

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! This week we covered “May Day” in St. Peter Chapel. May first has become known by this expression, which was used internationally as a distress call. Although we are in a world of trouble, the Sacrament of the Altar is not something from which we should flee. This is how Luther put it in the Large Catechism: “We must never think of the Sacrament as something harmful from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort. It will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body is also relieved (Large Catechism V 68).” We receive that remedy not only in the Sacrament of the Altar, but also in the Sacrament of Baptism and in God’s Word. Let us turn, then, to our continued study of Luther’s Large Catechism, where we learn more from God’s Word.



*“May Day!”*

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“We allow ourselves to be impeded and deterred by such thoughts as these: ‘I am not holy enough or worthy enough; if I were as righteous and holy as St. Peter or St. Paul, then I would pray.’ Away with such thoughts! The very commandment that applied to St. Paul applies also to me. The Second Commandment is given just as much on my account as on his. He can boast of not better or holier commandment than I. Therefore you should say: ‘The prayer I offer is just as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as those of St. Paul and the holiest of saints. The reason is this: I freely admit that he is holier in respect to his person, but not on account of the commandment. For God does not regard prayer on account of the person, but on account of his Word and the obedience accorded to it. On this commandment, on which all the saints base their prayer, I, too, base mine. Moreover, I pray for the same things for which they all pray, or ever have prayed.’ This is the first and most important point, that all our prayers must be based on obedience to God, regardless of our person, whether we are sinners or righteous people, worthy or unworthy (BoC, p.442-443).”

From the paragraph above, we can see that Luther encouraged us not only to turn to the Sacrament of the Altar in times of trouble, but also to the gift of prayer. After all, in times of trouble, the radio operator would not be considering his or her worthiness to send a “Mayday!”

call, but would send out the call trusting that someone will hear and come to their aid. The operator sends out this distress call both because that's what was taught to do in times of distress, and in the hope of help to come. For us in prayer, we have more than simply hope for help, as we read as we continue in Luther's Large Catechism.

“We must understand that God is not joking, but that he will be angry and punish us if we do not pray, just as he punishes all other kinds of disobedience. Nor will he allow our prayers to be futile or lost, for if he did not intend to answer you, he would not have ordered you to pray and backed it up with such a strict commandment. In the second place, what ought to impel and arouse us to pray all the more is the fact that God has made and affirmed a promise: that what we pray is a certain and sure thing. As he says in Psalm 50[:15], ‘Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,’ and Christ says in the Gospel of Matthew 7[:7-8], ‘Ask, and it will be given to you,’ etc..... ‘For everyone who asks receives.’ Such promises certainly ought to awaken and kindle in our hearts a longing and love for prayer. For by his Word, God testifies that our prayer is heartily pleasing to him and will assuredly be heard and granted, so that we may not despise it, cast it to the winds, or pray uncertainly (BoC, p.443).”

As we just read, when a radio operator sends out an S.O.S. or May Day! call, there is doubt as to whether it will be received. The same is not true for us when we pray, especially the Lord's Prayer. God has both commanded us to pray and promised to hear us in the day of trouble. While we may not be aboard a literal sinking ship, we recognize that we are always in trouble—the trouble of sin. We have not honored God or loved one another as we should. We deserve not to be heard in prayer, but to suffer the full punishment of our sins. Yet God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. Jesus has come, died for our sins removing our punishment from us, and rose again, giving us the assurance of life eternal, and that God will hear our prayers for His sake.

May we all continue to send “May Day” calls to God that He may answer us with His good gifts for the sake of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh