



Once Easter is over, there isn't that much left for the church year until Thanksgiving and Christmas. Right?! In fact, that's not true at all. The month of May includes the commemoration of 13 saints; Frederick the Wise (Elector of Saxony); Job (from Scripture); Cyril and Methodius, (Missionaries to the Slavs); Emperor Constantine, (Christian Ruler), and Helena (Mother of Constantine); Esther (from Scripture) and Bede the Venerable, (Theologian), to name a few of them. May also brings the celebration of Mother's Day, Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, plus two more celebrations in the life and ministry of Jesus: The Ascension of our Lord (May 30) and The Visitation (May 31). All of these are included in the Lutheran Church calendar.

Most of these, fall on a weekday in the month of May 2019, therefore, it is not possible to celebrate all of them. Why remember the saints at all? Job and Esther are of course names from the Bible and are familiar. But many of the others are not so well known. Why remember people we are unaware of and have no idea what they accomplished in life. Luther said:

We rightly honor the saints when we recognize that they are held up before us as a mirror of the grace and mercy of God. For just as Peter, Paul, and other saints like us in body, blood, and infirmity, were made blessed by the grace of God through faith, so we are comforted by their example that God will look in mercy and grace on our infirmity...Honoring the saints, also, consists in exercising ourselves and increasing in faith and good works in a manner similar to what we see and hear they have done.

The Holy One, our Saint, is Christ, our Savior who has done all things necessary that we would belong to the Father and inherit eternal life. The Lutheran Church has long celebrated the feasts and festivals of the Church year that teach about the life of Grace given to us in the life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We remember the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Circumcision, Epiphany, Baptism, Transfiguration, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord as gift to us of such a grand magnitude that the Church could never possibly honor the life of Christ with one celebration. We teach the life of Christ through the church year and remember God's grace given to us through the life and ministry of Christ. When we remember the saints, we remember God's grace in their lives which points to God's grace in our lives. They are not saints because they lived hundreds of years before our time or that they were more righteous or "saintly" than the average person. They are saints by the "Saint" Himself, Christ whose perfect obedience to the Father's will, even to death on the cross, was then credited to them and to us. They are righteous because the righteousness of Christ was credited to them through the blood of The Saint Himself, Christ. We too, are counted holy through the blood of Christ whose righteousness is credited to us and God sees us as His own dear children. **"We love because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19b.**

When the saints before us were persecuted, they did not hate but demonstrated love. They were not able to do this of their own accord but received God's love through the cross of Christ. This is the mystery of the cross that when persecuted, only love is returned. The saints before us were blessed by God's grace receiving it from Christ Himself on the cross. The same is true of us as well, that through every upheaval, trial and tribulation, we receive the grace of God in Christ. Therefore, in remembering the saints, we learn of the love given by Christ and His cross, for the saints and for us.

In remembering the saints, we thank God for giving them to us as The Augsburg Confession states while drawing strength in our faith as we see God's grace in their lives. The Augsburg Confession states that in remembering the saints, we give thanks for giving faithful servants to His Church and that through such remembrance, we are strengthened in our own lives of faith because we see the mercy of God given to them, while we learn from their example that we would imitate them in their faith and holy living following Christ who is our Head.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1

God's blessings in Christ our Risen Savior!
In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt