Each fall, beginning theological students across the United States complete the Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ). The ESQ provides an overall snapshot of entering classes for the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), one of our two accrediting commissions, and gathers useful data for each participating seminary, including why students choose to study at a particular seminary.

This past fall, the top six reasons for choosing Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne were:

- Denominational affiliation
- Theological perspective
- Faculty
- Curriculum
- Spiritual atmosphere
- Library

These pair nicely. The first pair speaks of our identity. Our identity statement reads this way:

Concordia Theological Seminary is an institution of theological higher education of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod whose central purpose is to prepare men for the pastoral ministry, as well as men and women for other service in the church, through programs offering an understanding of the Christian faith that is Christ-centered, biblically-based, confessionally-Lutheran and evangelically active.

The second pair speaks of the key ingredients for our programs of study, particularly our Master of Divinity and Master of Arts with Deaconess Certification programs. These are the professional degree programs through which we prepare workers for the church, or as our mission statement says, “servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all.”

During the first decade of this new millennium, the faculty engaged in a thoughtful process of curriculum review and rolled out a revised curriculum. This academic year, the faculty is engaged in a process of further refinement as course assessment data informs further change, particularly of the three Theologia courses. These courses are integrative in nature and focus on the pastoral acts of baptism, preaching and the Lord’s Supper.

Additionally, the faculty has engaged this year in a concerted effort to recast course syllabi and course assessment instruments in the language of student learning outcomes. This refinement and alignment will help to communicate what sort of servant in Jesus Christ each degree program seeks to form.

The third pair speaks of two buildings that are central to a seminary campus. A recent survey of campus facility planners discovered that visiting prospective students are most interested in two buildings on any campus—the building for their major and the library.
The expansion of Walther Library has further strengthened the architectural centrality of Kramer Chapel while providing excellent space for student study. The study areas are in a wireless environment that delivers electronic resources to laptops and other portable electronic devices wherever a person is working.

Prof. Robert V. Roethemeyer serves as Director of Library Services and Dean of Assessment at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In a seminary setting, the building of one’s major may easily be seen as the chapel. The chapel is not only the central focal point of the campus, but it is also the center of spiritual atmosphere on campus. The pattern of worship in Kramer Chapel marks the hours of the day. The water in the baptismal font reminds us of our daily need to drown the old Adam. The Word is read, sung and preached there. The body and blood of our Lord are served there. Servants in Jesus Christ are formed there.

The expansion of Walther Library has further strengthened the architectural centrality of Kramer Chapel while providing excellent space for student study. The study areas are in a wireless environment that delivers electronic resources to laptops and other portable electronic devices wherever a person is working. Naturally lighted, quiet lantern and lakeside study areas provide spaces for contemplative work to occur and enclosed study rooms provide spaces for collaborative work to occur. The narrow print-centric study carrels that mark the historic building give way to wide multi-tasking table tops where print and electronic resources are equally at home.

Soon after the first phase of this project opened in January, a request came from students to extend the evening library hours. We have. A fourth-year student said this about the new space: “It feels good to be in this space. I envy the first-year students who will be able to use this space throughout their seminary career.”

So, Walther Library and its expansion joins denominational affiliation, theological perspective, faculty, curriculum and chapel as one of the things that sets CTS apart!
Mention the word “economy” in our contemporary context and you will surely arouse strong emotions concerning the financial stability of our country. However, in the ancient world, the word economy had a much different meaning. The word economy referred to the way households were structured. Jesus often likens the kingdom of God to a steward (οικονόμος) through whom the economy of the household is ordered (Luke 16:1). The ancients recognized that life was not a formless thing; inherent in life itself are certain patterns that cannot be ignored, such as the fundamental activities of sowing and reaping. Sowing and reaping are not arbitrary patterns imposed upon seeds from the outside. Rather, it is the very nature of seeds to subsist within this elemental rhythm. “…unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies,” says our Lord, “it remains alone” (John 12:24). Jesus’ words suggest that God established the economy of the seed as a sign of His own death and resurrection. What God accomplishes in the earth is precisely what He will accomplish in human flesh through Christ.

For early Christians, to perceive the economies underlying creation was tantamount to perceiving the plan of God. In Genesis 1-2, Moses describes God’s creative work in terms of organic patterns that reveal the Creator’s mind. The chief economy that orders the very heart of God’s creation is the relationship between man and woman. God orders life so that neither can produce life independent of the other. The very life Adam receives from the divine breath is precisely the life that flows from his side for the formation of Eve. Marriage is the economy of love in which the two are made one through the free act of giving oneself for the other.

For the early Christians, the economy of love, like that of the seed, comes to its fullness in Christ and the church. Christ is the true Adam, who lays down His life for His beloved; out of the very blood and water that flow from Jesus’ side, the church receives her identity as His bride. The economy of love begins when Christ takes everything He has received from the Father and communicates it to the faithful. Like sowing, leitourgia is the beginning and source of the economy of love. Diakonia, on the other hand, is the harvest of love that takes place as Christians interact with one another and with their community.

Through leitourgia the church communes with Christ at the Eucharistic altar; but through diakonia the church communes with Christ in the poor, the sick, the stranger and the dying. “…as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40). Thus, John
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Chrysostom, a fourth century pastor, admonishes his flock with these words: “…would you honor Christ’s body? Then do not neglect Him when naked. For the same one who said, ‘This is My body,’ also said, ‘you saw Me hungry and did not feed Me’…let us learn…to honor Christ as He Himself desires.”¹ In this way, leitourgia and diakonia are truly interdependent. Christ gives us Himself at the altar in order that His love might animate us to love one another. Christ makes us members of His own flesh that we might embody His mercy toward the poor, the sick, the broken and the dying. It is for this reason that Christ defines His own life in terms of diakonia. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (diakonia), and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

It is in the life of diakonia that deaconesses find their identity and vocation. Like Eve and Mary, the mother of our Lord, the deaconess is a handmaiden; she labors so that the seed of Christ’s love might reap a harvest in the church’s fellowship of mercy. Through leitourgia the church is manifested as the bride of Christ. Yet through diakonia, the church becomes more than merely a bride; she becomes a fruitful mother, whose love is regenerating, turning slaves of sin and death into the beloved children of God.

¹ John Chrysostom, Homily 50.3-4.

Have you ever received an extraordinary gift? One that you didn’t deserve? One that changed your whole life for the better? One that brought challenges, but bestowed profound peace and satisfaction? One that could be said to be truly “Divine?”

Sacred Scripture describes such a special gift. It is a gift that comes from God. It is God’s call to serve Him by confessing His Name before the world. It is a call “to teach the faithful, to reach the lost and to care for all.”

Sacred Scripture also provides examples of how God has given such a beautiful gift. In the Old Testament, God appears to Abram with the call to leave his country for the land that God would show him (Genesis 12:1-3).
The incredible blessing that accompanied that call was that Abram would be the father of the Messiah (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 1:1).

A bit later, God appeared to Moses and called him to lead the enslaved people of God to freedom and the promised land (Exodus 3). The enormous blessing of Moses’ call is not only to behold God’s goodness in saving His people, but also in commissioning Moses to write the first book of the Bible—the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy). God reveals His character and actions from creation onward through the writing of Moses.

Still later, we are given portraits of the call of Isaiah (Isaiah 6) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1). Several features of these calls are significant. Foundationally, the call comes in every instance through God’s gracious initiative, i.e., God calls graciously and freely whom He wishes. There is no hint that some natural trait or capacity in these men caused God to select them. On the contrary, the one called frequently responds to God that he is inadequate. Moses regarded himself as a poor speaker and lacking in the charisma it would take to lead the people. Isaiah viewed himself as a sinner—one who had unclean lips. Jeremiah felt he was too young and not eloquent.

In all these cases, God assures His called one and promises His gracious and guiding presence as the guarantee of the call’s legitimacy. God’s presence, rather than human powers, will validate the words and works of the called servant. The manner in which Jesus calls His disciples (e.g., Mark 1:14-20) displays the same Divine initiative. Jesus calls fishermen to: “Come, follow Me…and I will make you fishers of men.”

These calls were God’s great and wonderful gifts. They defined the lives of those called by the gracious presence of God. God journeyed with His called servants and blessed their labors even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances. And, most wondrous of all, He used these weak and imperfect servants to reveal His saving will in Eve’s seed, in Abram’s seed, in David’s seed, i.e., in Jesus Christ.

To be sure, such a call frequently entails challenges and suffering. Those who reject God, refuse and reject the messengers whom He sends. But, by the power of the Holy Spirit, many who hear will say “Yes” to God’s offer of mercy and forgiveness in Christ. The joy and thrill of beholding God’s saving action in Christ—and being a servant of it—exceeds in every way the pain of refusal and rejection. God’s called servant has the profound satisfaction of dealing with the eternal rather than the ephemeral. By God’s grace, his words and actions are God’s instruments to bestow eternal blessings on the faithful. In this calling there is engagement with the very meaning of human experience. It is the privilege of bringing God’s healing truth to those who live in the midst of false claims. What delight there is—especially in a day when human beings are being reduced to mere matter…chance products of an evolutionary process without purpose—in announcing that each and every human being is God’s creature and the object of God’s saving love. As Jesus says: “I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

Today God gives this wonderful, life changing gift of a Divine call through His church. If you have experienced an abiding desire to serve God, if you rejoice in God’s grace in Christ, if you love the Blessed and Holy Trinity, then talk with your pastor. Also contact the Admission team—themselves called servants—at Concordia Theological Seminary. Your pastor and these seminary pastors can assist you in your reflections and provide answers to all the practical questions which will arise. By God’s grace you may well look back and regard such conversations as the way God is leading you to receive this gift greater than all—to be His called servant.

God assures His called one and promises His gracious and guiding presence as the guarantee of the call’s legitimacy. God’s presence, rather than human powers, will validate the words and works of the called servant.

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ON CAMPUS EVENTS

Prayerfully Consider Campus Visit
October 11–13, 2012
www.ctsfw.edu/PCV

Good Shepherd Institute
November 4–6, 2012
www.ctsfw.edu/GSI

Christ Academy College & Phoebe Academy College
October 18–21, 2012
www.ctsfw.edu/CAC

Prayerfully Consider Campus Visit
March 21–23, 2013
www.ctsfw.edu/PCV

Christ Academy High School
June 16–29, 2013
www.ctsfw.edu/ChristAcademy

You may also call 800-481-2155 for more information.