

DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 8, Number 3, After Pentecost 2005

From the Senior

As I have prepared for the 2005 general retreat, I have tried to be aware of the issues that are important to the members of our Society. None of us would have joined the Society of the Holy Trinity if we could find what we are looking for in our denominational bodies. We find that our Lutheran denominations don't provide the encouragement and support we need to be faithful to our calling to ordained ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ. We were called to be pastors, shepherds of souls. Our denominations regard us as professional leaders or, worse yet, "rostered persons." ("Rostered" doesn't even pass spell check!) I'll never forget the year that we gathered in general retreat to hear Philip Pfatteicher teach us about a theology of pastoral care—why we care for our members. At the same time, the professional leaders of my judicatory were gathered to hear about how to take care of themselves. While we prayed and confessed our sins, my professional colleagues played golf. I've nothing against golf (although I don't play), but the contrasts couldn't have been greater. The Rule of the Society provides us with accountability as we exercise a pastoral ministry.

So, as I have prepared for the 2005 general retreat, I have thought about three issues that are important to members of the Society. We want to be faithful to our callings. Larry Yoder, STS, Professor of Religion at Lenoir-Rhyne College and a founder of the Society, will help us to think about this as our teaching theologian. Many have joined the Society looking to the Rule as a way of growing spiritually. Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon (an Orthodox priest) will make a contribution to our use of Scripture in prayer by teaching us about praying the Psalms. Whether or not issues in our church bodies prompt us individually to consider a journey into the Roman obedience, our Rule holds before us a commitment to Lutheran reconciliation with the Bishop and Church of Rome. Fr. Thomas Baima (Roman Catholic ecumenical theologian and Provost of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary) will reflect on the present status and future steps of Lutheran-Roman Catholic relationships. (By the way, my thanks to Francis Cardinal George, OMI, Archbishop of Chicago, for sending my letter on behalf of the Society to Pope Benedict XVI to the Apostolic Delegate, to be delivered to the Vatican in a diplomatic pouch.)

During this preparation time, I have tried to use as many of our members as possible in leadership roles. We suffer from an "embarrassment of riches" in our membership, which makes it difficult to choose people to do things. I have

entrusted Paddy Rooney, STS, to be our chaplain, assisted by Ken Elkin, STS, as our cantor. I have decided to give a sermon/address at the Opening Service. Other preachers will be Carl Voges, STS, our Vicar, and Amy Schifrin, STS. Confessors for the general retreat will be Kevin Anderson, STS, Tim Duesenberg, STS, Michael Edwards-Ronning, STS, Carl Roemer, STS, Beth Schlegel, STS, and Jack Whritenour, STS.

I have also thought about how to make the best use of small group discussions. Thanks to an idea from Larry Yoder about having texts to study in conjunction with his presentation, Carl Voges and I have arranged to have two or three chapters meet together in groups to study 2 Timothy. Our group discussion leaders will be Paul Abbe, STS, Ron Bagnall, STS, Peter Jacobson, STS, Wolf Knappe, STS, John Larson, STS, Randy Meissner, STS, Joel Schmalz, STS, Mark Schroeder, STS, and Steven Tibbetts, STS. I encourage you to do some preparatory work by studying 2 Timothy before we gather. Bring your Bible and your Greek New Testament. If your Greek is rusty like mine, sharpen your language tool before the general retreat.

So far during 2005 I have had the opportunity to visit six chapters in chapter retreats. Sometimes I was the teaching theologian. Sometimes I was just there to share our common work. But I came away with two impressions. One is that as we grow into the Rule, it seems that Chapter VI, "Learning and Teaching Sound Doctrine in the Church," has turned out to be one of the most difficult chapters. The difficulty is that there is no encouragement to engage in the life of study, either from our pastoral colleagues or from our congregations. This is probably a cultural issue related to what historian Richard Hofstetter in 1964 called "anti-intellectualism in American life." We're a long way from colonial times when the Puritans established colleges because they expected an educated clergy, and simple Lutheran settlers would not accept itinerant pastors who lacked a university diploma. We also still suffer from what the late Joseph Sittler called "the maceration of the minister"—the tendency of congregations to spread their pastors too thin by assigning too many roles (and of pastors to acquiesce).

The other thing I learned from my visit of chapters is how important the formation of seminarians is, after hearing the experiences of some of them in terms of what they encounter in chapels and classrooms. This raised for me the need for the Society to develop an intentional way of relating to seminarians and to consider what kind of support we can

offer. I appointed three of our members who have expressed an interest in this issue to work on a Society strategy for relating to seminarians: Paddy Rooney, STS (chair), who serves as pastor now in York, Pa. near Gettysburg Seminary, Paul Abbe, STS, who specializes in youth and young adult ministry, and Carl Voges, STS, who serves as pastor in Columbia, S.C. near Southern Lutheran Theological Seminary. I know that there are other STS members who are located near seminary campuses. If you would like to be involved in this work, you are welcome to contact me. At the same time, the pressing need to consider theological education raises the urgency of furthering our discussions with Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Fort Wayne, Ind. because of their interest in our Society. I have appointed William Hampton, STS, Richard Ramirez, STS, and former Senior Phillip Max Johnson, STS to serve on a committee that will continue conversations with CTS on behalf of the Society. I note that I will be speaking at Concordia's Good Shepherd Institute in November.

Finally, I am excited to report that I will be attending the Congress of *Societas Liturgica* in Dresden, Germany in August. Dresden, as you know, was bombed into rubble by the Allies in the final days of World War II in retaliation for German bombing of London and other British cities. A lot of restoration of this "Florence on the Elbe" has taken place since the reunification of Germany. I look forward to seeing the restored Baroque churches of Dresden, the Frauenkirche and Kreuzkirche, which were once the crown jewels of Lutheran church architecture. I look forward to taking the spiritual pulse of the people in the Lutheran heartland of Saxony. I look forward to sharing my experiences with you when we gather in general retreat at Mundelein.

Yours in our common work,
Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

Thank You

The Society of the Holy Trinity would like to thank the following Archangels, Angels, and Saints for their financial contributions during the last fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2005:

ARCHANGELS—for contributions of \$500 or more

Douglas and Gerri Elletson

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Catherine Smith

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Peace Lutheran Church, Grass Valley, Calif.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Williamsport, Pa.

Zion Lutheran Church, Seven Valleys, Pa.

Chapter News

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Dean, Richard O. Johnson, roj@nccn.net

The California Chapter met May 23–24 at St. Andrew's Abbey in Valyermo, Calif., with all seven members and five guests in attendance. Dr. Clay Schmit, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) pastor who teaches homiletics and liturgy at Fuller Theological Seminary, led a conversation entitled, "Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Baptismal Water," which provoked reflection on continuity and change in liturgy. Dr. Schmit's perspective as a Lutheran at an evangelical seminary was particularly interesting. The chapter was also pleased to join the brothers of this Benedictine community for some of their liturgies, and members took advantage of the abbey's bookstore.

DELAWARE RIVER CHAPTER

Dean, Ronald C. Yergey, ronald.yergey@rcn.com

The Delaware River Chapter of the Society of the Holy Trinity met in retreat on June 6–7 at Loyola House in Morristown, N.J. Nine members and two regular guests gathered for 24 hours of prayer, preaching, confession, absolution, and teaching. Larry Vogel, STS, led us in a discussion of his paper, *A Third Use of the Law: Is the Phrase Necessary?* Phillip Max Johnson, STS, also led us in a discussion of *The Baptized Intellect*. We were richly blessed by God through this time together, being fed wondrously by his Word and the fellowship of those present.

GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER

Dean, Timothy D. Hubert, prtlim@juno.com

The Great Rivers Chapter of the Society of the Holy Trinity will have 100 percent attendance at the general retreat in September and expects to bring at least one new member to sign the Rule.

The chapter next meets November 14–15 at Todd Hall Retreat Center, Columbia, Ill. with Pr. Viktoria Halmagyi speaking on St. Elizabeth of Thuringia. Steven Tibbetts, STS, will be our chaplain.

February 6–7, 2006 the chapter will meet again at the Todd Hall Retreat Center with Steven Tibbetts speaking on his visit with the Society of St. Birgitta in Sweden. Jim Lehmann, STS, will be our chaplain.

NORTHERN OHIO CHAPTER

Dean, Richard L. Ramirez, dadchilos@aol.com

The Northern Ohio Chapter met on February 17, with Joy Schroeder, STS, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religion at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, as our teaching theologian. In addition to the six persons who had indicated a desire to sign the Rule at the upcoming general retreat, three more added their names to the list.

We also met in retreat on July 18–19 at St. Augustine’s House in Oxford, Mich. The topic was the ever-popular “Growing Into the Rule.” We talked about the joys and challenges of living out the Rule and welcomed having our brothers at St. Augustine’s House add to the conversation.

PASSAVANT CHAPTER

Dean, Paul A. Baglyos, pbaglyos@thiel.edu

The Passavant Chapter met May 27–28 at St. Emma Monastery in Greensburg, Pa. Kevin Anderson, STS, served as our teaching theologian, presenting the life, ministry, piety, and poetry of George Herbert (1593–1633), whose commemoration date was March 1.

Three retreats have been scheduled to follow the STS general retreat in September. On December 16–17 we will meet again at St. Emma Monastery. Robert Hawk, STS, will be our chaplain, A. J. Domines, STS, our confessor, and Pr. John J. Cochran of Trinity Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. our teaching theologian. Subsequent retreats are March 3–4 and May 26–27, 2006, also at St. Emma Monastery.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

Dean, Brad Everett, beverett@telusplanet.net

Bo Giertz’s classic work, *The Hammer of God*, provided a focal point for our time together at the FCJ Retreat Centre in Calgary, Alberta, May 29–31. The theological richness of *The Hammer of God* and its prophetic tone (“the more things

change, the more they stay the same”) provided a helpful framework for, not just the teaching sessions, but also our private and group conversation. Whenever talk was in danger of bogging down in complaints and criticism, someone would lift up an applicable portion of the book and the discussion moved in a more edifying direction. It went so well, the chapter has decided to try it again next spring. If anyone has suggestions for other books in the same vein we might read and discuss, please let me know. Our chaplain for the retreat was Frank Netter, STS, and Glen Johnson, STS, served as confessor.

We are planning our next retreat for November 20–22 at the FCJ Centre in Calgary.

SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER

Dean, David M. Wendel, dmwendel@aol.com

Dean David Wendel, STS, of the Sangre de Cristo Chapter is on sabbatical leave this summer and offers some interesting information about his sabbatical study project. With the approval of the Senior, he sent surveys to all of the members of the Society asking both for personal/parish information for the benefit of the Society and for responses to help assess the impact of the Rule on pastoral/parish life and practice. As of the most recent report, 96 surveys have been returned. The responses share interesting information on how the Rule is being lived and how it is shaping pastoral and parish practice. Dave compiled all the data and will make this information available to all who are interested at the general retreat. He has also written a summary article and has submitted it to *Lutheran Forum* for possible publication. He extends his thanks to those who responded.

SUSQUEHANNA CHAPTER

Dean, Beth A. Schlegel, baschlegel@christlutheranyork.com

The Chesapeake-Potomac and Susquehanna Chapters met in joint retreat at Precious Blood Spiritual Center, Columbia, Pa. on May 22–24. We observed the Feast of the Holy Trinity and commemorated Ludwig Nommensen, Leonhard Euler, and Nicolaus Copernicus. We engaged the dogma of the Holy Trinity as presented in Matthew 28, Robert Jenson’s *A Large Catechism*, and the eucharistic prayer of Hippolytus, led in discussion by Paul Lundmark and Beth Schlegel, both STS. We were visited by the Senior of the Society, Frank Senn, who also conducted elections for dean for both chapters. William Gies, STS, was elected dean of the Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter and Beth Schlegel was elected dean of the Susquehanna Chapter. We welcomed the participation of two first-year seminarians and one senior seminarian from Gettysburg, as well as two other fellow travelers. An important emphasis for our chapter work in the next year will be to develop and implement strategies for ongoing support for seminarians. Many thanks to Paul Blank, STS, for serving as chaplain; to Tom Shelley, STS, and Ken Elkin, STS, for serving as musicians; and to Cathy Ammlung, STS, and Beth Schlegel for serving as confessors.

We are planning a semi-silent retreat in Danville, Pa. for the early part of Advent, December 5–6, at Villa Sacred Heart, Danville, Pa. Two other retreats are being planned for 2006: a pre-Lent January 23–24 retreat to be held jointly

2005 General Retreat

Observe the August 21 deadline for general retreat registrations. Our hosts at St. Mary’s of the Lake need a clear idea of how many will attend well in advance of the retreat.

Date: Monday, September 12, 3:00 p.m., to
Wednesday, September 14, 12:45 p.m.
Arrival: Evening of the 11th (by arrangement with St.
Mary by Aug. 21) or morning of the 12th
Departure: After lunch on the 14th
Place: The Conference Center of the University of St.
Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, 1000 East
Maple Avenue, Mundelein, Illinois 60060.

Members of the Society in chapters register through deans.
Members at large and non-members register through the
Secretary of the Society, Pr. John E. Priest, 607-746-2098,
jepriest@dmcom.net by August 21.

with the Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter at Precious Blood Spiritual Center, Columbia, Pa.; a one-day Lenten retreat on March 13 at St. Peter's Middletown, Pa.

TEXAS CHAPTER-IN-FORMATION

Contact, M. Hoffman, mahoffmansts@stjohnsroosterchurch.org

The Texas Chapter-in-Formation of the Society of the Holy Trinity is planning a fall retreat to be held on November 14–16 at the Spiritual Renewal Center, Victoria, Tex. We are blessed to have joining us as our spiritual/theological guide, Frank Senn, Senior of the Society. For more information about this retreat, all are invited to contact Earl Mahan, STS.

Reported by Earl Mahan, STS
Love of Christ Lutheran Church, Weslaco, Tex.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Dean, Mark W. Knappe, gdlc@execpc.com

On May 16–17 the Wisconsin Chapter joined with the Illinois Chapter for a life-giving time of Word and Sacrament. William Lazareth, STS, Bishop Emeritus, Metro New York Synod (ELCA) led us in a vigorous discussion of his book, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics*. At this retreat the chapter elected Mark W. Knappe to serve as dean. We were grateful to our Senior, Frank Senn, who presided over the election. We were delighted to have a couple of lay people in retreat with us. They were enriched and impressed by the spirit of the retreat and the pastors who were gathered there.

From the Vicar

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed . . . (2 Cor. 4:8,9)

In a few weeks we will be gathering in Mundelein, Ill., for the ninth general retreat. The retreat gives us the opportunity to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the historic framework of the Church's prayer life. The three days expose us to gifted theologians of the Church, opportunities for confession, quiet time, biblical study, and conversation that encourages and stimulates.

We also come to the general retreat fully aware of the church structures to which we belong. Since 1997 (and much earlier!), most of us have to admit that the church structures have been a concern. While the ELCA structure has received most of the publicity, the structures in the LCMS (Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod) and WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) can pose concerns as well. In varying degrees, all reflect the symptoms of what has been dubbed by one of our parishioners as the “American virus.” This virus hides its deadliness by promising all kinds of success on the world's level. It also suggests that this success will be self-sustaining. The virus spreads easily because it is rooted in two outstanding characteristics of the American culture: an over-whelming concern for self and an excessive reliance on “feeling.”

There have been long moments when we wonder if the Society could be a new church structure, freed of that virus

and always imbedded in the ways of the Holy Trinity. The reality, though, is that the Society could never achieve that desired level. Driven by the desire to be like God, we would just take self and feeling to another level, leaving us pretty much like the house swept clean of the evil spirits!

In those long moments, though, we have been finding out that the Society does provide us with a way of dealing with the church structures and the culture in which we find ourselves. The Society—through its life, work, and members—keeps reminding us to remain faithful to the promises spoken at ordination. Those promises were made possible by the Cross first traced over us at baptism. Those promises are sustained by the continual tracings of the Cross over us. And those promises will find completion when the Cross is traced over us for the last time.

There is a great and wonderful mystery here. The Cross reveals how sin-soaked we, the church structures, and the culture are. Thus, it does not surprise us that we attempt to translate the Holy Trinity's Life into a reality that is more palatable to the Church and the culture, or to step away from it. However, the Cross can penetrate such attempts because it is dripping with the Lord's Forgiveness. The Cross is the only reality that can intersect with the American virus and kill it. The Cross is the only reality that can unleash the Life flowing from the Lord's baptism.

May that Cross sweep throughout the general retreat, deepening our awareness of the Lord's crucified and resurrected Life, and strengthening the ministry given us by the Lord God.

. . . always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Cor. 4:10)

Carl A. Voges, Vicar, STS

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