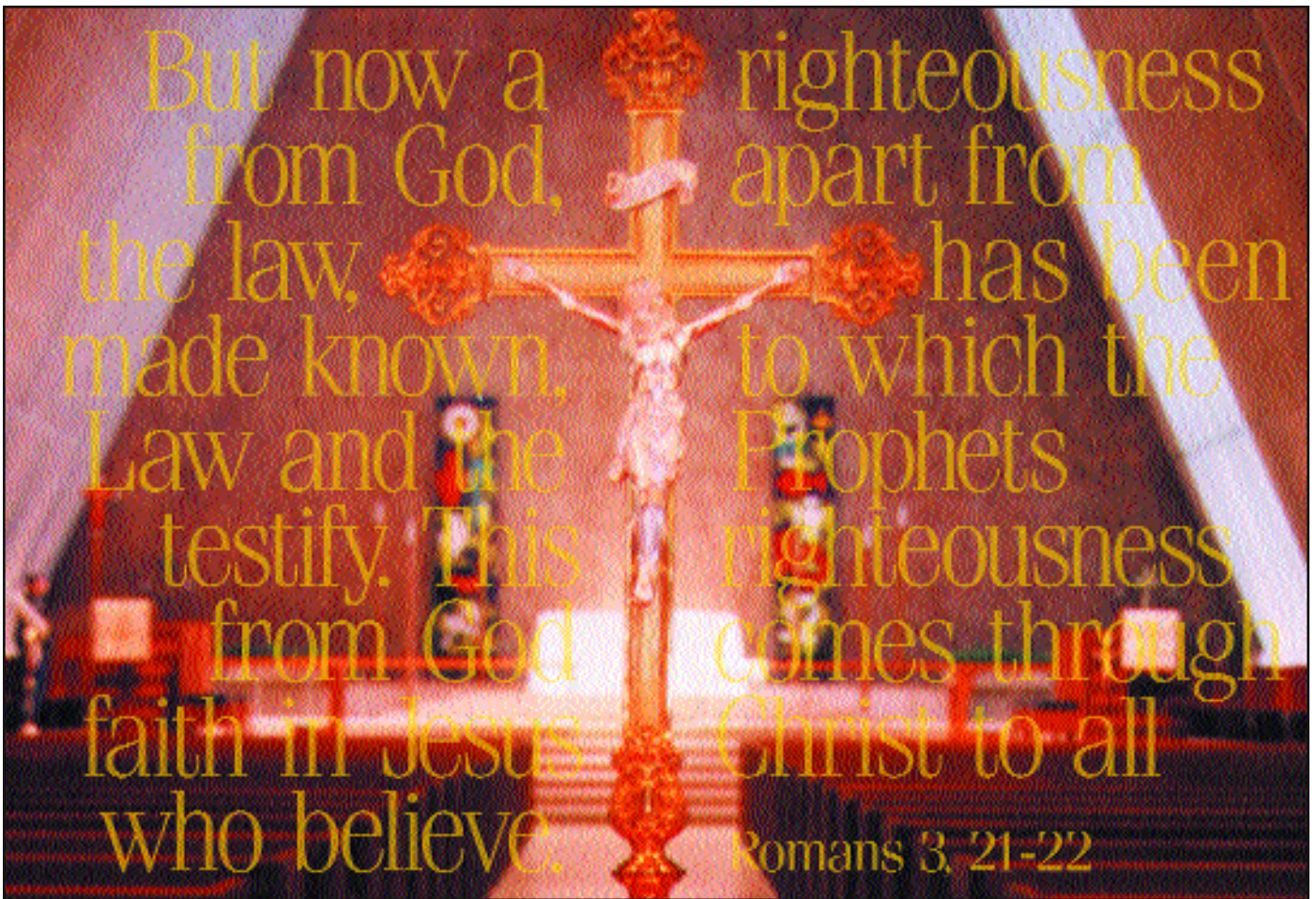


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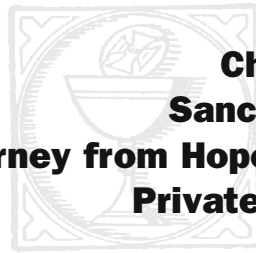
Christ In The Old Testament - p.6

Sanctification: By Grace Alone - p.8

A Journey from Hopelessness to Life in Jesus - p.10

Private Confession & Absolution - p.12

In The Field - p.14



CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
P R E S S

Private Confession & Absolution



By Rev. Kevin R. Loughran

“We urge you, however, to confess and express your needs, not for the purpose of performing a work but to hear what God wishes to say to you. The Word of absolution, I say, is what you should concentrate on, magnifying and cherishing it as a great and wonderful treasure to be accepted with all praise and gratitude.”

Luther’s Large Catechism

Prior to my arrival at the seminary nine years ago, two related questions plagued me, “What would the people be like and how would the seminary experience differ from my-then-current life situation?” It didn’t take long for me to discover that the people at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) all had dreams, ambitions, troubles and trials just like everyone else. What’s more, from my continued association with the seminary community, I know that they still do.

Of course, along with these dreams, ambitions, troubles and trials, the members of the seminary community succumb to temptations and fall into sin the same as people in the parish and secular settings. The truth of God’s Word is never more evident than on a seminary campus where the devil is prowling like a lion seeking to devour its prey. As St. Paul writes, “There is no difference, for all are sinning and falling short of the glory of God.” Nine years of observation provides ample evidence that this divine truth holds for faculty, students, staff, spouses and alumni of CTS.

Writing this, I also know that there is a significant shift in the way some members of the seminary community cope with the sin that so easily entangles them. Article XI of the Lutheran Confessions, which states in part, “It is taught among us that private absolution



should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse,” has moved from a mere academic discussion to become a living opportunity for receiving the forgiveness of Christ won by His Passion, death, and resurrection.

As a former student, while I was at CTS it was possible to ask a professor or pastor to serve as father confessor. But since this practice had fallen into disuse among many within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) it was and for that matter still is highly unlikely that a member of the seminary community would include individual confession and absolution as a part of their regular piety. It simply wasn't done very often.

Sadly, there is not enough space allotted here for a discussion on the decline of the use of individual confession and absolution nor to offer a full theological argumentation for its retention. Suffice it to say that we are sinners and that Holy Absolution is a means by which the Lord God confers upon us the forgiveness won by Christ. This ever-present reality should cause lines to grow outside the seminary's house of worship, Kramer Chapel. The lines should be full of people clamoring for an application of God's grace through the Word of Holy Absolution.

Indeed while there may not be long lines outside the chapel, individual

confession and absolution is offered on a daily basis throughout the academic year at CTS as a sign of God's grace in our midst. This joint effort between the seminary and area pastors accomplishes two noble purposes. First and foremost, it takes seriously the Lord's command that the church forgives sins. Second, the regular practice of individual confession and absolution at CTS provides a springboard for renewal of this God-pleasing practice throughout the LC-MS and worldwide sister churches who use the seminary as a training ground for their workers.

A confessional Lutheran seminary must be a place where the Gospel of Jesus Christ permeates all that is said, done and taught. Through increased activity within the safe harbor of Kramer Chapel more and more people are being shaped in the image of Christ. Here they receive the forgiveness offered in the Word of Absolution and are strengthened for service through the body and blood of the Crucified and Resurrected One. It is a comfort to know that daily the faith of future pastors of the church, as well as those who assist in their training, is being strengthened and sustained through the means which the Lord God has provided.

Rev. Kevin R. Loughran, is pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church, Wolcottville, Indiana



Private Confession and Absolution is offered weekdays in Kramer Chapel from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. on Communion days and from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on non-Communion days. Private Confession is heard by pastors from the Fort Wayne area in the Prayer Chapel, located under the Narthex entrance of Kramer Chapel.