

The Preus Family in the Dominican Republic

Summer 2018 newsletter

Pastors and church secretaries: To print this newsletter, please [click here for the pdf](#) in order to make it available to interested parties who may not have email access. Thank you!

¡Saludos en Cristo!

Dear friends in Christ and co-workers in our Lord's mission: Greetings in Christ!

This past spring has been fuller of activity than we could have imagined. In addition to regular parish duties, which include scheduled divine services Sundays and Wednesdays, ongoing evangelism in our community, seminary classes, meetings, and taking care of my family at home, I was privileged to take part in our seminary's first theological conference, called "simposio," as well as finish my dissertation and graduate with my doctorate in historical theology (more on these below). God has continued to bless our church and seminary with faithful workers and members who are dedicated to the proclamation of the gospel. Right now, pastor Idjon and I, with the help of our field workers from the seminary, are preparing to visit every member at least once per month. Every-member visits are not only possible, but essential at this stage of church life. Most baptized and confirmed members of our less-than-ten-year-old Lutheran church still have shallow roots. The truth they learn on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening is not necessarily the life they live in their homes, and it is certainly not the life they see around them. Like every Christian, whether they recognize it or not, our folks in Palmar require constant pastoral care, constant instruction, constant encouragement to live and "walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls [them] into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).



After the Easter Sunday service in Palmar



Continual conversation about theology and life.



Two "Ps" followed by two "Cs"

As a missionary who desires to

bring "Christ to the nations and the nations to church," the pastor must attend to two things: *presence* and *preaching*. That is, he needs to be where his members are—in their homes, in their communities, at their schools, at their birthday parties, at their aging parents' bedsides, and even on the baseball field. Of course, such *presence* is pointless if he is not also *preaching* God's Word in these places. An evangelist's job is not merely to be seen, but to be heard, or



The altar at Palmar Arriba, before Easter Sunday service

rather, to make the eternal Word of God heard in as many places as possible. A preacher must preach. However, neither presence nor preaching, neither of these two "p's," are sufficient in themselves. The evangelist must also be *consistent* with his visitations and *clear* in his proclamation. Anybody can show up once in a while to show support, but consistent presence establishes custom and builds trust in a young community. As members learn the custom of hearing God's Word in their homes, they also develop the custom of gathering together with the faithful to receive the grace of God delivered in preaching and the sacraments. As one professor of mine taught us at seminary, "A home-going pastor makes for church-going members." Nor is it enough to be *consistently* present and preaching God's Word in folks' homes if such preaching is not also *clear*. Any Dominican can talk about "God" and "faith", and you hear such talk all the time, but few have real faith in the true God. The fundamentals of our faith have been buried under centuries of superstition, and today the Word is twisted and contorted by competing visiting cults and roving charlatans. It is therefore necessary for the evangelizing pastor to prepare his sermons and lessons carefully and studiously before making visits. Clearly explaining who God is, what is sin, who is Christ, what he did for us, what he continues to do for us, what he promises to do, how he promises to do it, etc., is the means Jesus himself has established for his Holy Spirit to work faith and preserve a Christian community (Mat 28:19-20). The more doctrinal distinctions a pastor can teach his people in a simple manner in their homes, the more his people will come to expect good sermons from their pastor in the pulpit. To summarize, the two "p's" followed by two "c's," that is, *constant presence* and *clear preaching*, are the surest way to bring Christ to the Dominicans and the Dominicans to church.

Simposio 2018

Leaders of six Lutheran church bodies, three seminaries and five Bible institutes gathered in April with over forty other theologians and church workers at Concordia "The Reformer" Mercy Center and Seminary in Palmar Arriba, Dominican Republic. This was the first of, we hope, many confessional Lutheran theological symposia to take place at our seminary.



During the symposio

The symposium, a collaborative effort of the seminary, Luther Academy and LCMS Disaster Response, was held April 24-26, in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Heidelberg Disputation, which occurred on April 25, 1518. There, Martin Luther appeared before the general meeting of the Augustinian order in Heidelberg, Germany, and presented his "theology of the cross" as an alternative to the speculative theology he had learned at the university.

In keeping with the Heidelberg Disputation's focus on the theology of the cross, each day of the event considered one of the following topics:

- * Theology of the Cross as the center of the Mission,

- * Theology of the Cross as the center of the Pastorate, and
- * Theology of the Cross as the center of Mercy.

My paper was the first on the conference agenda: "La teología de la cruz en el contexto de la Reforma" (The Theology of the Cross in the Context of the Reformation), in which I probed the general question of how Luther's new theological orientation fit into the theology of the reformation in general. It was well received, and I took questions in Spanish and Portuguese. (It wasn't until later that I realized that the questioners were speaking Portuguese and not "bad Spanish.") Oh well, I'm getting there. At least we were able to communicate. I also preached a sermon later that week on 1 Peter 4:12-19. I will include a portion of that sermon in the devotion below. I thoroughly enjoyed the other papers delivered by pastors Theodore Krey, Sergio Fritzler, Jonathan Naumann, and others. My favorite aspect of the conference was meeting so many Lutherans across Latin America who need our support as much as we need theirs. I look forward to next year's simposio!



During some downtime at the symposio

Doctorate

I will not bore you with all the details of my doctorate. I would only ask you to rejoice with me that, by the grace of God, I did not give up on this huge task I began over a decade ago. I began studying systematic theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis the summer of 2007 and I ended up writing my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Robert Rosin in the area of historical theology this past May. The title of my dissertation is "The Practical Orthodoxy of Balthasar Meisner: the Context and Content of his Theology." I will tell you no more, except to say that it is finished. Thank God! Thanks also to Jenny for her tremendous patience and support through the years. God gave us five children in the course of those doctoral studies, a total of seven to care for, a wonderful flock to serve in Billings, MT, from 2011 to 2015 and now this incredible opportunity to serve as missionary, parish pastor, and seminary professor in the Dominican Republic and Latin America. The journey has been totally worthwhile.



Rev. Dr. David Preus and Jenny, after the hooding ceremony in St. Louis, MO

End of school year

Thinking back to one year ago, when we

were all in the middle of planning the grand opening of our seminary, it seems hard to believe that we have made it through all three trimesters we had planned. We have no graduates yet--next year, God-willing, we will graduate our first students--and we are still working on three of the five vicarages we had planned, but we are certainly making progress with what little we had to begin with. Our students are a diversely talented and very dedicated group of young theologians and future pastors. I am especially grateful for our Bolivian students, Benjamín Flores and Samuel Calero, who served us in Palmar doing outstanding work in the areas of organization and parish administration. They will be sorely missed as they transition to different regions in Latin America in order to fulfill their vicarage and final year of seminary. Please pray for all of our seminarians as we seek to place them all in their respective countries.

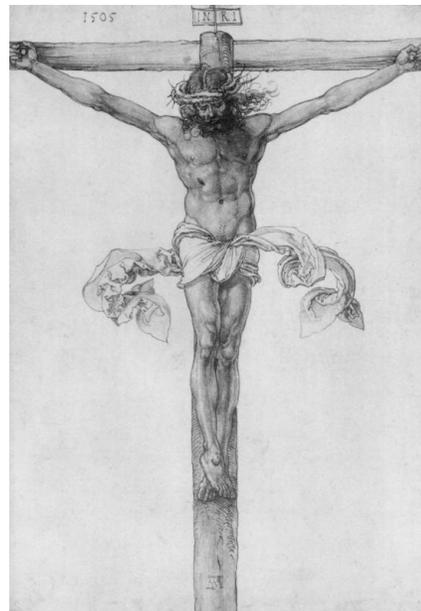


At the seminary's closing service, with Pastor Joel Fritsche preaching

Bearing our Crosses as Christians

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Christ is the owner of the world. And since the Holy Spirit has declared everything that is Christ's to you (John 16:15), you are co-owner of the world. All the things that are his are yours, even the world. Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). That is you. The Christians are the meek, and you have inherited the world. All that the devil promised our Lord in his temptation, but he refused to bite, all that the eye can see, all is yours. Christ won it for you on the cross. And you have also inherited the heavens and the spiritual things that you can not see. We eat, we drink, we enjoy life, we get married, and all that because we are children of the Father, joint heirs with Christ. However, those who do not have faith in Christ are thieves, they steal from God every time they eat and drink. They have no right to participate in pleasures, and they sin when they eat their daily bread--because they do all those things without faith.



Suffering works in the same way. When we suffer, we win. We can only win because Jesus has already won all things through of his own suffering on the cross. We are participants in his suffering, and we are blessed to suffer with the same sufferings that have freed us from our sins, from the devil, and from the world. For when Christ suffered once for all, God was accepting his sufferings and considering them as if they were ours. Our crosses have their value already in the one cross--and it is with right and pleasure that we carry ours in his name. Those who do not trust God, who are not Christians, also suffer, but they do not carry the cross. Their suffering is payment for their sin; it is punishment. They do not have the right to suffer, and when they do, it is pure vanity. It has no value, because it does not come from the cross of Christ.

We live and suffer in a different way than non-believers. But how can you tell the difference? St. Peter makes it very clear: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler" (1 Peter 4:15). But it is true that we often suffer because of our own sin, and, as clear as the commandments of God are, it is impossible to discern the depth and number of our daily sin. We suffer as sinners, and we must continue to suffer the consequences of our sins until God rescues our souls from the corruption of these bodies and lifts them incorruptible on the Last Day.

Meanwhile, again, we need to look at Christ where he reveals himself to us, and thus see the invisible things of God hidden under suffering and the cross. You must call something what it is by looking at it in the light of the Word of God.

The Word reveals that the water with which you were baptized is not simple water only, but it is water included in the divine mandate and linked with the word of God, yes, it is a baptism, that is, it is a water of life, full of grace, and a "washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The Word reveals that the bread and wine that you eat and drink at the Lord's Supper are the same body and blood of Christ that were offered on the cross and made the full satisfaction of all your sins. In baptism, the cross of Christ was distributed to you, and therefore, you must expect to face suffering and crosses in your life. At the Supper, week after week, we are marked again and again with the cross of Christ, while we declare his death until the day he comes. Meanwhile, those who eat and drink the same body and blood without faith eat and drink judgment upon themselves. God save us from eating and drinking as unworthy!

Saint Peter gives us a healthy warning when he says that the judgment begins with the house of God. Of course, we know that this is not a judgment of punishment, but of discipline. "To whom much is given, much is required of him" (Luke 12:48). Therefore, examine yourselves, dear Christians, and prepare yourselves to suffer in a manner worthy of God. Have you hurt your brother in any way? Are you harboring evil thoughts against a person who has offended you? Have you enjoyed your neighbor's loss of property or reputation? Have you sought earthly justice for your own benefit? Now ask yourself: have you not already gained the world and every good thing through Christ and his cross? What do you lack? Why should you deprive your brother of something? "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either." (Luke 6:29). You have nothing to lose once you have lost all things for Christ and won the world through faith in his promises.

Bear the cross with joy! There is one grace and one cross that makes every good work and every Christian cross worthwhile. May God produce a harvest of good works among us, and may he teach us to receive our crosses with thanksgiving. Praise be to the faithful Creator who has given us everything, including our crosses, in the name of Christ. Amen.

Reflections from home, by Jenny



Since you last heard from us, a lot of "normal" life has happened. We are thankful for continued good health and the companionship we have in one another. The kids have continued through the spring with their homeschooling and Spanish studies. Our outdoor cats, Peaches and Cherry, are now over a year old and are making friends (and trouble) with other neighborhood cats. Our housekeeper, Fidelina, continues to keep our house clean and cooks Dominican lunches for us during the weekdays. She has become somewhat of a Dominican "grandmother" to us and we appreciate her friendship and care for our family.

We recently returned from vacation in the US, during which we attended two big events: David's graduation with his PhD from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and the wedding of his youngest brother Peter to Taitlyn, which took place in Casper, Wyoming. The kids and I took a bit of extra time to visit my family, attend a homeschooling convention, and participate in some field trip opportunities while stateside. Now that we have returned home to Santiago, we are getting busy with mission life again while also finishing up our final two months of school since "summer" vacation came early for us this year. The summer heat, humidity, and bugs are heavy upon us now, so we are thankful for the inflatable pool we were given where the kids can cool off in the afternoon. We are also enjoying all the fresh seasonal fruit available to us these days - mangoes, pineapple, papaya, bananas, and chinola are part of most of our meals or snacks these days. Finally, as part of our "fun" summer reading, we have just started Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring". We thank you for your continued thoughts, prayers, encouragement, and support!



This photo was taken after David's brother's wedding in Casper, WY. Our Lena, the groom's god-daughter, (pictured on the lower-right) was also the flower girl.

Vaya con Dios!

Thank you for reading our summer newsletter. We continue to be excited about the work our Lord is doing in the Dominican Republic and across Latin America. We sincerely appreciate everything you do to support this missionary effort, and we hope you have a joyful and peaceful summer. Go with God! Vaya con Dios!

Love in Christ,
Pastor David Preus and family

Contact

Mailing address:
Preus family
Apartado 1356 Santiago, Dominican Republic
314-445-2350

To support our work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod P.O. Box 66861 St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod or LCMS. Include "Preus-Dominican" in the memo line. Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website at www.lcms.org/preus.

STAY CONNECTED



