

Rev. Adolph von Rohr

A Faithful Pastor for 58 years

"Let the one who has my word speak it faithfully..."

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Among psychologists and sociologists there is a great debate about how people receive certain abilities. This debate is known as the Nature - Nurture controversy. Some say that a person's abilities are inherited. Others claim that people develop certain abilities as a result of their experience and environment. In the case of Pastor Adolph von Rohr, a strong case can be made on both sides of this argument.

NATURE

Certainly, Adolph von Rohr inherited many abilities from his fore-fathers. A closer look at his ancestry testifies to that fact. The Genealogical Handbook of Noble Families traces the von Rohr family back to 1191. It also says that the von Rohrs have been numbered among the nobility ever since. Not only were they members of the noble class, but many also served as military officers or government employees.¹ For centuries the von Rohrs played important roles in the political and military affairs of Prussia. This family had many abilities, especially in the areas of organization and communication.

That is about all the information available about the von Rohr family up to the early 1800's. In 1797 Adolph's grandfather Heinrich von Rohr was born. Heinrich significantly changed the future of the von Rohr family. He started out as a typical von Rohr. As a teenager he served as a page in the court of Frederick Wilhelm III of Prussia. At 18 he was a second lieutenant in the Kaiser Alexander Grenadier Regiment. Heinrich showed some great communication skills in this role. He was chosen as a diplomat to help settle the Franco - Prussian disputes after the Napoleonic wars. Because of his good work in this area he was promoted to captain of his regiment on

¹ Sauer, Philip von Rohr. The Rev. Philip von Rohr Devoted Pioneer Pastor and Leader of the Wisconsin Synod. p. 1.

March 30, 1834.²

When Heinrich was in his early thirties, something happened that had a profound effect on the future of the von Rohr family. It was at this point in Heinrich's life that he became a devout Lutheran. He spent most of his time reading the Bible, taking instructions, and studying theology. This caused major difficulties for Heinrich. When Frederick Wilhelm III proclaimed a union between the Lutheran and Reformed churches, Heinrich refused to join. His main objection was the fact that this union did not acknowledge the real presence in the Lord's Supper. Because Heinrich refused to join the Prussian Union, he was considered a nonconformist and was dismissed from his position as captain on February 10, 1837.³

What would become of the noble von Rohr family now? Would they fade into obscurity? Certainly not! It was at this point that the von Rohrs stopped serving in the court of the King of Prussia and began serving in the court of Jesus Christ. Heinrich was not the only Lutheran upset over the Prussian Union. There were many other Lutherans who were opposed to the compromise of the true doctrine. Yet, this opposition group was not organized. It was Heinrich von Rohr, with his organization skills from his military days, who organized a group of 1,000 Prussians to sail for America in 1839. Heinrich von Rohr established Lutheran settlements at Freistadt (Trinity), Sheboygan, and Kirchhayn (David's Star). After working as a farmer in Freistadt, Heinrich went to Buffalo, New York, to study for the ministry. Upon completion of his studies he was ordained. Shortly after his ordination, he and John Grabau formed the Buffalo Synod (June 25, 1845). For many years Heinrich von Rohr was the president of this synod. He

² Ibid., p. 1.

³ Ibid., p. 1.

served as a pastor of a congregation in New Bergholz, New York, for 28 years. Heinrich von Rohr died in 1875 at the age of 77.

Heinrich's youngest son, Philipp followed in his father's footsteps (cf. Appendix II). He studied for the ministry at Martin Luther College in Buffalo, New York. It was here that Philipp became interested in educational principles. He became highly critical of the teaching methods used at Martin Luther College. He wrote in his autobiography, "when I compare this instruction with the training that our sons are getting at college and the seminary today, I recall painfully an almost wasteful youth. The instruction was very deficient and what is more, very mechanical. I can truthfully say that not one of our teachers knew how to make a subject interesting. Add to this an iron discipline and the fact that refreshing sports of all kinds were prohibited, and you have a conception of the situation."⁴

Philipp von Rohr was ordained on October 13, 1863. His first call was to a congregation in Toledo, Ohio. Here Philipp not only served as a pastor, but also taught school five days a week. He served in Toledo for two and a half years and then accepted a call to Winona, Minnesota.

On June 27, 1866, Philipp von Rohr was installed at St. Martin's Church in Winona. This is how Philipp described his early years in Winona. "When I landed in Winona I found a small gathering of 20 communicants and a church 18x30 feet meagerly furnished. But the congregation grew apace, thanks partly to the parochial school, which I founded with six children two weeks after my arrival. By that fall there were 80 children in the parish school. The next four years I taught an average of 100 students until finally the congregation was able to call a teacher. There

⁴ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

was no lack of work!"⁵

Eleven years after he came to Winona, Philipp von Rohr became a member of the Wisconsin Synod. "Philipp Andreas von Rohr was received into membership with the Wisconsin Synod at the Watertown convention in 1877 on the basis of a colloquy."⁶ He certainly was a blessing for the Wisconsin Synod. Immediately he was involved in Synodical work. When others saw his abilities, they began to show him much respect. Only twelve years after joining the Wisconsin Synod he was elected president of the church body.

Under von Rohr's guidance the Wisconsin Synod began to grow rapidly. During his presidency the Synod improved its educational system, began doing foreign mission work (Apache missions), and started to operate a publishing house (Northwestern Publishing House). The biggest impact President von Rohr had on the Synod was in the area of education. Even before he became president he was appointed to a committee to develop a more suitable catechism.⁷ He had a special interest in Northwestern College (or Northwestern University as it was known then). He preached at the dedication of the new seminary building in Wauwatosa. It was during his presidency that Dr. Martin Luther College officially became the only teachers college of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. All this shows his great concern for Christian education, both for church workers and for the laity.

Professor Balge summarizes Philipp von Rohr's life in this way: "The Quartalschrift, founded

⁵ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁶ Balge, Richard D. Von Rohr: A Beloved Brother and Faithful Minister. WLQ, Vol. 72, 3 (July 1975), p. 211.

⁷ Ibid., p. 211.

during his tenure, took no note of his passing, made no mention of his loss. It was a theological journal and it may be that von Rohr was not to be ranked among theologians. He was, in fact, the kind of theologian our seminary has always tried to produce: a student of the Holy Scriptures, faithful to the Confessions, widely read, conscious of an historical heritage, with a heart for people. In short, though he lacked what his Synod regards as a complete theological education, he was a fine practical theologian. He was what Paul called Tychicus (Eph. 6:21) and what Gausewitz called him: "A beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."⁸

With that kind of an ancestry one can easily see how Adolph von Rohr became a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Adolph inherited many abilities from his fore-fathers. Abilities such as: organizational skills, communication skills, a deep concern about education, a love for God's Word, and a love for people.

NURTURE

A paper about Adolph von Rohr would not be complete without a look at his formative years. Indeed, Adolph inherited many good qualities for his work as a parish pastor. Adolph learned many things about the parish ministry from his life in the house of a parish pastor. Adolph learned many things from his parents and his siblings. The Philipp von Rohr family was a fine Christian family. Through good times and bad they were always there for each other, offering encouragement or admonition from God's Word.

Adolph von Rohr was born on November 17, 1884. He was the youngest of eight children (Hugo, Adele, Frieda, Ada, Emma, Hedwig, Edmund, and Adolph). Actually, Pastor and Mrs. Philipp von Rohr had 13 children. The first two died at five months (a boy and a girl). Another

⁸ Ibid., p. 234.

boy died at six months. Two other boys died. One, the youngest son Philipp, died in a terrible accident when he was three. Philipp (senior) describes this sad incident, "Our youngest son Philipp, as a child of nearly four years, fell into a washtub of boiling soap-water. This happened in the morning at nine o'clock and he lived, fully conscious, until five o'clock that evening when he quietly went to sleep."⁹ The other son, Henry, died when he was seventeen. His father writes:

The deepest blow of my whole life was the unexpected death of our dear Henry who died at the age of 17 years and 4 months. He was a goodly lad, very talented, obedient and faithful and was my constant pride and joy. He was to have been first my assistant and later my successor and with this in mind was sent to our college in Watertown. He reached his Junior year. At the end of the schoolyear, already preparing to go home, he was seized with appendicitis. His condition was not considered serious but, since he could not go home with the other boys, I sent his mother to Watertown to nurse him. I myself had to go to St. Paul for Synod. After three days I received a telegram stating that Henry was in serious condition. I immediately boarded the first train available but while passing through Winona was told by my brother, John, that Henry had already died the evening before. I found him in his coffin! Three months before I had seen him for the last time. The extent of my grief I cannot express in words. Although my dear Lord comforted and strengthened me to bear also this cross, I must admit that even today as I write this I feel deeply the wound that has remained.¹⁰

In the midst of all this sorrow the von Rohr family was comforted by the Gospel. Philipp von Rohr writes: "Again in this affliction we were richly comforted by the Gospel. In fact all our afflictions have but produced the fruits of righteousness for me and my family. We have learned to thank our God for these tribulations and have come to realize that all things work together for good to them that love God."¹¹ Surely, Adolph learned very much from the example of his

⁹ Sauer, Philip von Rohr. The Rev. Philip von Rohr Devoted Pioneer Pastor and Leader of the Wisconsin Synod. p. 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 11-12.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

parents in dealing with the loss of their children.

Adolph's childhood was not always full of heartache. In fact, most of his childhood was quite joyful. Adolph spent some quality time with his father. The two of them enjoyed fishing together. "But of all his outdoor hobbies trout fishing was his favorite: he and his youngest son, Adolph, with his fishing buddy, a Mr. Wachs, would drive in a horse-drawn buggy to East Burns Valley and catch native Eastern brook trout by the dozen."¹²

An excellent description of family life in the von Rohr household follows:

The home life of the von Rohrs was no different from that of any other good Christian family where the father's influence is strongly felt...Christian ideals were taught by precept and example; the Bible was their textbook for all the problems of life... The von Rohrs never did believe that they had to be different because they were a minister's family; on the contrary, they were taught to believe...that the good things of life - laughter, recreation, good food, travel, art, literature - were not reserved for pagans and infidels. No one ever accused a von Rohr of being a puritan or a pietist.¹³

Not only did Adolph von Rohr have the advantage of growing up learning about the parish ministry from his father, he also had the advantage of growing up in the house of the Synodical president. Many pastors and theologians spent time at the von Rohr house in Winona. Men such as: Dr. Ernst and Dr. Notz from Watertown, Professor Adolph Hoenecke from the Seminary, the Badings (former Synodical president and his wife), and many others. Just think what a learning experience it must have been for Adolph to listen to these men discuss theology with his father!

One aspect of Adolph's nurturing that must not be overlooked is his loving mother. Emma

¹² Ibid., p. 10.

¹³ Sauer, Philip von Rohr. Elfrieda von Rohr Sauer: Pioneer Pastor's Daughter, Devoted Minister's Wife. CHIQ, XXXIII, 2 (July 1960), pp. 37-38.

von Rohr (nee Schaal) raised eight children and kept an open house for Wisconsin Synod friends. Because her husband was the president of the Synod and because Winona was midway between Milwaukee and St. Paul, the von Rohrs had many house guests. These guests affectionately referred to Emma as "Frau Pastor'n." Emma had a wonderful personality, which helped her to be an excellent mother and a gracious hostess. Adolph's mother taught him the two most important things for his future. She taught him God's Word and taught him how to get along with people.

There is no doubt about it, Adolph von Rohr had a childhood that would benefit him later in life. His childhood experiences were an important part of his training for the pastoral ministry. Without those experiences he may have never considered being a pastor. God used his parents as the first "professors" in his training for the ministry.

EDUCATION

While it has been stated that Adolph's education began informally at home, his formal education began at St. Martin's school. Upon graduating from the Lutheran elementary school, Adolph enrolled at Northwestern Prep. He continued his education at Northwestern College. This made his father very proud. For Northwestern was the apple of Philipp von Rohr's eye. Adolph graduated from Northwestern College in 1906. In the fall of the same year he began his studies at the seminary in Wauwatosa. This brought his father great joy. "His youngest son, Adolph, had been graduated from Northwestern College in 1906 and was a student at the Wauwatosa seminary, much to the satisfaction of the old pastor, whose heritage he would carry on."¹⁴ During Adolph's seminary years he sat at the feet of some very gifted theologians. These

¹⁴ Sauer, Philip von Rohr. The Rev. Philip von Rohr Devoted Pioneer Pastor and leader of the Wisconsin Synod. p. 22.

professors were Adolf Hoenecke, Johannes P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller. These men were the framers of the "Wauwatosa Gospel", an emphasis on the thorough exegesis of the Scriptures as the foundation of all doctrine.

Adolph's final year at the seminary was a difficult one. His father had been ill for quite a while with cancer. On December 22, 1908, Adolph's father, Philipp von Rohr, was called to his eternal home. Earlier that same year the president of the seminary, Adolf Hoenecke, had died. Hoenecke was replaced by the president of Dr. Martin Luther College, John Schaller. That final year of seminary was difficult for Adolph personally because of the loss of his father. It was also a difficult year for the whole student body because President Hoenecke had died the previous school year. Yet, the school year ended on a joyful note. On June 11, 1909, Adolph von Rohr graduated from the seminary.¹⁵ He was now entering the service of his Lord in the office of the public ministry.

THE FIRST YEAR OF MINISTRY

Candidate Adolph von Rohr was ordained on the eighth Sunday after Trinity (August 1, 1909) in his home church (St. Martin's, Winona). He was ordained by his father's successor (Adolph's brother - in - law) Pastor Alfred Sauer. The following Sunday Adolph was installed by Pastor Froehlke (of Neenah, Wisconsin) as the pastor of two mission congregations. One was Zion in Omro (just outside of Oshkosh). The other was in Rosendale.¹⁶ At least that seems to be the best description of the area in which Adolph von Rohr served. He describes this area a little differently when he writes, "In that year the present pastor, who had served two mission congregations, one

¹⁵ Gemeindeblatt. May 1909.

¹⁶ Wisconsin Proceedings 1909 - 1910. p.17.

six miles from Oshkosh and the other near Ripon, Wisconsin, was called."¹⁷ His obituary says that he served in the Omro - Pickett area (cf. Appendix III). These descriptions are just different ways of explaining where Pastor von Rohr spent his first year of ministry. The only information about this first year in the ministry is that he did not stay long.

PEACE, HARTFORD

In the summer of 1910, Adolph von Rohr accepted a call to Peace Lutheran Church in Hartford, Wisconsin. He was installed on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity (August 28, 1910).¹⁸ This is the area in which the Lord wanted him to serve for the rest of his life. God truly blessed Peace Lutheran Church through His humble servant, Adolph von Rohr. When one studies the history of Peace Lutheran, he or she cannot overlook Pastor von Rohr. He was the congregation's second permanent pastor. That is enough to make him noteworthy. Yet there is much more that makes him vitally important in the history of Peace Lutheran. He had a great impact on the growth and development of Peace. This was due to his many God given talents and the length of his service.

In order to get a clearer picture of Pastor Adolph von Rohr, let's examine three areas of his life in Hartford. First, how he used his abilities for the good of Peace Lutheran. Second, his family life. And finally, the length of his pastorate.

There are many ways that Rev. Adolph von Rohr used his abilities for the good of Peace Lutheran Church and for the good of the Wisconsin Synod. The following areas are worthy of close examination: concern for Christian education, as a preacher, as a shepherd of souls, and in

¹⁷ Centennial booklet of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church. p. 6.

¹⁸ Gemeindeblatt. August 1910. p. 285.

service to the Synod.

In the area of Christian education, Adolph von Rohr was ahead of his time in many ways. Many of the things Pastor von Rohr implemented are things which our Synod (WELS) will be implementing over the next decade (1990-2000).

When Adolph von Rohr arrived at Peace Lutheran he did two things which were vital steps for the improvement of education within the congregation. The first thing was to introduce English. "Until 1910 all services and meetings and instruction was conducted in the German language. Beginning in 1910, English was gradually introduced."¹⁹ Already in 1910 there was somewhat of a choice as to which language one wanted to use to study God's Word. The second area in which Pastor von Rohr tried to improve Christian education was in the education of children. He really wanted to start a Lutheran elementary school. However, the congregation was not yet ready for a school. That would have to wait until over 50 years later.²⁰

Since a school was not started, Pastor von Rohr looked for other ways to educate the children of the congregation. During the von Rohr years Peace Lutheran had a large Sunday School that met every Sunday except for two weeks in the summer. Children could start Sunday School at the age of four. However, the younger children were not forgotten about. Materials for children 18 months to 4 years were provided to the parents. There is an interesting note about this in the *Peace Lutheran Messenger*, November 7, 1958, "To the mothers of the young children 1.5 years to 4 years of age who receive the pre-Sunday School lessons: - You will find much fine help,

¹⁹ Taken from a pamphlet printed for the dedication of the new church building - June 12, 1960.

²⁰ Information from interviews of F. Kuehn and A. Bublitz members of Peace Lutheran.

many practical suggestions, all of them based on Scriptures, for the teaching of these lessons in your very valuable book, "Growing Up With Jesus", which was presented to you by the Ladies' Aid when your child was baptized." Vacation Bible School was a very important part of the educational system in addition to Sunday School. Vacation Bible School was held for five weeks every summer. Catechetical instructions were very important to Pastor von Rohr. He held classes three times a week (Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings). So far it seems as if Pastor von Rohr did some pretty typical things in the area of education. Yet, the most important part of his educational system has not been mentioned. He placed a great deal of emphasis on a Bible class for teenagers. These classes (for ninth and tenth graders) were not required. However, if someone missed a few classes in a row they could be sure that Pastor von Rohr would visit them. Another important fact about these classes is who taught them. Mrs. von Rohr taught one class and a layman taught the other.²¹ One of Pastor von Rohr's greatest gifts was the way he could teach the Sunday School teachers. He very rarely missed a Sunday School teachers' meeting and always had time to help the teachers. The only weakness in education during the von Rohr years was the lack of an adult Bible class. Not until the end of von Rohr's ministry was an adult Bible class offered (other than an adult instruction class). There are some good reasons for this. One is that the educational philosophies of the day claimed that people could not learn any more after a certain age (around 18). The other may be that the many organizations began their meetings with a devotion or a topic (Ladies' Aid, Altar Guild, Mission Society, Men's Club, etc.).

*That was
their
Bible Class*

As far as preaching is concerned, Pastor von Rohr was a good preacher. Good in the sense

²¹ Ibid.

that he was faithful to God's Word and he was able to communicate the message of that Word to the congregation in a very understandable way. Most would describe his style as very clear and to the point. An article in the Hartford Times-Press (September 15, 1955) described his sermons in this way, "His excellent and memorable sermons have comforted and instructed enumerable people..." From the few copies of his sermons remaining one easily sees that Pastor von Rohr was one to preach both Law and Gospel (cf. Appendix I). Because of this he was asked to preach for some special events later in his ministry. He preached at an 8:00pm service on Sunday, June 26, 1955 at St. Paul's in Lomira for their centennial. He preached for the ordination of Pastor Jerome Braun (a son of the Peace congregation). He also preached at Nain Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Allis for a church dedication anniversary.

As a shepherd of souls, Pastor von Rohr showed his great love for the Holy Scriptures and his great love for people. He would never back down on what God's Word says. Yet, he comforted those who were weighed down with the burden of sin and guilt. This probably explains why most people liked Pastor von Rohr. Unfortunately, there were a number of occasions in which people were upset with Pastor von Rohr. One of those occasions took place in the year of 1919-1920. In 1920 a group of people joined together to form an entirely English Lutheran church. On December 5, 1920 Redeemer Lutheran Church was established (ELCA). However, it seems as if there was more to this than some people who wanted to form an entirely English Lutheran congregation. It appears that some people were unhappy with Pastor von Rohr's stand against the lodge. It is interesting to note that the Order of the Eastern Star (the women's group of the Masonic Lodge) was started in Hartford in February of 1919. Only two years later a new Lutheran church that tolerated the lodge was holding services in Hartford. Another example of

Pastor von Rohr as a shepherd of souls is found in the case of a member who was engaged to a Catholic man. Pastor von Rohr did not forbid her to marry the man. Instead he advised her not to sign any document which would promise that their children would be raised Catholic. She told Pastor von Rohr that she would sign the document. Because of her action Pastor von Rohr asked her not to take the Lord's Supper until they could discuss this problem in greater detail. She came to the Lord's Supper and he skipped over her. As a result, her whole family left the congregation.²² While some thought Pastor von Rohr was quite intimidating, most who went to him with problems went away comforted and built up by the Gospel.

Pastor von Rohr was always concerned about having personal contact with the souls in his care. It was this concern that moved him to seek some help as the congregation grew. He often had professors from the seminary or Northwestern College help with the preaching. In fact, Professor Reim (professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1940-1957) preached on a regular basis.²³

In order to understand what a pastoral heart Adolph von Rohr had it is important to read some of his congregational letters. From the *Peace Lutheran Messenger*, March 21, 1949: "And how much shall you give? The answer is ask the Lord Jesus what you shall give. He knows what you have and what you can give." The *Peace Lutheran Messenger*, March 1952: "This spirit of giving must ever be nourished and strengthened in a Christian, for the spirit of the flesh, selfishness, is ever trying to creep into his heart and control it again. And where shall a Christian learn more and more of the spirit of giving, of love, and of thankfulness? Beneath the cross on

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Calvary." *The Peace Lutheran Messenger*, November 7, 1958: "For every Christian congregation the day of the Mission Festival is a red letter day, a day of great importance. To be interested in mission work is one of the first fruits of our faith in our Savior Jesus Christ. It is through mission work that we became Christians and were born again with love for our Savior and love for our fellow men. This love will prove itself in doing good unto others and the best thing you can do your fellow man is to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to them so that they also may be saved."

In addition to being a faithful shepherd of souls in his own congregation, Adolph von Rohr served the Synod. He did this on a smaller scale than his father had. But he was interested in the work of the Synod. He served the Synod on the conference level. For 27 years he was the chairman of the Dodge - Washington conference and for 8 years he was the conference's visiting elder. In addition to those things he arranged two special celebrations. The first was the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. This anniversary observation was held on July 13, 1930, at Schwartz Park in Hartford. The following spoke at this anniversary celebration: Professor F. Brenner, Professor J. P. Meyer, and Professor E. Kowalke. Von Rohr also organized an outdoor celebration of the founding of the Wisconsin Synod at Sunset Valley (near West Bend) in May of 1950.²⁴

Much like his childhood, Adolph von Rohr's family life in Hartford was full of ups and downs. In 1911 he married Elsie Dowidat. Adolph and Elsie had two children, John and Mary Beth. In 1935 Elsie von Rohr was called to her eternal home. In 1940 Adolph married Ida Dysterheft of Winona, Minnesota. Family life in the von Rohr house must have been quite happy even though

²⁴ *The West Bend Pilot*. May 25, 1950.

there were some terribly sad moments. This was a family that turned its attention to Christ and the great happiness He gives all people through His death and resurrection.

The remarkable thing about Pastor von Rohr was how long he served Peace Lutheran. He was their pastor from 1910-1967. For 57 years he served the same congregation. During those years many changes took place. From the age of horse and buggy to the Space Age, through two World Wars, through the introduction of a new hymnal (The Lutheran Hymnal), through the split with the Missouri Synod, Pastor von Rohr faithfully shepherded the flock in Hartford. During those years the congregation grew both in numbers and spiritually. When Pastor Von Rohr arrived in Hartford there were 140 communicant members, by 1934 there were 560 communicant members, and by 1965 (the year Peace called Pastor D.H. Kuehl as an associate pastor) there were 908 communicant members. Although he served the same congregation so long, people always liked and respected him. Only in a few isolated instances did Pastor von Rohr's personality clash with one of the member's. The congregation showed their respect for their pastor by holding many anniversary services for him (35, 45, and 50 year celebrations). Pastor von Rohr's fiftieth anniversary in the ministry was celebrated with a service in the new church building which was dedicated on June 12, 1960.

RETIREMENT

After 57 years at Peace and 58 years in the ministry, Pastor Adolph von Rohr retired. In his retirement he helped his successor, D.H. Kuehl, as much as possible. He preached his last sermon in the summer of 1968. Less than two years later, in April of 1970, Pastor von Rohr was called to be with his Lord. A funeral service was held at 2:00 pm on April 22. Professor Carl Lawrenz (President of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) preached the sermon based on I Peter 1:3-5 (cf.

Appendix III).

With the death of Adolph von Rohr, the von Rohr line of pastors came to a close. God certainly accomplished much through these three important men. Their work was equally important, although it had a different scope. Heinrich von Rohr was important to all of American Lutheranism. Philipp was important as a president of the Wisconsin Synod. But to the people of Hartford, Wisconsin, Adolph von Rohr was the most important of the three. It was Adolph that had brought them the good news of salvation for nearly sixty years.

Pastor Adolph von Rohr was a faithful servant of Christ. He was faithful to the teachings of Scripture and he faithfully carried out all the duties of a pastor. What a wonderful blessing God gave Peace Lutheran in the person of Pastor Adolph von Rohr! If the members of Peace Lutheran remember anything about him may it be what he wrote in their centennial book: "Let us remember in all our activities, it is the Word and the Sacraments that alone will build and secure the future of our congregation. Thus imploring God's blessings, let us resolve, by His grace, to redouble our zeal in building the Kingdom both at home and abroad." Adolph von Rohr certainly fits the description of a true prophet found in Jeremiah 23:28, "Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain? declares the Lord."

APPENDIX I

Confirmation \ Palm Sunday

April 14, 1957

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. I John 2:15-17 (KJV).

This is your Confirmation Day, a day you should always remember. It should be a day of sacred joy, for you dear children, for your parents and sponsors and members of the congregation. It is also a day of joy for your Savior Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed you, when you renew your baptismal vow with Him. Also the angels in heaven rejoice when you make your vow to your and their God.

Dear friends, as you beheld these children marching into church singing "Let us ever walk with Jesus", and later as you see them approaching the Lord's Altar to make their confirmation vow, does not this remind you of the day of your own confirmation? Since then you have experienced much in life, in joys and sorrows, in trials and tribulations, good and evil days, but did Jesus ever fail you? Oh indeed not! He never forsakes or fails His own, according to His promises: "Lo, I am with you always." You have experienced His blessings, comfort, patience, loving kindness in His Holy Word and Sacrament. He has been faithful to you.

Have you always been faithful to Him, or have you often forgotten Him, neglected and offended Him? Truly you must confess with Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of these mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shown to Thy servant." Oh be thankful and rejoice, He hath not forgotten you, His covenant stands, to forgive and to bless you.

Let us also rejoice today when we hear these children make their vows in childlike faith and trust. We know that later in their lives they will face trials and temptation, good and evil days. They belong to the future of the church. Will they remain faithful? What will be their temporal and eternal lot? All our hope and prayer is that God may bless and keep them. So, dear children all the members of the congregation have your welfare at heart and are praying for you.

Above all there is One, whose eyes are resting upon you and wants you to remain faithful and to be saved. He is the unseen witness of all you think, say and do, your God and Savior who loves you with an everlasting love, who received you as His own in Holy Baptism, who has written your name in the Book of Heaven. He is here to receive you at the Altar and to renew His covenant with you.

This should be a day, which you will never forget in all your life, a happy blessed day. I have chosen a Word of the Lord, that should be a continual reminder of your confirmation vow.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD.

What is the world? In the past the world has been very small for you, your home, your school, your church, playgrounds, childish thoughts and childish plans--but the world is larger and as you grow older the horizon of your thoughts and desires will grow wider. You will know more and more the trials and temptations of this world its joys and its sorrows.

And when the Apostle John admonishes; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," he does not mean the people of the world with whom we must live. It is God's will that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Nor does He mean the calling that you will choose in life, the

work that you will do. He does not mean the creation, the good things God has created for the benefit of man. No, He does not want you to enter the world with a cold, loveless heart.

But remember, that in the world, among the people and life in this world, there are things even God does not and cannot love and which He tells us in His Word not to love and these are sin, evil or as St. John describes it: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. That is not of the Father, but of the devil who brought sin into the world." And the world is full of that especially attracting the young, the children of God, -- and to take the love of God out of their hearts, rob them of their faith. This sinful condition in the world often may have an innocent outwardly good appearance. The world knows how to cover up evil with a cloak of righteousness, and finds an excuse for every evil. And so it may happen that the lust of the flesh, and of the eyes which should be an abomination to every Christian may be called an innocent pleasure. That is the world you must face. Who thus loves the world, that he also loves sin, in him is not the love of the Father.

And remember always what John says, "And the world passes away and the lust thereof." All the things of the world that you can see, shall pass away. Do not set your heart upon them, do not live for them--that is the spirit of the world and people of the world. That is all they live for, all they strive for,--Mammon is their god. And no thought whatever for the true God, for the Spiritual blessings which our dear Savior merited for us through His suffering and death--of heaven.

Keep His promise always before your eyes: Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. You know that you are destined and chosen for eternal life--heaven is your home. You know that the greatest treasures are not what the world offers,--the lust of the world,--but the treasures that Christ merited for us. You remember the story of the rich young ruler in Holy Scripture. He wanted to be a follower of Christ, --yet he loved the things of this world more and finally in sadness turned away from Christ. Remember the words of Christ: "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and yet lose his soul." The world passes away and the lust thereof, --you are appointed to eternal life. Your name is written in the book of life--give not your heart to the world, that you forget yonder world, PARADISE and the way to heaven. You know it. By grace through faith in Christ. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Love not the world but let your Lord and Savior have the first place in your heart. Let Jesus be all to you, Jesus the Son of God, your King, who came into this world to save you. You know how he loves you, ---redeemed you, purchased and won you, not with gold or silver but with His Holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death, that you may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. You belong to Jesus, --and you want to belong to Him. All blessings for body and soul come from Him. The world can only deceive and finally lead you to destruction, but Jesus never deceives. Be thou faithful unto death, faithful to Jesus--He will guide, help, bless you and give you the crown of life. Oh, love not the world, that it takes Jesus out of your heart.

But he that doeth the will of the Father abideth forever, John finally says. It is the will of the Father that you believe in Jesus whom He sent. It is the will of the Father that you lead a Christian life, that you be patient in suffering--that you take up your cross. Are you prepared to do this? You have not the strength to do this alone, but He--Jesus will help you. Use the means of Grace diligently.

A--Hear His Word, be a diligent hearer. The world will entice you not to hear and read the

Word of God. Always remember, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth." And "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God." "My sheep hear my voice."

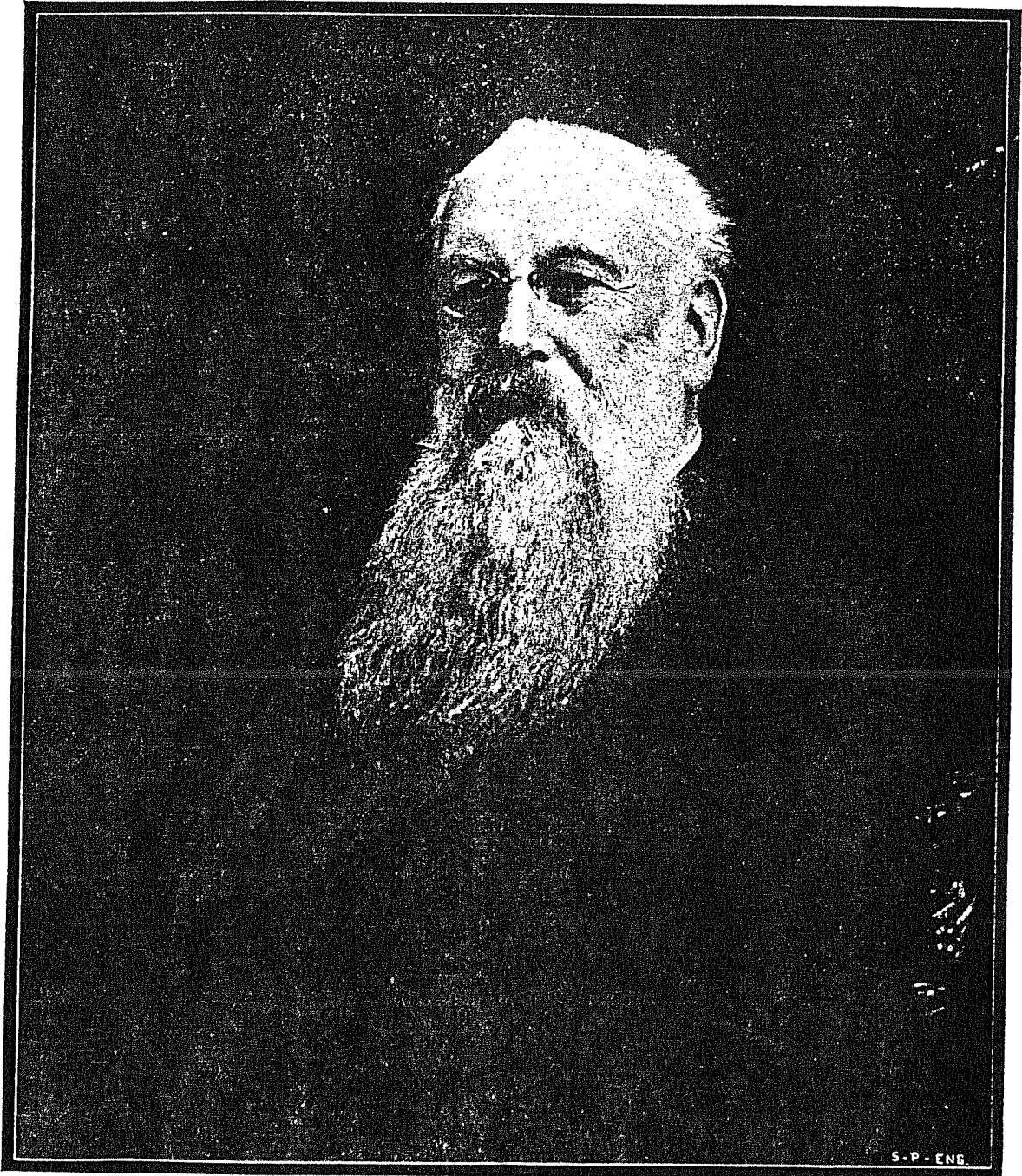
B--Receive Holy Communion often. "This do as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

C--Be diligent in prayer. "Without Me ye can do nothing." "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." "Verily I say, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give it to you." "Watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation."

Oh remember that Word of God, "Love not the world." Fight the good fight against the devil, the world and your flesh.

So come to His altar with thankful heart that He has called you and with prayerful hearts that He may keep you faithful until your blessed end. Amen.

APPENDIX II



Geb. den 13. Febr. 1843.

Präsident Philipp von Rohr.

Gestorben den 22. Dez. 1908.

APPENDIX III

† Pastor A. von Rohr †

April 19, 1970

Pastor Adolph von Rohr was born in Winona, Minnesota, on November 17, 1884, the son of Pastor and Mrs. Philip von Rohr. Pastor Philip von Rohr was one of the early presidents of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Pastor Adolph von Rohr was a graduate of Northwestern College in 1906 and of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (then situated in Wauwatosa) in 1909. His first year in the ministry was spent in the Pickett-Omro parish near Oshkosh. In 1910 he accepted the call to become pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Hartford, Wisconsin, a congregation which he served 57 years until his retirement in 1967. During this period of time, Pastor von Rohr served as chairman of the Dodge-Washington Conference for 27 years and as visiting elder for

eight years. After his retirement, he continued to assist his successor, Pas-



Pastor Adolph von Rohr

tor D. Kuehl, as health permitted, preaching his last sermon in August 1968.

In 1911 Pastor von Rohr married Elsie Dowidat. This marriage was blessed with a son, John, and a daughter, Mary Beth (Mrs. J. W. Perschbacher), both of whom survive their father. The first Mrs. von Rohr died in 1935. In 1940, Pastor von Rohr married Ida Dysterheft, who survives her husband. Three grandchildren and three sisters also survive.

After a long and painful illness, Pastor von Rohr died on April 19, 1970, at an age of 85 years. Funeral services were conducted at Peace Lutheran Church, Hartford, on April 22. Professor C. Lawrenz of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary preached the funeral sermon on I Peter 1:3-5, using as his theme "The Living Hope which We have Through Christ's Resurrection." Burial took place on April 23 at Winona, Minnesota.

JUNE 21, 1970

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