



November includes several commemorations of the saints of Christianity. Johannes von Staupitz was Luther's Father Confessor (*Nov 8th*) Martin Chemnitz (*Nov. 9th*), Martin Luther's (*birth Nov. 10th*, his death is also commemorated *Feb. 18th*), Clement of Rome (*Nov. 23rd*), and St. Andrew, (*Nov. 30th*, *Apostle*) among others.

Martin Chemnitz worked after Luther's death to bring unity when the Reformation was beginning to fracture and is one of the authors of The Formula of Concord that settled those disputes (1577). Clement of Rome is remembered for emphasizing the central nature of Jesus' death and resurrection saying; "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ, realizing how precious it is to His father, since it was poured out for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to the whole world." St. Andrew the Apostle, Simon Peter's brother, became the first of Jesus' disciples (St. John 1:35-40). Andrew introduced his brother Simon to Jesus (St. John 1:41-42) and is considered the first of the missionaries going out with the message of Christ. Johannes von Staupitz was Luther's Father Confessor who saw Luther as the troubled young man who needed to look to Christ. Staupitz believed that Luther needed to earn a doctorate in order to drive Luther into the Scriptures and then become a professor of theology.

As Luther studied God's Word, the Holy Spirit did His work and brought Luther to the proper understanding of the righteousness of God. Luther had come to despise the term "the righteousness of God" because he was so troubled by his own sin and inability to please God. Luther's misunderstanding of the righteousness of God was because he had been taught to believe Jesus is a very stern, harsh judge who was constantly angry with the sinfulness of humans. Therefore, Luther believed his "good works" must satisfy God's anger for sin. In this, Luther constantly struggled to do whatever work he was doing to his very best to please God. Luther never found peace in all this effort to the point he despaired of his own faith. Recognizing Luther's struggle, John von Staupitz sent Luther to learn the Scriptures by studying for a doctorate. Through the work of the Holy Spirit the Scriptures were opened to Luther and **Romans 1:17 "The righteous shall live by faith"** brought him comfort. By God's grace through the Word, by the working of the Holy Spirit, Luther understood the "righteousness" that was acceptable to God was not wrought by human effort, but the "righteousness of Christ" given by His death on the cross and in His resurrection that was acceptable before God. The righteousness of God is given by grace to sinners through the merits of Jesus and for the sake of Jesus in His work of redemption. This gift is given through what Jesus accomplishes, done by His love and sacrifice for all people. Once Luther understood this, he was eager to share this good news with all the world throwing himself into all of the work necessary to help others understand God's mercy for all in Christ.

We commemorate the saints gone before, not because they were perfect people; they were sinners as are we all. Nor do we worship them, pray to them or hold them up before us as somehow superior. Instead, we commemorate the saints gone before to praise God for the gifts he gave them, giving them His Grace in Christ and teaching us how God works things for our good through the people and circumstances that come our way.

Johannes von Staupitz's influence placed Luther in a position to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures; the rest, by God's Divine Grace is history. Martin Chemnitz played an important role in the Confessions by his work to keep the focus of the Reformation centrally located on the Scriptures, when the devil was causing great divisions. St. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother was involved in introducing Peter to Jesus not through his own wisdom, but by the Divine wisdom of God within God's plan in bringing people to the knowledge of God in the Scriptures. All of these people and more were sinners who needed their Savior, Jesus, who rescued them from sin, death and the devil by His work on the cross. God caused them to be in the right place at the right time for the Divine purpose of God. Our Heavenly Father puts us in the right time and right place today as saints within His Kingdom to share the Good News of Jesus with those whom God has put in our lives.

As Martin Luther was encouraged by Johannes von Staupitz to learn God's Word, we also are encouraged by our parents, grandparents and many people in our lives to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest God's Word so that as God puts us in the right time and place we will be an encouragement to others as well. We too, can be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all whom God places in our lives by God's Grace as we serve Him in His Kingdom. A Blessed November and Thanksgiving Day to you all praising the God who has saved us by giving His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt