

Living into Discipleship

Reformation A (Diaconal Consecration of Liz Jimenez and Glenna Rahr)

Text: Romans 3:19–28

October 30, 2011

Three Pillars of the Reformation

Whenever a building is constructed, the design will include load-bearing walls or pillars to support the weight of the structure. Without these load-bearing supports, the building cannot stand.

What is true for the construction of a building is also true for the structure of faith. Figuratively speaking, there must be some *load-bearing walls* or *pillars* for faith to stand and endure the tests of time.

For the Christian faith, those pillars are the Holy Trinity, the resurrection of Christ and Scripture. Without these pillars in place, the Christian faith falls apart.

Martin Luther knew the Reformation needed a solid foundation to hold it together. So he carefully laid out the *load bearing walls* that would enable the evangelical faith to survive the struggle with the Roman Catholic Church.

He knew there had to be basic principles of understanding in place that would provide him and those who followed his teachings a foundation upon which to stand in their opposition to the teachings of the papacy and Rome.

As we look at the theology and teaching of Luther, there are three pillars of faith that become evident.

- *The 5 Solas*
Sola Scriptura,
Solus Christus
Sola Gratia,
Sola Fide,
and *Soli Deo Gloria*
- *The Priesthood of All Believers*
- *The Holiness of All Vocations*

These pillars guided Luther and his followers during the Reformation, and they provide wise counsel for us today in our journey of faith.

Since we are consecrating Liz and Glenna as Synod Deacons today, I want to focus primarily on the *Priesthood of All Believers* and the *Holiness of All Vocation*.

But before I do that, I need to say a brief word about each of the 5 *Solas* that together form the first pillar of evangelical faith.

Sola Scriptura—Scripture Alone:

At the time of the Reformation, the Pope and the *Curia* insisted that the traditions and laws of the church were equal in authority with scripture.

Luther believed the final authority on matters of faith was not the Pope or the *Curia* but Scripture alone.

He made that clear in his trial before the Diet of Worms.

When the papacy demanded that he recant his teaching, Luther said,

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason...

My conscience is captive to the Word of God.

I cannot, and I will not recant...

God help me, Amen.

Solus Christus—Christ Alone:

Christ alone is set forth in Scripture as the mediator between God and sinful mankind.

Our access to God and salvation

is not through priests, saints, angels or Mary.

Christ—and Christ alone—is our only access to God

and the only means by which God's blessings are bestowed upon us.

Sola Gratia—Grace Alone:

Grace is the free, unmerited favor of God given to us in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Our salvation is entirely a gift of grace—it is the exclusive work of God.

We play no part and make no contribution to our salvation.

It is grace God's grace alone that we are redeemed

through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sola Fide—Faith Alone:

Our salvation is given to us not because of our piety or good works—it is given to us through faith.

While salvation is given to us *through* faith,

it is not given to *because* of faith—faith is not a *work* of righteousness.

Note that this saving *faith* is not *knowing about* God;

saving faith is *trusting in* God—it is putting our lives in God's hands.

Soli Deo Gloria—To God Alone the Be Glory:

Since God alone is responsible for our Salvation, it is our duty and delight to lift up our voices in adoration and thanksgiving to God.

This adoration and thanksgiving expresses our awareness that our salvation comes through Christ and not through our own righteousness.

We give all the glory to God

who redeems us through sacrifice of his Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we look at these three pillars of our faith,
we see that the first pillar—the *five Solas*—is doctrinal or theological in nature.
It deals with what we believe about God and why we believe it.

The other two pillars
—the *Priesthood of All Believers* and the *Holiness of all Vocations*—
while rooted in theology, are functional in nature,
i.e. they deal with how we put our faith into practice.

The Priesthood of All Believers:

We put our faith into practice
through the *Priesthood of All Believers*.

The *Priesthood of All Believers*
was an important and integral part of Luther's theology.
He rejected the elevated status of priests and members Holy Orders
in the Roman Catholic.

It was a common belief in Roman Catholicism that only the *Religious*
—that only those ordained as priests or as monks and nuns—
could do the work of the church.
The role of the laity was to *pray, pay and obey*.

While that mindset has
changed somewhat in Roman Catholicism,
one of the fascinating rituals that takes place when a pope dies
is the closing and chaining of the Vatican gates.

The gates are chained shut to symbolize that the work of the church
has come to a halt until a new pope is elected.
And the gates to the Vatican remain chained shut until the new pope
makes his first appearance on the papal balcony.

Luther rejected that mindset saying, *We are all priests as long as we are Christians.*
Our consecration as priests flows out of our baptism into Christ.
*Through baptism, says Luther, we have all been ordained as priests.*¹

While some of us are called to
public ministries in the church
and are ordained into the ministry of *Word and Sacrament*
or consecrated into ministries of *Word and Service*...

all of us are called to
live out our *baptismal vocation*...

all of us are called to
be and make disciples for Christ.

As a part of this *Priesthood of All Believers*,
each and every one of us is called to
pray for others, intercede with God, proclaim the word,
and hear confessions and offer absolution to one another.

While these ministries of the *Priesthood of All Believers*
 are not formal or structured
 like the ministries of ordained clergy and consecrated laity,
 they are just as valid...and just as important.

Which leads us to ***The Holiness of All Vocations:***

When we pray the Lord's Prayer,
 we ask God to *give us this day our daily bread.*

The way God gives us our daily bread
 is through the vocations of farmers, millers, and bakers.
 We could add truck drivers, factory workers, bankers, warehouse workers,
 and the cashier at the local supermarket.

Virtually every facet of our economic system contributes to
 the piece of toast or bowl of cereal we had for breakfast this morning.
 When we thank God for the food that he provides us,
 we were right to do so.

God also protects us and provides for our safety
 through the vocations of government.
 God gives us the gift of healing
 most often by means of those who work in the medical vocations.

God proclaims his Word by means of pastors
 and teaches by means of teachers.
 God creates works of beauty and meaning by means of artists
 to whom he has given particular talents.

Your vocation is holy work.
 Whether you work as

a sales associate at Wal-Mart or Sears...
 or a nurse at a doctor's office, clinic or hospital...
 a mom preparing meals for the family ...
 or a teacher working with children at school...
 a police officer upholding the law...
 or serve in the military protecting our nation...
 a doctor healing the sick...
 or a lawyer protecting a client's rights or property...
 a manager of a local store
 or a CEO of a giant corporation...

your work—your vocation—
 is just as holy...just as sacred...as mine.
 Your work is holy work because it
 contributes to the welfare of our society.

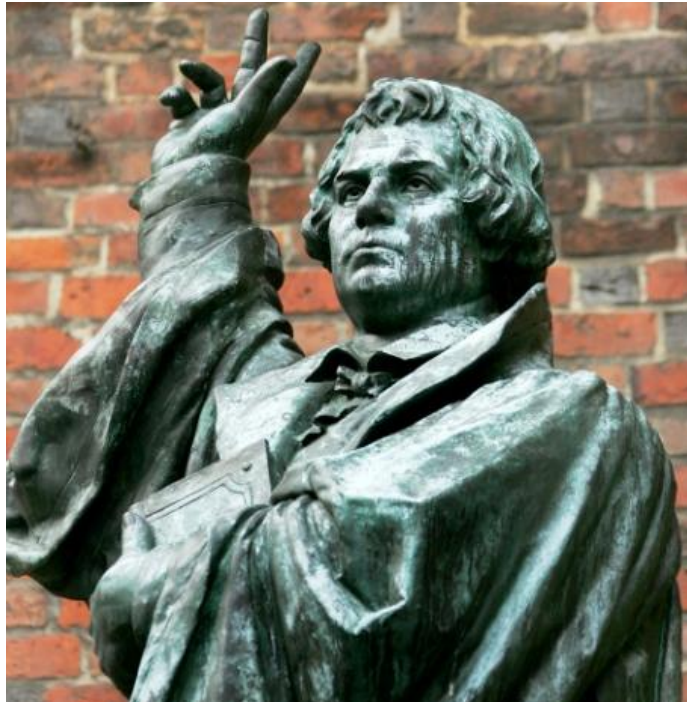
If you have trouble wrapping your minds around that, I invite you to frame it like this:
 you don't work for Wal-Mart or Sears—
 you work for God at Wal-Mart and Sears.

You don't work for Brandon Regional Hospital or Tampa General Hospital—
you work for God at the hospital.
And you are not just a homemaker—
you work for God in the home nurturing your children and family.

Whether your calling is to be a pastor
or a doctor...lawyer...teacher...clerk...homemaker...or ditch-digger...
your work is sacred—your work is holy—
when you do it for the glory of God.

Today as we share in the joy of consecrating Liz and Glenna as Synod Deacons,
they—and our other deacons—are powerful reminders of the
priesthood we all share because of our baptism into Christ.

And as they continue in their daily work,
they remind us that all our work is holy
as long as we do it
for the glory of God.



¹ *Luther's Works*, Volume 6