

Romans 10:11-17

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”

These words were so appropriate for Luther and his companions. Simple, common pastors and professors of theology. The Lord had sent Luther, through Father Staupitz, to learn the Scriptures more deeply, through doctoral work. And now he was preaching and teaching the things that were coming to his attention. Sent. Preached. Heard. Believed.

About 1,000 years before Luther was born, the Lord was gracious to Saint Patrick and blessed him with escape from the Irish pig

farmers that purchased him as a slave. He fled 200 miles on foot to a sea port, and was able to return home to Britain. Yet our Lord Christ was still forming Patrick to be the future pastor of Ireland. A life of receiving God's gifts of Gospel and Eucharist, and responding in prayer continued. And these words from Romans 10 apply very much to Patrick.

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Sometime around the year 433, the Bishop of Rome sent Bishop Patrick and a number of companions as a great mission to Ireland. The people of that land had not believed. They had never heard. There had been no preaching for no one had been sent. But for the next 60 years, the Lord used Patrick and his

fellow missionaries to preach the Gospel and deliver Christ's gifts. They were sent. They preached. The people heard and believed.

Fast-forward almost 1100 years, and you have a group of pastors and professors, gathered before Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, along with his court. The Emperor was growing more and more frustrated with these "Lutherans," whom he felt were teaching against the Church. Wanting to stop them, he demanded a confession of faith to prove them wrong. And on this day, the 25th of June, in the Year of Our Lord 1530, a document that drew greatly from Luther's words, and crafted by his colleague Phillipp Melanchthon, was publicly read. This confession clearly explains that the Lutherans are indeed teaching nothing new, but are the same one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church from the New Testament, while showing the distinctions between the Lutherans and the errors of contemporary Rome.

And you sit here saying, “Thanks for the history lesson. So what? How does that apply to my life?”

The Lord still uses the same tools to deliver Jesus to you. You still won't believe if you don't hear, and you won't hear if no pastor is preaching, and the pastor won't preach if he's not sent. Jesus doesn't just wave a Harry Potter wand and say “Alohamora!” and *poof* He's in your heart. No! He uses His means, and St. Paul tells us this morning about the means of the proclaimed Word. Hand in hand with Baptism, the preaching of the Gospel is basic to faith. It is vital – necessary – and a joy to receive Jesus in His Word.

The Lord places pastors in your life to bring that Word to you. He nurtured Patrick as he grew up in Britain. And He then took the young shepherd to later tend the flock of the people of Ireland. Yes! By the work of the Spirit, they were brought to faith!

He placed Martin Luther, and the Wittenberg reformers to proclaim that Word. He worked through their preaching and teaching to affect the lives of so many throughout Saxony and then on to the world, renewing a focus on the life-giving Gospel. The Lord worked faith into people as He always has, but brought clarity to Reform His Church. ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”***

So what do we celebrate today? The man Luther? A defiant “Yay us; boo Rome?” Not at all. We rejoice that faith comes from hearing, and that the Lord has sent His servants to preach and teach that Word so we may hear it.

Today, our Lord blesses us to hear His Word and receive Him in His most holy and precious Body and Blood, to form and feed *faith that we may live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Even as*

He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen.

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