

be proper and appropriate to kneel at the words "and was made man," to sing them with long notes as formerly, to listen with happy hearts to the message that the Divine Majesty abased Himself and became like us poor bags of worms, and to thank God for the ineffable mercy and compassion reflected in the incarnation of the Deity. But who can ever do justice to that theme? ...

The following tale is told about a coarse and brutal lout. While the words "And was made man" were being sung in church, he remained standing, neither genuflecting nor removing his hat. He showed no reverence, but just stood there like a clod. All the others dropped to their knees when the Nicene Creed was prayed and chanted devoutly. Then the devil stepped up to him and hit him so hard it made his head spin. He cursed him gruesomely and said: "May hell consume you, you boorish ass! If God had become an angel like me and the congregation sang: 'God was made an angel,' I would bend not only my knees but my whole body to the ground! Yes, I would crawl ten ells down into the ground. And you vile human creature, you stand there like a stick or a stone. You hear that God did not become an angel but a man like you, and you just stand there like a stick of wood!" Whether this story is true or not, it is nevertheless in accordance with the faith (Rom. 12:6). With this illustrative story the holy fathers wished to admonish the youth to revere the indescribably great miracle of the incarnation; they wanted us to open our eyes wide and ponder these words well. (AE 22:102-103, 105-106) ✠

## Lutheran Worship at Its Best



The architecture of Trinity Lutheran Church in Boulder Junction, Wisconsin, a village in Vilas County abutting upper Michigan, is, shall we say, not very traditional. A large cross graces the wall above the altar, made out of the word "Jesus," with the middle s elongated to produce the vertical bar of the cross. Angels aim long trumpets at the cross, while below all this the simple altar itself is, well, simple. There is a row of large windows behind it, through which a wandering deer will from time to time peer in at the congregation at worship, no doubt a distraction for children in particular.

But my family loves to attend this little church while we are on vacation.

The building is certainly orderly, clean, and unassum-

ing, and the people are taking good care of it, but I would always prefer a more traditional look that draws all attention to the pulpit and altar. However—and here's my point—the purity, decorum, and dignity of the Divine Service there outweigh by megatons the north woods-outdoorsy design the architect was evidently aiming at. In fact, I have been in many churches where the reverse is true: a beautiful, traditional décor is offset by a clumsy, casual dismissiveness of those attending the holy things, and it tends to ruin everything.

But here at Trinity I felt as if I was home. *The Lutheran Hymnal* was in the pews, and, since Holy Communion is offered every Sunday, page 15 is the setting they use—that is, the Common Service—my sense of familiarity was certainly stoked. But what really edified me was the calm, determined, authoritative, and dignified ceremony and preaching of Pastor John Frahm, who only arrived as their pastor this summer. Come to think of it, his predecessor, Pastor Shane Cota, who now serves a church in my hometown of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, had had the very same approach here. It would appear that this is the kind of thing this congregation, to their credit, wants to see in their pastor. I trust (and certainly hope) that they know how blessed they are to have had these men as their pastors. It is without question the kind of thing I would like to see in every pastor.

The delivery, that is, of the sweet beauty of the mercy of Christ for sinners, with clarity and simplicity. The sermon was no time for laughter or wearying storytelling. It was the Word of God, as even the Catechism declares it must be: "preaching and His Word" (*LSB*, p. 321). Here the authority of the preacher was seen in its best light: he was, that is, authoritatively telling me that my miserable sin was forgiven for Christ's sake, and that I was therefore acceptable to God. He was telling me that my prayers most certainly reach the throne of God and are heard, because Jesus has made me this promise and I may gladly believe it. For this sublime delivery of the gift of God, this preacher had my full attention. The liturgy, likewise, was formal yet simple. Care was taken not to rush, but there was also no evident need to add inflection or emphasis as if needed to make the words come alive somehow. A pastor does not need, after all, to embellish the holy things of God with his own paltry attempts at relevance.

This, I repeat, was worship done right. I came to be fed with the precious Gospel and the priceless Sacrament, and this very grace I received in purity and in abundance. If, therefore, you plan to take a vacation Up North next summer (Wisconsinites at least know the attractive meaning of that term), I heartily recommend you include little Trinity in Boulder Junction in your Sunday morning plans. Just remember to tell your children to pay attention; they will have plenty of opportunity to watch the deer later. ✠