My guess is that the average clergyman sees more real life in a week than the average layman sees in a year.

Be that as it may, I want you to know that the ministry is the greatest and highest office that a man can have in this world. This is true in spite of what men may think or say to the contrary. It is great because it is the one occupation that has been ordained by God Himself. It is great because it centers in a great Lord - the God who

gave His only Son and the Christ of God who gave His life for our redemption. It is great because it is a ministry to people - people lost in the guilt and shame and horror of their sins - people whom Christ came to seek and to save. The Apostl Paul sums it all up, when he says: For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

St. Paul was under no illusions or delusions about himself. He did not hesitate to apologize for himself. He needed the grace of God as much as any man, and he needed to be forgiven more than others. He did not hesitate to call himself the chief of sinners. He recognized that while other people could walk to hell, preachers could talk their way to hell. Paul knew the devil as a very real enemy, besetting him behind and before, trying to entice him away from his Savior. He was well aware of the temptations that are common to every man. He knew the need for self-discipline and self-control. In today's epistle he compares himself to an athlete, striving for the prize. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I mayself should be a castaway.

St. Paul apologized for himself, but he never apologized for Jesus Christ. When it came to Christ, he was a man with a one-track mind: What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.... This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.... I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified..... We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. With passion and persistence Paul proclaimed the fact that Christ had died for all men, and that He had been raised from the grave to be the living Lord of heaven and earth. I delivered unto you first of all that

which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised again from the dead according to the Scriptures. Neither pain nor persecution could prevent him from preaching Christ the Savior to all men. Paul was a minister of Jesus Christ.

Paul could have been proud of himself, but he was not. If he boasted at all, it was about Christ and the people who had been won for Christ by the power of God's own Word. What is our hope or joy or crown or boasting? he asked. Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. Paul's concern was for people. He gave himself to preach Christ to people; those who responded were his joy and his glory. Paul wanted people to get out of life what he was getting out of life by faith in Christ.

We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. This is the only greatness and the only glory of the Christian ministry. There is a brother pastor who has been in the ministry much longer than I who has written this Credo for the Christian pastor. I share it with you now with the personal prayer that it may be true of my ministry among you, and with the hope that it may inspire many of our young people to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to give themselves to the greatest occupation on earth - the holy ministry: I am a preacher - I am one of the greatest line in the history of men - My line reaches back beyond the Cross to the days when the flood came over the earth - Only because of the Church I serve and the Word I preach does God permit the world to roll on its way - I have watched men step quietly through the last gate because I had been permitted to show them the way - There are men and women, and children, too, before the throne of heaven today who are my children - They are there because God let me bring them there - The saints of the Church are my joy, and the sinners are my burden - I am an ambassador of the King of Kings - I am the last echo of a far voice that forever calls men home - Neither obscurity nor popularity can rob me of my glory - It is not my own but the reflected glory of Him whose free and happy slave I am - I am a driven man - I must preach faith in a

world that disbelieves, hope in a time that has no hope, and joy in an hour that knows only sorrow - I am at home in a tenement house or in a mansion because my home is neither - I and my people alone stand between the world and destruction - The flames on my altar will not die and the lights in my sanctuary will not be quenched by flood or storm - I am a preacher, and very glad of it. Amen.