



Crucifix or Cross? by Pastor Glenn Huebel

What is the difference between a crucifix and a cross? The cross is the implement upon which a crucified victim is nailed. It is the symbol without the body attached. The crucifix is the same symbol with the body (corpus) attached. Both are ancient symbols and both are still used by the church today, but there is a lively debate about which symbol is better or more appropriate. This division falls along the same boundary that divides Roman Catholics and Protestants. Protestants, in large measure, prefer and insist upon the cross rather than the crucifix. The Roman Catholic Church has actually mandated use of the crucifix in Church chancels and upon altars. Lutherans cannot be easily placed in either group. First, no one mandates in the Lutheran Church what the altar and chancel ornaments must be.



Francisco de Zurbarán-Christ on the Cross 1627

We have freedom in regard to such things. Second, the practice of Lutheran Churches varies considerably. Many Lutheran Churches display only the empty cross. Others, mostly those of the Higher Church variety, prefer to use the crucifix. This is one of those areas of liberty where St. Paul forbids us to judge one another for preferred forms of piety. Individually, we do as seems good to us. Either symbol reflects respect for Christ and His sacrifice. The empty cross probably suffers more abuse or non-religious use than the crucifix, but that does not deter our proper and respectful use of it.

In that context, we might profitably consider the symbols we choose to use for our congregational worship. Since entering the present sanctuary in 1984, Messiah has used the crucifix for our processional cross but an empty cross is affixed to our altar and stands in the center of the stained-glass window. I suppose this satisfies those of both preferences, but that was not the intention. Actually the crucifix has probably raised more eyebrows because many, if not most, American Lutherans grew up associating that symbol with Roman Catholicism. Not only did we not see the crucifix in our churches, but we never had processions, especially here in the Bible belt where Protestantism has been dominant for decades. Growing up in Texas, I used to hear that we use the empty cross because the crucifix denies the resurrection of Christ. That simplistic argument seemed OK to me, but I wasn't paying much attention to such things anyway. As I look back, it should have been obvious that those who preferred the crucifix had just as much faith and confession in the resurrection as we did. They celebrated Easter Sunday with more pageantry and fanfare than we Lutherans did, so it was a shallow argument to say the least. The symbol of the resurrection is not an empty cross but an empty tomb. The cross was not emptied because Jesus miraculously came down from it as His accusers dared Him to do. It was left empty because He died there and His body was removed and placed into a tomb. The cross served its intended, gruesome purpose all the way to the end when Jesus cried out, "It is finished!"

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*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*

Why then do so many Protestants really find the crucifix so objectionable? Could it be not so much that they want to emphasize the resurrection, but that they want to get past the messy, bloody, wretchedness of the death of Christ? "Let's not look at the atonement.

Let's not look at the price that was paid! Let's not look at the ugliness of our sin! Let's not long consider the call to repentance. Let's not look at the weak and lowly Savior. Let's get on to the 'victory party!'" Would they have preferred that Jesus had NOT chosen to keep the ugly wounds on His risen body? Would they prefer not to speak so much of that "blood of Jesus" and a whole lot more of His glory and power? Might it be that the crucifix stirs up the same kind of repugnance in them that it stirred up in Peter when he boldly told Jesus He should not go to the cross or speak of it? Might not this animosity to the crucifix be a fruit of the theology of glory that so dominates Protestantism today?

They cannot tolerate even an empty cross in their sanctuaries lest they cause offense. How much more obnoxious would a crucifix be? Perhaps the accusation of denial of the resurrection is a red herring to distract from the real denial.

If we let Scripture draw a "word picture" of the Gospel, what would it look like? That's fairly easy to answer. Just count the chapters and paragraphs of the four Gospels dedicated to proclaiming the events of the passion of Jesus (from Thursday evening to Friday afternoon). Compare that to any other event in Jesus' life, including the birth and resurrection stories. His suffering and death on the cross dominates the Gospel proclamation as it is defined by the four Gospels. We are hearing the passion story in our Wednesday evening devotions. Each of the five readings is longer than all three readings on Sunday morning, but we could not finish all the Gospels say about the passion

without long readings every Wednesday. Likewise, the cross is the heart of the Gospel proclaimed by St. Paul who said, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him CRUCIFIED!" The word picture of the Scriptural gospel is a picture of the crucifix. Why should we find it so repelling to depict the same message in our symbols? And if we do, we might ask ourselves why we would desire to come to the altar to receive the body given and the blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins? The sacraments do not bring us to an empty cross but to wounds that heal (Is 53:5), to the blood of the New Covenant (Matt 14:24), and to the tomb in which our sins were buried with His body (Rom 6:4).

Here the King of all the ages,
Throned in light ere worlds could be.
Robed in mortal flesh is dying
Crucified by sin for me

(*Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow*, v. 2)

The Discerning Church in a Meme World by Pastor Tom Chryst

"Kids these days" can tell you just how popular the "meme" has become. They are everywhere – social media, internet discussion boards, embedded in text messages and more. A meme is *"a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by Internet users."* You can make your own memes – and the rules are simple. Find a picture, add a line or two of text, and that's it.

I believe memes are symptomatic of modern American culture. In many ways, they are the perfect icon for it. With the rise of the internet, and the coming of a new generation of "digital natives", memes stand as a symbol of how things have changed and of how people think in modern times. I'd like to suggest that memes illustrate these key aspects of the world we live in:

1. The (over)importance of image

2. The shallowness of argumentation
3. Everything is fair game for humor
4. Thriving on 'popular' culture

In contrast, the Confessional Lutheran Church often swims upstream against the culture.

"Do not be conformed to this world, [a] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

We seek to maintain biblical values and traditional forms over and against the shifting winds of our times. We seek to discern what is good and true and excellent and praiseworthy in the culture, and distinguish it from that which is not. What aspects of the secular world are Christians wise to uphold and

extol, and what represents a departure from the goodness of God's creation? The church recognizes God as the creator of all things, whose completed creation was "very good". Though marred by sin and fallen under the sway of death, still it retains great order and beauty and goodness that testifies to His creative glory. And so we are not simply "against the world" without distinction. Therefore consider with me some of the pros and cons of the "meme" world we live in.

The (Over) Importance of Image

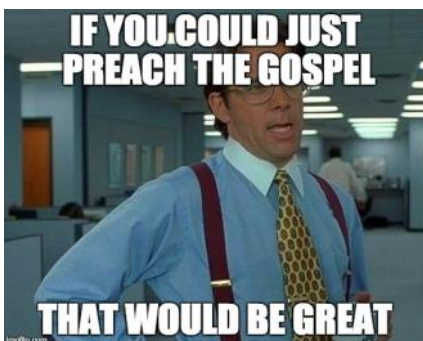
Many have observed the shift from a word-based culture to an image-based culture. The first culprit in this revolution was, of course, the television. As TVs entered every American home and radios faded in

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importance, slowly the culture seems to have sagged into a greater and greater reliance on the visual, the picture, over and against the spoken or written word. And now with the advent of internet media, their influence has seemed to grow. While pictures can communicate powerfully, and indeed “speak a thousand words”, we should be perhaps a bit concerned about a societal pivot away from a word-based culture.

But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

The church is decidedly a word-based entity. We are formed by, maintained by, governed by, fed by and soaked deeply in the Word of God. We recognize the preeminence of language as a vehicle for meaning and communication. For even the creation came into being through the word. God has used spoken and written words to teach his people of all times, making us wise unto salvation. At Babel, He frustrated the languages of the nations to keep them from uniting in common purpose against Him. And at Pentecost he restored, however briefly, the oneness of language for the purpose of proclaiming Christ to the nations.



Yet, Lutherans have traditionally held a balanced position on the use of images for the church's purposes. We are not iconoclasts – destroying any and every image under a legalistic misreading of the commandments. Scripture warns about the worshipping of images, but doesn't prohibit them in all times and

places. The Lutheran Reformers retained the stained glass, for instance, in many churches – which helped to teach especially the illiterate, the stories of the faith. We can use images in much the same judicious way today. But still, let's offer a word of caution against a dumbing-down effect when imagery supplants the primacy of the word.

The Shallowness of Argumentation

In a similar vein, the meme stands as an example of a shallow argument, tersely put. And such shallowness, all too common in today's world of thought. There's no room for much nuance, for deep understanding, or the wisdom that comes from intense study in a meme with two lines of text. Twitter, with its 144 characters, also lends to this form of sound-byte style argumentation. It seems that this sort of shallowness is often aimed at scoring points, rather than meaningful and mature exchange of information, and that is all too common lately. It's not a healthy trend for our public debate to be reduced to slogans and catch phrases, or for our understanding of complex issues to be limited to what can fit on the sign of a protester.

There may be a time and a place for such brevity, but woe to the church that treads far down this path. Christian theology isn't best taught on a bumper-sticker. The whole counsel of God cannot be summed up quite so easily. While there is beautiful simplicity to the faith, such that even a child can believe in Christ and be saved, yet there is also an unsurpassed depth and mystery that cannot be mastered in a lifetime. Take Luther's comments about how one must continue as a student of the catechism throughout all of life. Or that the difficulty of properly distinguishing law and gospel should be compared to a doctorate degree.

Christian teaching is worthy of deep, intense, thorough study. This is why we teach a pastor's class for new members that is more than a “get to know you”, but delves into the chief doctrines we confess. It's why we

catechize our youth and expect them to learn so much of it by heart. It's why we require our pastors to study Greek and Hebrew and systematic, historical, and practical theology with a four-year Master's degree. It's why we offer so many Bible studies for different ages and groups at different times. We want to dig deep into the Bible and understand it with both head and heart. God's word is worth the effort.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Ephesians 4:11-14

Read St. Paul if you want an example of how Christian teaching is NOT shallow argumentation. Paul's epistles are full of depth and meaning, unfolding the teachings of Christ and applying them in systematic and categorical ways.

Everything Is Fair Game for Humor

Mememes also illustrate the irreverence of our times. There really seems to be very little that is “off limits” when it comes to poking fun. Everything is common, everything is equally subject to criticism and disdain. Institutions and offices that used to command respect in the culture are routinely dragged through the mud and dishonored with little thought.

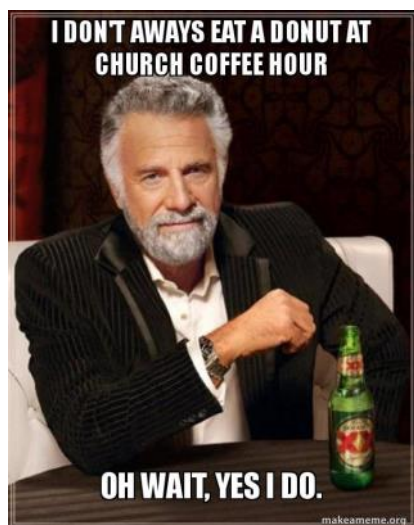
Christians ought to know a thing or two about reverence. That which is holy, or “set apart”, demands a different, more honorable treatment. The Holy Christian Church. Holy Matrimony. Holy Communion. Even the secular institutions that God has established for our good

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deserve a certain level of honor and respect. We teach this to our children and put it into practice.

Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.
Romans 13:7

And yet, we are not without humor. I've been doing some study lately into the role of humor in the Bible and not only does Jesus appear to use humor at times to teach, but Scripture also teaches there's a time and a place for everything – and that includes laughter. But we also know that means there's a time to be serious, and certain things that must be held in reverence and honor. We're not sour-puss killjoys, but neither are we governed and ruled by humor and entertainment.



Memes Thrive on Pop Culture

What's common to "pop-culture" is that which is popular. Pop culture cares little for what is "excellent or praiseworthy", but gives precedence to whatever the most people seem to like or know. And so we have people who are "famous for being famous", but have little to speak of in terms of achievements or contributions to society. The internet has given us the particular pop-culture phenomenon of "going viral", in which an image or video or some other item quickly becomes ubiquitous by a sort of technological word-of-mouth. But such popularity

is also fickle and fleeting, and 15 minutes of fame are here now and gone, well, in 15 minutes. A culture that is so driven by the current and the popular ideas of the moment will show a lack of permanence and have no sure foundation.

And so the Christian comes along and holds up things that are time-tested, traditional and have a history. We are not swept away by every wind of teaching that comes along, for instance, but hold fast to that which we have received. We build our house not on shifting sands, but on the rock of Christ and his teaching, which does not change. The culture is subject to movements and trends, influenced by whatever ideas happen to hold sway with the majority. But the Church will not be moved, though the mountains give way.

And yet, ought a Christian pay attention to the culture which surrounds him, even the pop-culture? Perhaps to an extent. We certainly don't need to isolate ourselves in a modern monasticism, walled off from everything that isn't up to a spiritually snobby standard. The Lutheran should know better than to try keeping ourselves in some sort of pious bubble. Sin will find us anywhere, as it comes from within us. We aren't holy because we are better than the world – but only by the blood of Christ.

It may well serve us to know some things about the world that surrounds us, that we may better witness to them. In a sense, pop-culture is a language spoken by the masses and the Church may do well to navigate within it without caving in to it. But how we do this calls for wisdom, too. Some churches clearly pander to pop-culture in the basest way, selling themselves out in order to prove "effective". We need not be so desperate. After all, we have the Word, where the Spirit promises to work, and to create faith when and where He will. Like St. Paul who would become "all things to all people, in order to win some", yet Paul never compromised the truth of the Gospel or shirked from proclaiming it.



"In", But Not "Of"

Perhaps the Biblical principle of being "in the world, but not of it" is the most helpful guideline.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:19

Christians are in the world, and yet not "of" it. We are different, by nature. Christ has made us to be so. He has chosen us, "called us out" (which is what the word "church" literally means in the Greek). And yet, paradoxically, we still find ourselves here. We are still exposed to all that is around us – the good, the bad, the ugly. We don't really belong here in the world that is perishing, but for a short time we are stuck – and must make the best of it.

Remember that in a very real sense, the world hates you. What Jesus says is true. The (unbelieving) world despises Christ, and it detests his Church. And so we cannot just simply swallow everything the world has to offer us. We can't uncritically hitch our wagon, individually or as a church, to every passing fad, every worldly idea, every shiny new object of affection the world has to offer.

But we have been placed here. We are, in another sense, a part of this world – this creation. We are given families and friends and coworkers and all manner of neighbors to love. We are given all the blessings of daily bread to support us. And we are even allowed to enjoy the creation God has placed in our care.

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And so, in a world of the image, the Christian is formed by the word. In a world of the shallow, the Christian seeks depth. In a world of irreverence, the Christian honors what he ought. And in a world that

lauds the popular, the Christian praises that which is truly good. And yet we despise nothing God has made, and love all people as we have opportunity. For Christ has died for this world, and though this

world is passing away, He makes all things new. He desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Let us ever be discerning about that truth.

Braille Sunday by Barbara and Erasmo Pinero

"On Sunday Feb 4, our church introduced the Texas associates from Lutheran Braille Workers, Jean and Tim Webber. The goal was to inform our long time and new church members about the purpose, goals and volunteer activities at our Braille Center (located at the Hwy 377 Messiah Activity Center). Our guests, hosted by Barbara and Erasmo Piñero, installed a very informative table at the church entrance where pamphlets, goodies and other material were handed out to our parishioners. That same morning, during our Sunday School session, Pastor Huebel, our guests, and Erasmo stressed the importance of the work being carried out by our volunteers. The hour was mostly dedicated at educating our Bible School class about the history of Braille as an enabler for blind readers; and how the Braille international and domestic outreach can work together to

spread the Word to our visually impaired Christians brothers around the world.

Messiah's Braille Center No. 132 continues to produce Braille books in English and Swahili, an African language. In the last six years, we have produced and shipped more than 1200 Braille books to faraway places such as Indonesia,

Singapore, Kenya, and others. The production of Ezekiel books has re-started, we have continued production of our Rainbow books and a hymnal.

Our work is supported by able and motivated volunteers which help with production or packaging. Without them, our mission will be curtailed significantly. Open Braille night will continue to take place one Friday per month. JOY group volunteers meet the second Thursday and possibly the fourth Thursday of the month; and Youth Braille one Sunday per month after the second service. New groups are scheduling workshops for March and April. If interested and wishing to help, contact Barbara Pinero at bpinero1scom@gmail.com. Look for upcoming events and workshops in the Sunday bulletin, MLC's facebook page or the church calendar on the website.



Support MLCA on March 19! (Bring this flier.)



Dining for Dollars

Panera Bread – Watauga

8416 Denton Hwy #100, Watauga, TX 76148

Monday, March 19
4-8 pm

Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy



SPANISH CAMP

Taught by Mrs. Blanca Hernandez

9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. 3 year old—Kindergarten
12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m. 1st—3rd grades
2:30 p.m.—4:30 p.m. 4th grade— Adults
June 4th-7th/June 11th-14th/June 18th-21st/June 25th-28th

\$250.00 for 1 child * 20% sibling discount

CHESS CAMP

Led by Pastor Chryst

2 camp sessions this year! Come to one or Both!

July 9th-13th & July 30th-Aug 3rd

1:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.

Open to students entering 3rd -12th Grades.

\$30.00 per session

ART CAMP

Taught by Mrs. Huebel

9:00 a.m.—11:45 a.m. 1st—5th grades
1:00 p.m.—3:45 p.m. 1st—5th grades
July 30th-Aug 3rd

\$130.00 * Contact Mrs. Huebel to Register

DESTINATION SCIENCE

4 sessions in July

July 9th-13th / July 16th-20th / July 23rd-27th /
July 30th-Aug 3rd

Visit www.destinationscience.org for more
information and to register.

PRESCHOOL CAMPS (3yrs-6yrs)

Taught by Mrs. Melissa & Mrs. Ginger

9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. June 11th-14th "Hawaiian Hullabaloo"

9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. June 18th-21st "Animal Antics"

9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. July 9th-12th "Princess & Pirates"

9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. July 16th-19th "A Camping We will Go!"

\$150.00 per week

Registration for Camps will open on Monday, March 19th.

For more information please contact schooloffice@mlcatexas.org.

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SPEAK *Life*

Pregnancy Help 4 U Annual Gala



April 20, 2018
Texas Motor Speedway
Lifeguards.pregnancyhelp4u.org
Dinner begins at 7:00 P/M



*All guests are asked to dress in
White Apparel to honor the sanctity
of life.*

*Come join us as we Speak Life into 2018.
Guests will enjoy dinner, silent auctions, a
nationally known inspirational speaker, a
musical guest, & PH4U client testimonies.*

Tickets are \$100/1 or \$800 to host a table of 10

*To purchase tickets, or for further inquiries,
contact Bailey:*

817.753.6222

bailey@pregnancyhelp4u.org
Lifeguards.pregnancyhelp4u.org



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

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

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is an adage known by many, but the Messiah congregation may not know that two of its new members **are** doctors that are very welcomed.

Meet Your Fellow Members by Dawn Holden

Miguel and Kristina Hernandez became Messiah members about one year ago. Their initial interest stemmed from Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy, where they wanted their three children to attend.

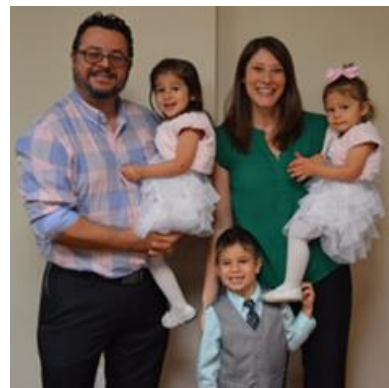
Miguel and Kristina are both internal medicine physicians. Miguel works at nursing homes, where his professional reputation leaves him in high demand at facilities. Kristina works at area hospitals. She is a member of Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), a non-profit organization whose profits funnel into Meals on Wheels.

In the couple's free time, which is rare, each follows his own path. Miguel enjoys backyard barbeques, specializing in ribs and chicken wings. His hidden talent? He can curl his tongue. Kristina likes to go on nature hikes with their three

children: Christian, age 5; Adriana, 3; and 2-year-old Kristiana.

Kristina hails from Kansas City; Miguel is a San Antonian. They enjoy Messiah's embracing feel.

"It was the people," Kristina said. "They are open and welcoming. Also, my husband appreciated that Pastor Huebel knew his name the second Sunday we attended."



Church Work Day—March 24, 8:00am!

Make plans to come and help clean up and repair **your** church property! *Many hands make light work*, so let's all come and make light work of cleaning and repairing the buildings God gave us for His work. We'll start at 8am—come when you can!



Worship Schedule for Holy Week and Easter

Palm Sunday, March 25,	8:00 am,	Congregational Processional (beginning outside)
	10:45 am,	Children's Processional (meet in the Reception room at 10:30am)
Maundy Thursday, March 29	7:00 pm,	Divine Service with Holy Communion and the Stripping of the Altar
Good Friday, March 30,	7:30 pm,	Service of Darkness (<i>Tenebrae</i>)
Saturday, March 31,	8:00 am,	Prayer Vigil begins (8:00am—7:00pm)
	7:30 pm,	Service of Confession and Absolution
Easter Sunday, April 1,	7:00 am,	Easter Sunrise Service with Communion
	8:00 am,	Easter Breakfast (Freewill offering)
	9:00 am	Easter Egg Hunt
	9:30 am,	Sunday School
	10:45 am,	Easter Worship