

Nbr. 68 – March, 2025

Another Voice from the Past

In his 1916 Southern Illinois District Convention Essay, Franz Pieper quoted still another voice, from further back in the past: that of Martin Luther. Here's the quote that Pieper reported from Luther, with paraphrasing supplied:

"I have said repeatedly that faith in God alone is not sufficient, but that the cost – the vicarious satisfaction – must also be considered. The Turk and the Jew also believe in God, but without the means and the cost. But what is the cost? This the Gospel shows us.

"Christ there teaches us that we are not lost but have eternal life, that is, that God so loved us that for our sakes He went to the greatest of all costs. He offered up His only dearly beloved Son, subjecting Him to our misery, to death and hell, and making Him drink this cup of bitterness to its dregs" [St.L. XI, 1085].

See? WOW! Pieper added: "That is the way of salvation." It is indeed . . . in Jesus' deed.

Your congregation's Witnessing Helps posters

Between February and May, every congregation will receive free from CID a set of four Witnessing Helps posters. The posters are rolled up together in a tube marked with a sticker that says, "Witnessing Helps." An additional sticker identifies the congregation by name and city.

These tubes are being distributed at Circuit Pastoral Conferences (Winkels) and Circuit Forums. At the end of these meetings, the Circuit Visitor or someone else is usually entrusted to deliver any otherwise unclaimed tubes.

Our readers will recall that mention has been made of Witnessing Helps in this newsletter starting with its October, 2024 issue, with additional notices in the December, 2024 and January, 2025 issues. The latter announced "teaser" handouts that had just been added to CID website at <https://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-witness-ministry.html>

The posters are intended to whet the appetite of viewers to see all the suggestions on one or more of our Witnessing Helps sheets. If they entice people to the above URL, they will have served their purpose.

If you want to know what the four posters look like, consult the URL above and look at the "teasers." They are identical to posters except that a.) a teaser is meant to be printed on a standard size sheet of paper, not a large poster and b.) a full-size poster bears an additional acknowledgment of central Illinois CEF for granting money that underwrote the costs of poster printing, tubes, etc.

Each poster has a photograph in the bottom right corner. If your congregation schedules a witness training or practice session and wishes to announce it, one way to do so is to print a notice on a standard sized sheet of paper and place the sheet over this photo. Basically, only the photo need be covered up by this sheet, not essential poster contents. Note that the same URL appears above and beneath the photo, so it will appear even if it is partially obscured in one place.

I urge churches to frame all 4 posters and display them. If there is space on the wall to display only one, fine. Dedicate that space to the "Helps" and rotate the 4 posters, maybe on a monthly basis.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

Help with Evangelism from the “Sainted” Saints

My father died in an accident at work when I was 11 years old. Our pastor came to our home within an hour after we got the bad news. He spent an hour or two with us that afternoon, listening, comforting us with the Gospel, and just being present. That evening, a Wednesday, he returned to our house after church and gave us his sermon in conversational format. For weeks thereafter he kept us in mind, occasionally popping in for visits.

What has stuck with me ever since is a profound appreciation for the impact of the Gospel in times of grief. As a parish pastor, I tried not only to minister to people immediately following a loss but also to follow up with them upon the anniversaries of the deaths of their loved ones.

I have advised young pastors, especially those recently ordained, to maintain a “calendar of deaths.” Perhaps they can begin it only when they arrive, but one must start somewhere. With this as a tool, a pastor is poised to send a card or handwritten note to his members on the anniversaries of the dates when dear people joined the church triumphant. He can also do so, for example, during the Advents before the first 2 or 3 Christmases when they will notice a conspicuous vacant chair at their holiday dinner table.

But why limit the sending of such messages to church members? *Why not send them to non-churched folks as well?*

I was asked to contribute an article to the February, 2025 *Lutheran Witness* on things the members of the priesthood of all believers can do for the church, especially in small congregations. In addition to formal and informal evangelism efforts, I

mentioned laypeople assisting pastors with record-keeping and coordination of activities, making “extra” visits (beyond made by the pastor) to hospitalized and home-bound members, taking over managerial and administrative duties that do not require the attention of a pastor, and other activities. What I did not mention – but wish I had! – is the prospect raised here: get help in evangelism from members of the priesthood of all believers, the saints, who are now with the Lord. They can still in effect help you to reach their loved ones.

Use a calendar of deaths to broaden the scope of contacts you make. Instead of sending cards or notes only to church members, include non-churched family members or friends of the deceased. A church can do this even during a pastoral vacancy. Some suggestions:

- Concentrate on their close relatives (not distant ones) and/or good friends (not more remote acquaintances).
- Even though contact information on non-churched people can be hard to come by, after a funeral, though you are likely to have such information on various mourners. They signed guest books and made memorial contributions.
- If you get a non-churched person’s contact information via a memorial they gave, avoid any impression that you are now trying to weedle more dollars out of them. No, you are the one with a gift – THE Gift – to give.
- Do not dwell on the deceased. Throw the spotlight instead onto Christ, Who died for our sins and rose again. He saved their loved one, and He has plenty of grace to save them too!

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