



Lutherans and Saints

 by Pastor Glenn Huebel

A big issue in the Reformation was the practice of the invocation of saints. This abuse is practiced openly even in modern America, where the Roman Church has toned down many of the abuses exposed by the Reformers. The most prominent saint is Mary, the mother of our Lord, who has been given nearly divine status through the centuries. The Churches named "Immaculate Conception" refer to Mary rather than Jesus. The Roman Church teaches that Mary herself was immaculately conceived and that she was miraculously assumed, body and soul, into heavenly glory. This, in fact, is one of the rare "ex-cathedra" teachings of the Papacy, meaning that it cannot be reversed. Ex-cathedra means that the Roman Church regards it as an infallible (and unchangeable) teaching. Mary is also regarded as a "Co-redemptrix" with Christ.

Many today wonder how Lutherans regard the saints, since we name many of our churches after them, and since we sometimes celebrate "saints' days" in the Church Year. This is one of several areas where the Lutheran Church manifests a unique position and practice that is neither traditional Protestant nor Roman Catholic.

Let us consider, first, what Lutherans rejected in regard to the honor of the saints. In the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Lutherans included a fairly short article (XXI) on "The Cult of the Saints." The confessors at Augsburg only objected to the most egregious abuses of offering prayers to the saints and using saints as mediators to God. God alone is the object of prayer since prayer is an act of worship and Christ alone is our mediator. Scripture does not command or

even permit us to pray to saints. It seems that the Lutherans did not expect strong reaction to this reasonable position. They were mistaken.

The Roman Confutation utterly rejected the Lutheran position as a heresy, and vigorously affirmed invocation of the saints as well as the title, "Co-redemptrix," for the Virgin Mary. The Bible passages they used showed that saints on earth pray for other saints on earth (Job 42:8), or that saints before the throne of God pray for the church on earth (Rev 5:8). They also showed that angels pray for saints on earth (Zech 1:12-13). The Confutation acknowledged that Christ alone is the sole mediator of redemption, but that saints are mediators of intercession. Lutherans regarded such arguments as pure sophistry. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, they write: *"all they manage to prove is that the saints should be honored and that the living saints should pray for others. They present this as though on this account the invocation of departed saints were also necessary."* They add, *"Even if the saints do pray fervently for the church, it does not follow that they should be invoked."* Against the argument that the Roman position only affirms the mediation of intercession, the Lutherans respond: *"they even apply the merits of the saints to others and make the saints propitiators as well as intercessors. This is completely intolerable, for it transfers to the saints honor belonging to Christ alone..... Even though they distinguish between mediators of intercession and mediators of redemption they obviously make the saints mediators of redemption."* Anyone who knows the indulgence theology ("Treasury of Merits") knows that the Roman Church affirms applying saints' merits to others. All of this is nothing less than idolatry.



Jan van Eyck (Dutch, c. 1390-1441) *Adoration of the Lamb*, center panel of the Ghent Altarpiece, 15th cent. St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium.

But Lutherans did not reject the traditions altogether. Lutherans see value in commemorating those who have walked before us in the faith. Lutherans honor the saints in three ways: 1) **With thanksgiving** to God. We have received much good from the lives of faithful Christians who have gone before us. It is proper for us to remember the benefits God gave us through these faithful

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Meet Your Fellow Members	2
Pray, Pay, Obey?	3
Forgotten Saints	4

That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31

Saints, cont.

people. 2) **The strengthening of our faith.** Even when we see the saints before us fall into sin and are forgiven and restored, we remember that God is gracious and merciful to us as well. 3) **Imitation.** Even St. Paul boldly urged Christians to imitate him even as he imitated Christ. So also, there are outstanding virtues of many saints who have walked before us in this world and who are worthy of imitation. Just as children in our nation need heroes to emulate, so young Christians are benefited by hearing of the courage, integrity, and other great virtues displayed by Christians in past ages. For these reasons Lutherans have retained many of the old liturgical saints days in the church year. Last Lenten season we focused upon several of these saints in our midweek services. When the saints' days happen to fall on Sunday we will

often depart from the seasonal readings to celebrate the special saint's day. This is very appropriate so long as we do not offer prayers, seek their mediation, or in any way give them Divine honor. We understand completely that the saints of old were poor humble sinners like we are, and that we are not saved or even helped by their merits. They themselves were not saved by their merits, but by faith in Christ. We give all glory to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

A list of people we "commemorate" can be found in the opening pages of our hymnal (page xii, xiii), with the following explanation:

"The calendar of commemorations given below lists a number of men and women from both the Old and New Testaments and from the

first 19 centuries of the Church's life. Their defense and the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith and/or their virtuous living have caused these individuals to stand out over time as persons worthy of recognition. In every case, the purpose of our remembrance is not that we honor the saints for their own sake, but as examples of those in whom the saving work of Jesus Christ has been made manifest to the glory of His holy name and to the praise of His grace and mercy."

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb 12:1)

Meet Your Fellow Members by Dawn Holden

With so many new member families at Messiah, we have started a new *Messiah Messenger* newsletter feature, highlighting 1-2 newer members in brief personal human-interest profiles each month. (Their contact information can be found in the Members section of our website.)



Stan and Melinda Taber

The Tabers joined Messiah almost a year ago. Stan grew up in central Texas; Melinda comes from Kansas. They moved to the D/FW area in August 1998. They attended Grace Lutheran Church in Arlington, where Stan served on the Board of Elders, but they wanted to belong to a church closer to their home so they

discovered and transferred to Messiah.

Stan is retired from a career as a construction electrician; he's thrilled to no longer have to drive hundreds of miles to each site. Melinda is a contractor with the Federal Aviation Administration.

In their free time, the couple enjoys antiquing. Stan also loves fishing, and his favorite is catching catfish. He also likes serving the church and singing in the choir. Melinda enjoys cooking and playing Scrabble.



Jasmine Rivera

Jasmine has been in North Texas about one year. Although born in California, she was raised in Colorado.

She transferred to Messiah the end of November 2016. Her parents and grandparents also are Messiah members: Noe and Julie Rivera, and Tobie and Elaine Hall respectively.

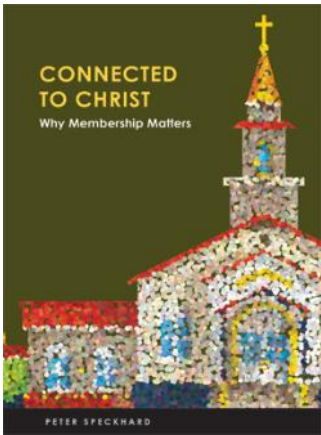
Jasmine works as a teacher's aide for Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy's 2- and 3-year-olds.

She is engaged and will marry her fiancé mid-November at our church.

In her spare time, Jasmine likes to drive around the Metroplex, getting acquainted with area locales and sight-seeing. She enjoys conversational Spanish, as well as dabbling with inventive cooking. However, her primary interest is spending time with family.

Regarding our church, Jasmine said, "I fell in love with it! Mainly the people and how it's run, the overall atmosphere, the culture."

“Pray, Pay, and Obey?” by Pastor Tom Chryst



Our Young Adults group has been going through “Connected to Christ: Why Membership Matters” by Rev. Peter Speckhard. Last month I mentioned to you how it explored the question of why the church needs people of varying gifts, as well as what the “main purpose” of church is – that being, to receive the gifts of Christ together.

This month the focus has been on the phrase, “Pray, Pay and Obey”. The author uses this little slogan for the backbone of a chapter on Christian responsibilities as members of a congregation. We admit that “Pray, Pay, and Obey” is often used as a snide expression by someone with an axe to grind, or a critic of the church - as if the Christian is told to simply “put in your money, sit down and shut up and do what we tell you”. But we’ve been using this threefold expression in a kinder light, to acknowledge in a godly way, what the responsibilities of membership entail.



The first and most important responsibility of a church member is to “show up”. As a pastor, if you do nothing else for the church – if you never give a dime, if you never lift a finger to volunteer, if you never socialize or bond with other members, or do anything outward to “support” the congregation – the one thing I would see from people most is this: Come to church! Receive the gifts! Hear the word! And by the way, I truly believe that if you do this earnestly, those other things will follow in time.

It’s probably worth noting here that attendance has been down somewhat at Messiah lately. Pastor Huebel has noted that it’s more than just a blip on the radar, but that the numbers show a somewhat significant drop. We don’t know what the reason is for this, and perhaps there’s more than one. But I would encourage you to pray about the situation, consider ways that you might encourage your fellow Messiah members to be a part of the family in this most important way – and to, especially, yourself, “show up” to weekly worship. Luther said if we truly appreciated the precious gift that was given here (in word and sacrament) we would “run” to church with great joy.

Secondly, the group and I have been having a great discussion of Christian stewardship under the “pay” section of the chapter. Here we’ve covered many practical questions – tithing, designated gifts, electronic giving, and other such practical matters. We even had a very interesting discussion of “how much should a pastor’s salary be?” (I didn’t bring THAT one up!) What a joy to see these young adults “coming into their own” and looking toward deeper participation in the life of the church.



The “obey” part of it is still to come, but I peeked ahead. Here we’ll be discussing ways to actually “live out” and “apply” what happens here on Sunday in the rest of a Christian’s day-to-day life.

I don’t think I’d ever tell someone they ought to simply “pray, pay and obey”. But as a framework for a deeper discussion of church membership – and especially its responsibilities – I suppose it works.

Each of us has received, and continues to receive, manifold blessings beyond number, both bodily and spiritual, through Christ who has done it all for us. For us, there is only to receive the blessings with joy, and to express that faith that we have been given in a grateful response. Church membership is just one context in which we can do so.



Remember to help our school by liking, sharing, following, re-tweeting, etc.! @MLCATexas. Also, check out the church’s Facebook page!



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

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Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org



Friday, November 1, 2013

The Forgotten Saints

I had two grandfathers.

One was named Robert Preus. Robert Preus was a dual-doctorate sporting Lutheran pastor, professor, and seminary president who was instrumental in preserving the theological integrity of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod during our "Battle for the Bible" in the 1970's. His books are still devoured by young seminarians who never met him. He's still regarded as the English language's leading scholar on seventeenth century Lutheranism. And while he's certainly not as well known a theologian as St. Augustine or Martin Luther, Robert Preus is greatly revered and fondly remembered by many today, both inside and outside the LCMS.

The Forgotten Saints by Pastor Hans Fiene

The following article first appeared on the blog, *The High-Mid Life* by Pastor Hans Fiene on All Saints Day in 2013.

Pastor Fiene is the pastor of River of Life Lutheran Church in Channahon, IL.

My other grandfather was named William Fiene. William Fiene didn't write books, didn't translate theological treatises. There are no collections of his sermons because he never preached any. He wasn't a pastor. He was a mortician from small town in Minnesota. So, outside of his family and friends, nobody in the LCMS remembers his name.

But I am a pastor today because of him. My seemingly less-theologically-significant grandfather is equally as responsible for the clerical collar around my neck as my grandfather with a Wikipedia page. I say this not because I had countless theological conversations with Grandpa Fiene. He died a few months before my twelfth birthday, and in the years before, Parkinson's disease had already torn his central nervous system apart so much that I don't recall ever hearing him say my name or making eye contact with me. But the theological influence of my paternal grandfather is still in my bones, and it's come to me through what he taught his son, my father, in both word and deed.

When William Fiene was 27 years old, he contracted polio and never walked again. But he didn't despair, didn't curse the Lord who let his legs be taken from him. Instead, he kept believing, kept trusting Christ's promises, kept praying with his children, kept teaching them Bible stories, and kept taking them to church every week. Often, during the harsh Minnesota winters, my grandfather's crutches would slip on the icy pavement while packing his family in the car on Sunday mornings. For many, that would have provided a very easy justification for staying home, sleeping in, and slowly falling away. But my grandfather kept braving the

cold, kept slipping, kept falling, and kept picking himself back up and taking his family to St. Paul's Lutheran Church

From my father's youngest days, he saw, in his father, a man who would endure pain and humiliation in order to bring his children the Word of God. William Fiene taught his son John that the pure Gospel found in the Lutheran Church was more important than anything else in this world. That's what my father taught me. And that's what I pray I will teach my sons, John, August, and Anders.

Today is All Saints' Day, a day when we commemorate all Christians, all those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And while we certainly thank God for the famous saints known the world round, we should also thank God for the forgotten saints, for the congregation of faceless believers whose names will never be written in history books, even as those names are written in the Book of Life.

So I thank God for both of my grandfathers today. Like many other pastors, today I thank God for Robert Preus, for his faithfulness, his wisdom, his writings, his lectures, and his life devoted to the Word. But even if my father and I are the only pastors in the world to remember the life of William Fiene today, I do so with equal parts thanksgiving. I thank God that, as a child, my father didn't have to look at icons of Peter and Paul to see the image of a saint. He saw one in the face of the man dusting the Minnesota snow off of his bloody knees and picking himself back up in order to bring his children to Jesus.