

Commemorating the Saints

Satan's always working to confuse our theology. If he can't knock us off the horse on one side, he'll try to knock us off the other. He's done a really great job when it comes to commemorating the saints.

Sometimes I hear people say: "We're Lutherans! We don't commemorate saints! That's too catholic!"

But that would be to fall off the horse on the other side.

Now, of course we don't want to imitate the Roman error whereby we seek the so-called "merits of the saints." Christ is the world's Redeemer, the *only* Mediator between God and man. To look to anyone or anything but Christ alone for salvation is crass idolatry.

But that doesn't mean we forget about the saints entirely. After all, we believe "...in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints," don't we?

As Lutherans, in accord with the Church's faith in every generation, we believe, teach, and confess that the remembrance of the saints is to be commended in order that we may imitate their faith and good works according to their calling (*Augsburg Confession, 21*).

Remember, a saint isn't someone we go to in prayer so we can get a little extra favour in God's eyes or to get help in selling our house. A saint is one who has been made holy. This is what the Holy Spirit has done for you in Holy Baptism, where the flood of Christ's own blood has made you holy, right, and good before your heavenly Father.

We remember and thank God for the saints' lives on a Sunday in the Divine Service when we gather at the Lord's table with "angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven." Who is that company of heaven but the saints?

After we commune, we sing the hymn of Saint Simeon (the Nunc Dimittis, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace..."). Next, we pray that the love of Christ would not only fill our own cup but run over that we would live "in fervent love toward one another." This is a prayer that we would regard and treat one another as saints. As St. Paul says, "*So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*" (Ephesians 2:19).

To despise the commemoration of saints is to sever our communion in Christ, to forget how indispensable the other members of Christ's Body are. When we confess our faith in the communion of saints, we confess the vitality of our fellowship with one another, both with the saints who live here with Christ on earth and the saints who live with Him in heaven. Forgetting about the saints is just as bad as seeking their merits. Throwing the baby out with the bathwater is just as bad as drowning the baby in the bathtub.