

“Called to Confess”

(A Free Conference of Confessing Pastors and Laity of the NOW District)

February 20, 2006

Dear Brothers in Christ:

One of the escalating concerns in our nation is the growing obesity and increasing number of diabetes cases diagnosed among our young. Yes, some of it comes from lack of exercise, but studies reveal that a steady diet of junk food, convenience food, and/or fast food (e.g. McDonalds, Burger King, et al) — although it keeps one upright and breathing — has much to do with these rising numbers. If “what we eat” is so important to the health and appearance of our body, can we expect anything less with our spirit?

When Jesus says, “*My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow Me*” (John 10:27), He declares that this is to be a way of life for His sheep. When the Father speaks to the apostles on the occasion of Jesus’ transfiguration, “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him*” (Matt. 17:4), the command is to “*keep on hearing Him.*” Both shepherd and sheep are to live having their ears attuned to God’s Word, but shepherds especially are commanded to do so because their responsibility and privilege is to publicly proclaim the whole counsel of God into the ears of the sheep they have been divinely called to serve.

When Peter was restored and reaffirmed in his office following our Lord’s resurrection (John 21:15-19) with the words: “*Feed My lambs ... Tend My sheep ... Feed My sheep ... Follow Me,*” Jesus obligates him do these things as a way of life. It would seem at the very least that His charge to Peter reflects urgency, consistency, thoroughness and faithfulness.

Scripture tells us that a faithful shepherd leads his sheep into places where they are fed with good healthy food. It also says that a faithful shepherd protects his sheep from the wolves. But sometimes distinguishing the wolves from the sheep is difficult. Thus, Jesus warns, “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*” (Matt. 7:15). What is true of false teachers is also true of false teaching and improper practice. Even the chief apostle Peter fell into error in regard to his practice of table fellowship with Gentiles and needed the assistance of the apostle Paul in this matter. All of us have blind spots. This is why we need one another to think through the various doctrinal issues that plague the Christian Church today. In an effort to facilitate reflection on one such issue, ***Called to Confess*** has prepared a brief bulletin insert for you and, because we believe in the priesthood of all believers, for your flock on the sixth “talking point” highlighted in our recently mailed tri-fold. It was written by Pastor Tim Pauls and is entitled: “Men and Women in the Church.” We thank Pastor

Pauls for sharing some of his thoughts on this important subject and we hope that it will aid our Synod as we strive together to do our Lord's will.

As we stated in our previous correspondence:

We recognize that because we are sinful human beings, we may have “blind spots” of our own. Thus, we desire to be “*quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry*” (James 1:19). Yet, we also believe that “*slow to speak*” does not mean ***never*** to speak. Indeed, as Christians we have been called to “*speak the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15). Therefore, “*in love*” we have endeavored to “put the best construction” on the actions of others and we have consciously avoided pointing fingers at anyone. We simply see ourselves as ***Called to Confess***. And “*in love,*” we pray that, if we are in error, you would, “*in love,*” show us our error from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

If you do not agree with the positions stated here, we ask that you at least consider the arguments and put the best construction on our actions, our motivation, and our concern to fulfill the great commission by “*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*” (Matt. 28:20). Our goal is not division, but that once again our Synod be united under the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in The Lutheran Confessions. May God bless you and lead you to recognize that all of us are ***Called to Confess***.

To contact us or request an electronic version of the insert, send a note to: CalledToConfess@yahoo.com, or you may download a copy at www.scholia.net/lcms_items.htm.

Laboring together in the vineyard of our Lord, we remain ***Called to Confess***.