

**Judging the Job: The Vocation of Day School Teacher and Parish Musician in The
Church of Jesus Christ Scripturally Evaluated
To commemorate the ordination and installation of
Lowell Robert Borcharding, B.Sc.
On The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 9, 1956
In Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Detroit, MI**

(The underlined sections on the following pages were addressed directly to the ordinand when this pamphlet was originally presented as a sermon.)

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this meditation revolves around the special Office featured in our public worship on this occasion, namely: the solemn installation of a servant of The Church as teach in our day school and as musician in our parish.

It was eight years ago that he decided to follow this vocation. He accordingly subjected himself to intensive training under the supervision of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and was declared qualified last spring to assume office in one of Synod’s congregations. The parish that besought his services and whose request he heeded was ours.

It therefore devolves upon us to recognize in a formal manner his presence in our midst, and to hallow an occasion such as this one with praise to God and prayer.

And to the end that we may do so with a vivid realization of what this installation means, both to The Church at large and to our own congregation in particular, I desire to focus the attention of those concerned upon it as God supplies the grace.

Permit me, then, to dwell upon your work as a teacher and musician in The Church of Jesus Christ, enlarging upon this subject on the basis of God’s holy Word.

A simple statement in that Word admirably adaptable to such a purpose is this one: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me.” These are words from the lips of Our Blessed Lord.

I. IT IS A DIVINE WORK

They serve to remind us, in the first place, that the work you are to do in our midst is in duty bound to be in the full sense of the word a divine work.

Christ declares: “I must work the works OF HIM THAT SENT ME”, and by that He meant God. When Our Lord appeared here on earth in the form of a man, it was God Himself who ordered Him to come—a fact Christ never forgot until His work in this world came to an end.

We who are serious Christians view your presence in our parish and the labors you are undertaking in the very same way. We believe that you were sent to us by God. We believe that eight long years ago when you first began your training, indeed, ages before you were ever born, then already God decreed that you should someday serve Him in our midst. We believe that when we called you through our synodical officials, it was God Himself who called you. And we have the right to suppose that you believe the very same thing.

Which, of course, implies some mighty serious things.

For one thing, it follows therefrom that you are not your own boss. Since you were sent by someone, you are under someone. You are not here to do what YOU want to do. You are not free to teach in your classroom what YOU feel like teaching. You are not at liberty to play on the organ what YOU desire to play. In some denominations an installation like this one is called “receiving holy orders”, and it is a good name, for you are truly under the orders of someone higher up.

But—and this is just as important—that someone higher up is not this congregation. Let it be repeated: you are not your own boss; but, when all is said and done, this congregation is not your real boss either. This congregation did not SEND you; this congregation RECEIVED you. There are, of course, certain areas of your activity under the jurisdiction of this parish. But when it comes to the really vital things connected with your vocation—when it comes to matters of conscience—no mere man, or group of men, for that matter, is to command you. What you teach in your classroom is not to be decided by congregational resolution. What you feature in the field of music is not to be dependent upon a morbid desire for popularity and the insipid praise of the multitudes.

Your Boss is God. He is the one who sent you to us. From Him we received you. And you are answerable, in the final analysis, to Him and to Him alone.

But to Him you are answerable!

Remember that when you are in the classroom. Every single thing you teach those little ones in front of you, by word and by action, rises to the throne of Him who sits above the clouds. He writes it all down in His book of remembrance. He files it all away in the drawers of His omniscience. And one day the files will be opened and the record read, and your teaching career in The Church of Jesus Christ will be evaluated by Him whose judgments are always just.

Therefore play it safe. Teach nothing out of harmony with The Sacred Scriptures. Interpret them in no other way than as The Book of Concord interprets them. When your own opinions contradict Holy Writ and The Lutheran Confessions, give them absolutely no encouragement. Should some demand of the parish oppose Holy Writ and The Lutheran Confessions, categorically disregard it. Your Boss is God.

Remember that also when it comes to music. In this field, likewise, your first allegiance is to God. Only what truly exalts Him meets with His favor. Only what genuinely reflects the doctrines and practices of His holy religion wins His approval.

There is music—and there is music; and your splendid training qualifies you to see the difference. Set your musical ideals high. For they must be high, since the promulgation of God’s glory is thereon dependent.

We as a congregation gave you a divine call to pursue a divine work; and we entreat you to do in our midst only the pedagogical and musical works of Him that sent you.

II. IT IS A NECESSARY WORK

Our text reminds us secondly that your labors in our parish constitute a necessary work.

Christ declares: “I MUST work the works of Him that sent Me.” His mission here on earth was absolutely indispensable. He HAD to live and die as man’s Substitute if man was to be saved. And He lived and died in that spirit.

As you should.

I like to think that your work is an absolute “must” from your own standpoint.....

Why is it that men—ambitious, young men—become servants of The Church? Many do; it is surprising that any do. In our highly irreligious and thoroughly materialistic culture, where practically every occupation is evaluated in terms of worldly advantage, how does it happen that certain individuals—and the majority of them is gifted and talented and could well make a successful impression on this competitive world of ours—deliberately turn their backs on everything the business world is prone to prize so highly, to bury themselves as humble servants of The Church in unpretentious congregations?

The answer is to be found in this textual word “must”. They MUST of necessity do this kind of work, else life for them is not worth the living. Wealth and fame they summarily set aside in order to serve The Bride Of Christ. For some mysterious reason God lays His hand upon them, and their hearts become filled with a divine compulsion to labor for Him which constrains them to count all things but loss, if only they can spend themselves for The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the dissemination of His most holy name.

And to those who follow such a vocation, in spite of countless temptations to do otherwise, this perishing world owes an incalculable debt of gratitude; because their work is likewise a “must” from the standpoint of God.

There are many things about Him most mysterious; but one of the strangest is the way He chooses to spread His Word and extend the tentropes of His Kingdom Of Grace:

He chooses to have no feet but their feet to go and assure men that, in spite of their damning sins, they need not despair. He chooses to have no voice but their voice to tell others that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses them from all transgression. He chooses to use no strength but their strength in populating Heaven. Humanly speaking, if men did not feel constrained to spread God's Gospel for Him, His precious Church on earth would vanish, and Christ's most precious blood would have been shed in vain.

So we are grateful that there are still individuals in the world like you, who feel that they MUST labor for Christ. For God's work MUST go on, till the world is filled with the knowledge of The Lord as the waters cover the sea.

III. IT IS A DIFFICULT WORK

There is, in the third place, an indication in our text that your work in our midst is destined to be hard work.

Our Lord had no illusions about His own mission; He declared: "I must WORK THE WORKS." His life here on earth was by no means a picnic. It was no easy thing for Him to leave the glories of Heaven, and be made of a woman, and be under The Law, and carry His cross and our sins and sorrow, and finally die on Calvary the most shameful of deaths. The story of His life is recorded on the pages of The Bible in blood and sweat and tears.

Nor is your work going to be easy. As an instructor in our day school and as musician in our parish, you are actually going to combine two tremendous jobs in one. And if you purpose to be conscientious about them (as every servant of The Church is who is worthy of the name), you will find ample opportunity to exhaust yourself in the vocation you have chosen to follow.

The Church is too important an organization to be hampered by dullards and sluggards. The gospel is too vital a message to encourage inertia. Our day school is too precious an institution to countenance indifference. The public worship of God is too significant a privilege to tolerate haphazard preparation. Since it is true that church-work is the most indispensable work in the world, it follows therefrom that such work, in all its multitudinous aspects, deserves our utter utmost in terms of time and talent and energy and interest. Else we are remiss in our duty in the eyes of Heaven.

Be prepared, therefore, to SACRIFICE for the cause you represent, because your work is often going to demand of you exactly that.

But perhaps the main reason why church-work is such hard work is related to the disquieting fact that it is so little appreciated.

The unbelieving world, of course, does not appreciate it at all. Now already you need to accustom yourself to the annoyance that when society in general hears you are

engaged in labors for The Church, it will most often give you a patronizing smile and quickly walk away.

We may as well admit it: the world looks down its social nose at Our Lord and at the institution which espouses His cause, and it looks at His and her servants in the very same way.

Nor should we be surprised that such is the case. Did not Christ clearly say (Mt 10:24): “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord”? And did He not add (Mt 10:22): “Ye shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake”?

It must necessarily be so: the friendship of this world is enmity with God, and, conversely, friendship with God means the enmity of the world.

But what makes church-work often heartbreakingly hard is the fact that it is sometimes not appreciated by The Church’s own members! And they frequently show their lack of appreciation by keeping criticisms at a maximum and salaries at a minimum.

There is much human malice and lack of charity still to be found in every Christian congregation (our own included), as you are liable to find out from personal experience.

So what will you do when such lack of appreciation threatens to overwhelm you? Throw in the sponge and call it quits?

That is when you must seek support from The Everlasting Arms. That is when you must strengthen yourself with the conviction that He appreciates your consecrated efforts who alone really matters.

And someday His promise will be fulfilled (Dan 12:3, marginal reading): “That they be (Christian) teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, forever and ever.”

IV. IT IS AN INSPIRING WORK

In the last place, we learn from our text that yours is an inspiring work: a truly Christlike work.

Our Saviour says: “I must work the works of Him that sent ME.” Those pronouns “I” and “Me” refer to Christ Himself.

In His work He was indeed a teacher, just like you.

When Nicodemus said to Him on one occasion (Jn 3:2) “We know that Thou art a teacher, come from God”, he verily spoke the truth. To teach men the way of salvation,

and thus to seek and to save that which was lost: that is why He came among them. To reveal the mysteries of the true religion: that is why He was manifest in the flesh.

Let Christ, then, inspire you to work as He worked.

But was He also a musician, as you are? Do not doubt it.

The instrument upon which He performed was the cross of Calvary, a performance applauded in every land under the sun. The composition which has Him as its author is “The Symphony of Salvation”, which will be sung by saints and angels through all eternity.

Once more, then, let Him inspire you as you take up your duties. Keep Him in mind as you labor, and your work will give you genuine joy.

CONCLUSION

Yours is work answerable to God. It is necessary work, if The Church is to continue. It is difficult work, that receives very little recognition. It is at the same time inspiring work, that draws you close to Christ.

Officially you begin your work today. May you continue in it for many years to come. And through all those years—through every day of them—may the words of Our Blessed Lord serve to guide you: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me.”