Yeas ago, in my childhood, I remember the day when I discovered my father’s watch laying on the table. Being the curious sort, I wondered what exactly made this watch tick. Simply wondering would not suffice—I took the watch apart. Piece by piece I dismantled the watch until I had a rather fascinating array of little wheels, cogs, springs and tiny screws. It was all very interesting to my young mind and I did learn much about the inner workings of a watch, however, I had absolutely no idea how to reassemble the pile of pieces.

All the pieces of the watch were present—every piece proved to be an integral part for the watch to work—but a pile of pieces does not a watch make. Unassembled, the watch was interesting from a mechanical point of view, yet totally useless from a practical standpoint.

Welcome to seminary education! The seminary is a place where the mechanism, that is theology, history, biblical languages and doctrine, is taken apart to see what makes it tick. From the parsing of verbs to the proper distinction of Law and Gospel to the historical realities of the Reformation, the “Theological Timepiece” is taken apart one piece at a time. Each part is examined under the microscope of Lutheranism—each part is turned this way and then that in order to observe it from every angle—what makes this stuff tick. What then?

If we were to leave it at that we would be left with no more than a pile of interesting pieces that, in and of themselves, are completely useless. An imperfect verb with a genitive ending means continued on next page
A pile of pieces may be interesting in an academic way, but the properly assembled, the Word of God, the functioning theology of the Church and a steadfast confession are the great blessing from God, through His Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

nothing apart from the verse, the text, the narrative from which it has been extracted. A historical date means very little without the context of situation and culture, not to mention what precedes and what follows. Law and Gospel separated from one another do not function in the way in which they are intended. Nothing but a pile of interesting pieces, facts and figures, which do not a theology make.

All of the bits and pieces, facts and figures, times and dates, demand to be reassembled that the message of God’s Word might clearly resound throughout the Church. Welcome to seminary education! While there is much to be learned by disassembling, there is even more to be learned from the reconstruction. When all the words are formed into the biblical narrative, the beautiful Gospel message rings out. When all the times and dates are taken in context, God’s work and control in history amazes. When all the doctrines are unified into their proper places, the fabric of our confession holds fast in the face of any attack.

Taken together, all these disciplines provide the framework for the ministry of the Church and her confession. A pile of pieces may be interesting in an academic way, but the properly assembled, the Word of God, the functioning theology of the Church and a steadfast confession are the great blessing from God, through His Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Welcome to seminary education!

Prof. Jeffrey H. Pulse serves as an Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
A mountain top experience is an exciting event in the life of all people, whether it is a new job, a great grade on a paper, getting your driver’s license or marrying your sweetheart. “mountain tops” provide profound milestones. Christians, too, have mountain top experiences, often while on a retreat with the youth group or at summer camp. These heartfelt mountain top feelings of zeal and renewed vigor in faith toward God are sincere and leave a lasting effect, at least until the retreat ends and campers go back to life as we know it.

Now retreats and summer camps are not places to be avoided, in fact, they are wonderful opportunities to gain perspective, learn new things, relax and build relationships. Yet what happens after momentous milestones and homecomings is the reality of life; where problems invade, people get hurt and sinful desires rule the day. Any camp counselor or academy proctor, such as myself, can confirm that when the students go home, there are challenges to meet them. Throughout the Old Testament and with Jesus in the Gospels, mountain top experiences play a role in the life of the faithful. The following are three examples of mountain top experiences with rather unexpected conclusions. Each is tied intricately to the other and ultimately points to Christ and His word of promise in a world of sin and deception.

Moses Meets with the LORD
Moses is called to meet with the LORD on Mount Sinai several times and there receives the Law and Commandments written for the Israelites and our instruction (Exodus 24:12ff). He also tells Moses to make “a sanctuary, that I (the LORD) may dwell in their midst” (Exodus 25:8). Although the people with Aaron are at the base of the mountain collecting gold to fashion into their idol god, the golden calf, and falling into the sinful desire for a new leader, God remains faithful to His word of promise to dwell among them (those on the LORD’s side) in the sanctuary Moses is to build.

The Transfiguration of Jesus
Similarly, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a high mountain and there He becomes transfigured before them, radiant like the sun and clothes white as light. As this mountain top experience continues, Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus. In the climactic moment Peter asks Jesus if it be His wish that three tents be made for Him, Moses and Elijah, but as Peter was speaking, a voice boomed from a bright cloud beaming overhead which said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5). And while coming down the mountain Jesus commands that no tents be set up to worship Him with Moses and Elijah, and that no one tell of the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead. The risen Christ is their hope, not the vision!

Satan Tempts Jesus upon a High Mountain
The last mountain top experience is very unique in that it is, by definition, unlike what one usually considers a mountain top experience. Here there is no joy but blasphemy. Satan, upon a high mountain, points to all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, saying to Jesus that they can be His if only our Lord falls down and worships him. But Jesus sends Satan away rebuking his blasphemy declaring, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve” (Matthew 4:8ff). Faithfulness clings to the Kingdom of God and rebukes what does not serve the Lord.

In the three passages our focus becomes misdirected from the faithfulness of God to the sinfulness of the Israelites’ idolatry, Peter’s confusion and Satan’s desire for power. What are to be momentous milestones for the people of God become idolatrous examples of sinners in a fallen world. Our “mountain tops” do not last long before reality strikes down any hopefulness, permitting sin to rule our hearts and minds. But in Christ there is hope for the hopeless, life and salvation which underscore the promises of God for all people of faith who trust in the Son of Man, who on the cross won forgiveness and gives it through Word and Sacrament. Our Baptism and participation in the Lord’s Supper are a foretaste of the feast to come, a heavenly reality and true mountain top experience. Long after heartfelt mountain top experiences fade and we return to the reality of the valley below, where sin meets and seeks to destroy us, our trust is in the Lord who is indeed The Mountain Top in valleys below, bestowing His gifts and keeping His promises.

Jared S. DeBlieck is a first-year seminarian at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
Join us for Christ Academy:

Christ Academy is a two-week residential program for high-school-aged men of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It is a place where students come to study about Christ who is present in His Word and Sacraments, who died that our sins may be forgiven. While students experience the life of the seminary, Christ Academy offers these men the opportunity to explore the possibility of some day becoming a pastor.

Worship: The Center of the Experience

Students are immersed in the daily prayer life of the seminary. The four daily offices are prayed by professors and students alike.

“The worship is what makes me want to be here five years from now.”

“The chapel was beautiful, the liturgy full of life. I really enjoyed singing as a choir.”

“I have been reminded again and again how great a sinner I am, but how much greater a Savior that Christ is for me.”

Exploring the Holy Ministry

Through a uniquely Lutheran lens, Christ Academy explores the many facets of pastoral ministry and its application in the world.

“I would encourage teenage friends to come, especially if they are thinking about being pastors. Even if they aren’t, CA is a great way to learn more about Lutheran theology and the role of a pastor.”

“My life is changed because of Christ Academy. There is no doubt in my mind that I will attend this seminary.”

Life-Changing Studies

Christ Academy, like Concordia Theological Seminary, is centered on Christ crucified who dwells in His Church through the Means of Grace. Students of Christ Academy will study Exegetical, Systematic, Historical and Practical Theology. The classes are taught by professors from CTS and professors from our Concordia University System.

“The classes were fascinating and engaging. The professors made theology clear and the subjects taught were all interesting.”

Fun Activities

Lifelong friendships are made at Christ Academy. Through dorm life and activities such as trips to Cedar Point and TinCaps baseball games, flag football, capture the flag and more, students have time for fellowship with others who have similar goals and aspirations in life.

“I was most influenced by the presence of my confessional Missouri Synod Lutheran brothers.”

“I felt unified with my brothers in mind, spirit and song.”
Frequently Asked Questions

Where will I stay during Christ Academy?
You will stay in dormitory rooms on the seminary campus, two guys per room. Each room has two closets, two chairs and two beds. Bedding and towels will be provided.

Who attends Christ Academy?
LCMS high-school-aged men who are interested in learning about theology and are open to the possibility of preparing for the Holy Ministry. Admission is competitive, based on seniority, ability to participate in the Academy for the two full weeks and short admission essays.

What will I study at Christ Academy?
This year our professors will lecture on such topics as: Theology of the Cross, Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, the Economy of Salvation, Ethics at the Beginning and End of Life and Catechetics. In addition, professors will host fireside chats which are an inviting discourse on a range of topics in a more informal setting.

Do I need books for Christ Academy?
Some books will be required. A list will be sent to you when you are accepted into the Academy. All of the books will be available in our bookstore upon arrival. One of the following translations of the Bible will be required: ESV, KJV, NKJV, RSV, NAS, NIV.

Will there be musical opportunities?
Students will sing in the Academy choir which serves at special worship services during the Academy. Students who play brass instruments may bring them to participate in worship services.

What about sports?
There will be opportunities for basketball, soccer and other sports depending upon the collective interest of the students. Academy-wide games take place in the evenings.

What role does worship play at Christ Academy?
A very central role! Daily word and prayer services such as Matins, Vespers and Compline as well as Holy Communion are offered each week. Students also help lead worship by participating in the Academy choir.

Might I arrive early or spend an extra night?
Yes.

How much will this cost?
$500 covers tuition, room, board and activity fees. In addition, spending money will be needed for books, some snacks and optional activities.

Top 10 Reasons to Come to Christ Academy:
1. Worship in Kramer Chapel
2. Knowledgeable professors
3. Fellowship with peers
4. Capture the Flag
5. The food is great
6. Cedar Point
7. Games
8. Chanting
9. Learning the LSB
10. Evening activities and events

For more information about Christ Academy, please call us at: 1-800-481-2155
You can also find information at the seminary’s Web site: www.ctsfw.edu/ChristAcademy or e-mail: ChristAcademy@ctsfw.edu
What is Christ Academy:
A two week retreat at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Who is Christ Academy for:
High-school-aged young men of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod who are (or should be) considering becoming pastors. It is open to those who have completed their freshman year through those who have completed their senior year.

What does it cost:
$500 is all inclusive (housing, meals, Christ Academy polo shirt, admission to an amusement park and other events, etc.) Limited financial aid may be available at the recommendation of your pastor.

How do I get there:
Please arrange your own transportation to and from Christ Academy. We can offer suggestions for planning air or rail travel, airport shuttles, carpooling, directions and the like.

Please return this form to:
Christ Academy Registration
Concordia Theological Seminary
6600 North Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825-4996