



A Chat with Katharine von Bora

Sketch

[Please provide: five actresses and five copies of the sketch for the actresses.]

[Please note: There are several German words used within this skit. “Guten Abend” (pronounced “goo-ten ah-bendt”) means “good evening.” “Ja” (pronounced “yah”) means “yes.” “Auf wiedersehen” (pronounced “owf veedersayin”) means “until I see you again.”]

Cast:

Emcee

Gina, Laura, Carol – attendees at an LWML meeting

Katie – dressed in period costume as Katharine von Bora, Martin Luther’s wife

Props: Three chairs in a row facing the audience to resemble attending a meeting. A fourth chair is placed to the left of the other three. This chair is slightly turned to face the other three, but placed so the skit audience can still see the skit character’s face.

Setting: An LWML meeting. Gina, Laura, and Carol sit in the three chairs facing the audience. The Emcee stands to their right and is turned partially toward the chairs and partially toward the audience.

Emcee: Ladies, we have a very special guest speaker at our LWML meeting tonight – Katharine von Bora!!

Gina: [Whispers loudly to her friend **Laura.**] Oh, my goodness! Isn’t she the wife of the great reformer, Martin Luther?

Laura: [Whispers back loudly] It can’t be! She’s been dead for hundreds of years!

Emcee: Katharine, or Katie, as you may know her, has made arrangements to come to us from the 16th century to comfort us in these troubling times. Help me to welcome Katie Luther. [Polite clapping.]

Gina: [Again whispers loudly] This has got to be a hoax!

Katie: *Guten Abend*; that is, “Good Evening,” ladies. It is my privilege to speak with you. If you don’t mind, let’s make this an informal chat. [Sits down on the fourth chair.] I can see by the wondering looks on your faces that there are questions you’d like to ask me?

Gina: [Raises hand and blurts out in a doubtful tone.] Are you really Martin Luther’s wife?

Katie: *Ach, ja*, ’tis true! Let me tell you about that. It started as a marriage of convenience, and for Dr. Luther, as a way to prove a point. But let’s back up a bit. Since the age of nine, I had grown up in a convent. My mother died when I was five years old. My step-mother and I did not get along so I was placed in the Nimbschen Convent.

Carol: What was it like in the convent in those 16th century days?

Katie: Though I loved God and wanted to serve Him, I felt like I wasn't free. We were affected by the unrest in the church at the time. Eleven other nuns and I secretly sent a message to Dr. Luther, asking him to "spring us," as you might say in your century. [Smiles.]

Carol: Was he able to help you?

Katie: *Ach, ja*, he did, though it was dangerous for him and us. Martin had nailed the 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church in 1517 when, as a monk, he had questioned indulgences. He never really wanted to leave the church, but he had studied the Scriptures ardently and he had discovered a great truth: we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. I'm sure you are aware of Ephesians 2:8 and 9.

Laura: We learned those verses in confirmation class!

Laura and Carol together: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Katie: Martin had always been so troubled by his sins, and his study of the testaments finally brought him peace – especially Romans 1:16-17. St. Paul wrote: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Carol: We learned in history class at school that the 95 Theses your husband pounded on the door at Wittenberg were denouncing indulgences, money that was paid to the church to assure salvation. The belief was that "works" could get people into heaven.

Katie: Very good, Carol! As I said before, Martin really only wanted to correct faults in the church at the time; he didn't want to leave it! But as you well know, he was excommunicated and thus began a whole new movement which became known as the Protestant Reformation.

Gina: [Crosses her arms in front of her and leans back in her chair.] Not to be disrespectful, but who are you, anyway? Are you some sort of impersonator trying to play with our minds? If you are who you say, tell us about the real man – surely Martin Luther was not all that perfect!

Katie: *Ja*, Gina, even though Martin was one of the "movers and shakers" of the western world, he was also just a man – a sinful man, as he was well aware. But I loved him even though he could be stubborn, rigid, and moody. Despite his faults, he was such a good father. He loved our children so well. He taught them little songs about Jesus and prayed with them.

Laura: I think Martin Luther wrote a hymn that we always sing at Christmas, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come."

Katie: *Ja*, he did! He wrote "kaboodles" of songs, including that great anthem of the Reformation: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Carol: Let's get back to your personal story – how did a confirmed old bachelor like Martin Luther end up with a nun who was sixteen years younger than he?

Katie: And what a story it is! After Martin received our plea for help getting out of the convent, he devised a plan. He sent a delivery man who carried twelve herring barrels in his cart. After dark we sneaked from the convent and ran to a nearby road and hid in a clump of trees. When the delivery man came, we climbed into the barrels. WHOOEEE! Did those barrels ever stink! We were a smelly mess when we climbed out a few hours later. But we were so glad to be free that we didn't even mind smelling like fish! We danced around that delivery man and thanked him over and over. And we praised God, of course!

Laura: What became of you nuns after that?

Katie: Oh, several returned to their homes. Most of us became governesses and eventually everyone got married – except me. Dr. Luther was very concerned for our well-being and even arranged some of the marriages himself. But I was a problem – I was 24 years old and an old maid in those days. What's more, I was very strong-minded and I wasn't about to marry just any man. The good doctor thought that I was proud and haughty.

Laura: So how in the world did you end up marrying Martin himself, especially since he thought that you were a difficult person?

Katie: [Chuckles] Well, Martin kept insisting that I should marry a certain Pastor Glatz. He just kept pushing the idea, and finally, I stamped my foot and told the good doctor that I would rather never wed than to marry someone I didn't care for.

Laura: I don't blame you! We women of the twenty-first century in America would never marry a man we didn't love!

Katie: In our day, women needed a man for safety and protection, so Martin finally decided to propose to me himself, and I said "Yes!" He was 42 years old and I was 26. I think part of his decision was to make a point that marriage is pleasing in the eyes of God. Also, he felt responsible for me. But let me tell you, he really needed a wife to look after him! His life was so full of study and writing and translating the Scriptures that he didn't eat or sleep at regular hours. He would just tumble exhausted onto filthy sheets night after night. And his living quarters were a mess! You can be assured that changed after I became his wife!!

Carol: Since this was sort of an arranged marriage, were you two happy together?

Katie: *Ach, ja!* He may have had other motives when he took me for a wife, but I truly believe that he came to love me deeply, and I, him. His affectionate name for me was "Kitty, my rib." Other times he referred to me as "Katie, my chain" or "my lord."

Carol: Why did he call you "my lord"?

Katie: Well, perhaps I did "lord it over him" at times. I worked my "tail" off managing our lives. I was in charge of the farm, the fish pond, and the cattle. He never worried much about his debts or where his next meal would be coming from. He always said, "God will provide." Indeed, and it goes without saying that I was part of God's provision! But that being said, I want you to know that truly Martin was the spiritual head of our family, and in our marriage, he loved me as faithfully and tenderly as Christ loves the church.

Laura: You both worked so hard! Didn't you ever have any fun?

Katie: Most certainly we did. Martin loved music and he would gather our family and friends about him for a song fest. We had many happy hours singing hymns and popular songs with Martin's booming voice leading us. I can just hear him now and my heart sings again. [Crosses her hands over her chest.] My LWML friends, music is such a pleasing and healthful thing. Martin also loved nature, the birds, the meadows, flowers, and trees. We enjoyed hikes and picnics in the lovely German countryside.

Carol: Katie, with all your cares, hard work, and trials, and especially with the deaths of two of your daughters, didn't you get "down" yourself?

Katie: Ah, the Lord was the strength of my life through it all. The death of our children ripped our hearts apart with grief. I remember Martin's prayer at Maggie's bedside. He prayed: "I love her so much, dear God. But since you have chosen to call her away from here, I willingly let her go so that she may be with You."

Carol: I can only imagine how wonderful it will be in heaven!

Katie: *Ach, ja*, my dear friends! You will have trials and tribulations here on earth, but be assured that God **does** live and His promises are true. He will be with you just as He was with Martin and me 500 years ago.

Gina: [In a kindly tone.] Before you go, Katie, I just want to apologize. I realize now that you are real, and the life you lived on earth was real. Your story has been written in the pages of books, just as the names of all of us are being recorded in the books of heaven.

Katie: Bless you, Gina, for hearing and understanding, and I beseech you all to keep reading about the heroes of faith and reading the Bible, for therein will your faith be nurtured and given growth by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Emcee: Thank you, Katie, for being our special guest today. Your example of faith will inspire us in the days ahead. *Auf Wiedersehen!*

Katie: *Auf Wiedersehen!* And farewell!

Information in this sketch was taken from *Kitty, My Rib* by E. Jane Mall, Concordia Publishing House, 1970; and *Martin Luther: Hero of Faith* by Frederick Nohl, Concordia Publishing House, 1962.

A Chat with Katharine von Bora
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