

PARABOLA YEARS AT ST. OLAF
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I graduated as an OLE in 1959. I was an English Major with a strong Minor in Philosophy. Existentialism was the big thing for me, but to this day I cannot give a definition of it. I can say Soren Kierkegaard, as Dr. Howard Hong presented him to us, is the Father of Existentialism, and "Truth is Subjectivity". I also can say my Professors, (Marie Malmin Meier, David Hesla, in particular) introduced me to T. S. Eliot and Shakespeare in such a way that I have been addicted to their works after all these years. But it was Arnold Flaten, of the Art Department, who had discussion groups on Thursday nights in the art barn, which moved me to a new understanding of what it meant to be both Christian and Human. We discussed Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, which begins: *I am a sick man...I am a spiteful man. No, I am not a pleasant man at all. I believe there is something wrong with my liver. However, I don't know a damn thing about my liver, neither do I know whether there is anything really wrong with me.* I was enthralled with his writing, and I ravenously devoured his novels and his marvelous gift of insight that it was possible to be fully human and fully a believer in Christ at the same time. I used to think you had to choose one or the other.

In my application for acceptance at St. Olaf, it asked: Why do you want to go to St. Olaf? I wrote that I wanted to be of service to God and my fellow man. I was a friend with several "pre-Sem" OLE classmates. I took one term of New Testament Greek. I sang in the Chapel Choir, and we did Mozart's Requiem with full orchestra under the direction of Miles Johnson as I recall. I also sang in the Liturgical Choir doing Gregorian Chants. I also fell in love with Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D-minor, on my cousin's Hi-Fi in Ytterboe Hall. I believe the organist was E. Power Biggs. I even constructed a kind of theology of that piece with a contrapuntal love relationship between God on the bass notes and humans like me on the high notes. Bach knew how to be Christian and Human at the same time! I ended up a graduate of Luther Theological Seminary in 1963.

I recently retired after 41 years as an ELCA Pastor.

I wrote a published poem in the St. Olaf Campus Magazine, and I close with that:

PARABOLA

Sometimes
I fear
I'll discover
My life to be
A parabola,
Tangent at one time,
To the Truth,
With ascending
And descending lines, that
Graphically express these facts:
Beginning, ending.... oblivion.

It is because of those parabolic days at St. Olaf life became a parable of God's Grace to me, and hopefully through me. I only believe what I am loved into believing.