

“When by the Spirit of God I understood these words “the just shall live by faith”, I felt again like a new man: I entered through the open door into the very paradise of God!”
Martin Luther

This Sunday is Reformation Day as well as Halloween. While the latter has a “Scary” aspect to it, the former is most comforting to all who understand it. Reformation Day marks the beginning of the reform movement in the Christian Church occasioned by the questioning of a monk by the name of Martin Luther. Basically the prevailing logic of the church at that time implied that to be close to God meant there were things you must do to earn your standing with God. If you didn’t do them, your soul might be in danger. Martin Luther tried to do all these things, and always was frustrated because just when he thought he made progress in doing something or getting past something bad he did, another bad thing or sin would crop up and he felt like he was at “square one”.

Martin, though was very bright, and was sent to a new university in area named Wittenberg where he taught the Bible to new seminary students. In this teaching and study process Martin Luther took a special interest in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. Here the apostle Paul argues that no one on their own is acceptable to God, but that it is by faith in Christ alone that we are God’s children. That prompted the comment that you see at the top of the page.

What does that have to do with us? Everything! When we seek a Spiritual life we can get in the trap of thinking, maybe if I don’t do bad things, or maybe if I pray, fast, read spiritual books (i.e., the Bible) we will be more acceptable to God. Except for the few who seem to be able to pull that off, we would have to admit that such consistency for you and I would be a very tall order indeed.

That is where faith comes in, and the realizing that God understands our situation completely, that is why he sent Jesus. Moreover Jesus does not just proclaim God’s good news; he enters into the very depth of suffering, humiliation, and death on a cross. All the worst case “scenarios” our lives could have is placed upon Christ crucified. But the good news comes on Easter, that in Jesus resurrection all is defeated, waiting for the final victory when Christ comes back again.

Where is your “spiritual journey” today? Do you get frustrated that you can never get past a certain level, or have you given up hope that you can never be anything good for God? Read John 3:16 again, then read the epistle scripture passage for Sunday from Romans again (Romans 3: 19-28). Then walk confidently each day knowing that God is for you and not against you, and as you put your faith in God, you’ll never walk alone.

Let this Reformation Day renew your confidence that you are God’s beloved child.

Pr. John Van Haneghan