

It is safe to say that in the last five hundred years, our relationship with our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers, has not always been one of...Christ-like love, let's say. We have our fair share of disagreements when it comes to Communion and the role of women in ministry and plenty of other matters we could go on and on about. However, in case you haven't noticed, there is this Pope at the Vatican who isn't quite as enraged with us Protestant folk, not to mention other religions and people who live certain lifestyles that some previous Popes, not to mention current Catholics, still do not care for too much.

Except, all of that pales in comparison to what Pope Francis has, officially, proposed in the last couple of months. Pope Francis, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the church that has endured being the butt of countless jokes in their refusal to change even more so than us Lutherans, as we still have to hear the ancient crack: "How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb? [And the Lutheran responds:] Change!?!'" And yet, the even *more* historic, the more traditional, the more stick-to-your guns hardcore liturgy Roman Catholic

Church has just heard its Pope suggest that they change a line in the never-allowed-to-be-changed Lord's Prayer.

Now, before we continue, we should mention that Pope Francis is only suggesting the English translation of the prayer be changed.

Nevertheless, just imagine the reaction this must be unleashing in pews of Catholics across America: the prayer that has been spoken by them, their parents, grandparents, and on and on for generations! The Pope has the audacity to consider that something else might be better than what has been done for centuries (as if we in the Lutherans haven't heard that argument before on a variety of issues).

So, when it comes to the line: "Lead us not into temptation," Pope Francis suggests saying something else, instead: "Do not let us fall into temptation." In an interview he did a couple years ago, the Pope said: "It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation...I am the one who falls. It's not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen. A father doesn't do that; a father helps you to get up immediately."

Now I know we Lutherans are not supposed to agree with the Catholics too much. We must keep our distance for public reputation sake and all, but the Pope...just might be onto something here. I'm not suggesting we start a rapid change amongst the entire Lutheran church across the world. I know that wouldn't go over so well, to say the least. Nevertheless, are we under the impression that God, in any way, leads us into temptation, so as to test our faith or something?

I thought back to when I got my driver's license the very day I turned 16, and I took advantage of that freedom, of that control over a 1992 Buick Lesabre; and I will be the first to admit that I often unleashed it upon the accelerator pedal. I tested that speedometer, because, obviously, in my teenage years, I was invincible to any physical detriment to my health, not to mention other drivers on the road or any law enforcement personnel along the way. Of course, come my freshman year of college, as I was driving back to school from my sister's house after my niece's birthday celebration, my succumbing to temptation for a couple years by then, finally was met with flashing lights in the rearview mirror.

And no, I do not believe for a second that God willed my foot to push further than needed. I do not believe God was putting me to the test, to somehow convince me to look at life in a different way from there on out, or to see how I would react when my temptation turned into something more. It was not part of some divine elaborate plan ahead of time. No, that was me. *I* did it. Not God, not even the devil; just me.

Now, as for when I saw God when I was behind the wheel; it was my final day as a student at college. Driving, ironically enough, one of the slowest speeds ever through the campus one final time after graduation, where my family had come down to celebrate. I saw God in their dedicated support and encouragement. I saw God in professors who made me read the Bible in a different way, to see God a little differently than what the centuries of church tradition said *had* to be true. I saw God as the Holy Spirit still moving and shifting inside that chapel with an ambiance to make me stop altogether and take in the beauty of stillness.

In it all, I saw God who made a promise to pick us up no matter what temptation we, ourselves, succumb to along the way. I saw God be so insistent that nothing we do, no matter how much we try to blame it

on God or others; none of that can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. I saw the God who doesn't push us into evil, into fear; but who nudges us to see the Lord who embraces us even when hanging on a cross; to see the Lord who will jump into depths of sin with us, and will always show us the way out, no matter how many times it takes, no matter how many times we say we don't need the help. No matter what, God is not giving up, leaving us behind in whatever temptation reels us in. Lest we forget, God's grace is far, far greater than all of that. After all, we pray God's kingdom come, and the Gospel truth is that it already most certainly has in Jesus Christ, our still-Risen Lord. And for that Great News that can never be taken away from us, we most certainly give thanks to God indeed! Amen.