

BULLETIN INSERT 3.25.26

OPENING LITANY

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled.

My Lord, fill it.

I am weak in the faith; **strengthen me.**

I am cold in love;

warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I do not have a strong and firm faith;

at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether.

O Lord, help me. **Strengthen my faith and trust in you.**

MARTIN LUTHER'S

The Marks of the Church

In 1539, Luther wrote "On the Councils and the Church" as part of the real possibility that the Roman Catholic church and the Lutheran church would not be reconciled in his lifetime. The third section of the book is to be studied during Lent. He identified seven marks of the church which can assure us of God's work in the world. Please join us for simple worship and meal during Lent and take home our litanies and Luther's words as part of your family's faith journey to Easter. PT

*"Well then, the Children's Creed teaches us that a Christian holy people is to be and to remain on earth until the end of the world. This is an article of faith that cannot be terminated until that which it believes comes, as Christ promises, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" [Matt. 28:20]. But how will or how can a poor confused person tell where such Christian holy people are to be found in this world?"*¹ Martin Luther

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 148.

THE OFFICE OF MINISTRY



The church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer. There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 [:8], "He received gifts among men ..."—his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc. The people as a whole cannot do these things, but must entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other? It must be entrusted to one person, and he alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments. The others should be content with this arrangement and agree to it. Wherever you see this done, be assured that God's people, the holy Christian people, are present.^[1]

Just as was said earlier about the other four parts of the great, divine, holy possession by which the holy church is sanctified, that you need not care who or how those from whom you receive it are, so again you should not ask who and how he is who gives it to you or has the office. For all of it is given, not to him who has the office, but to him who is to receive it through this office, except that he can receive it together with you if he so desires. Let him be what he will. Because he is in office and is tolerated by the assembly, you put up with him too. His person will make God's word and sacraments neither worse nor better for you. What he says or does is not his, but Christ, your Lord, and the Holy Spirit say and do everything, in so far as he adheres to correct doctrine and practice. The church, of course, cannot and should not tolerate open vices; but you yourself be content and tolerant, since you, an individual, cannot be the whole assembly or the Christian holy people.^[2]

Now wherever you find these offices or officers, you may be assured that the holy Christian people are there; for the church cannot be without these bishops, pastors, preachers, priests; and conversely, they cannot be without the church. Both must be together.^[3]

^[1] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 154.

^[2] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 156.

^[3] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 164.