

## **“Justified By Faith”**

### **John 10:1-10**

Thanks to Rona, we weren't able to have our Confirmation service last spring.

Congregations who have fall Confirmation usually have it on this Sunday, Reformation Sunday.

Today we remember Martin Luther, the priest and Augustinian monk nailing his 95 theses to the Wittenburg church door in his attempt to reform the Catholic church. Luther openly opposed the sale of indulgences, pieces of paper that assured salvation if you paid enough.

In his reading of scripture, Luther found St. Paul repeating that we are saved by God's grace through our faith in Christ.

Today our three confirmands affirm their faith in Christ. They affirm that they are baptized children of God.

Our Confirmands have learned from their families, from years of Sunday School, worship, and confirmation what it means to be children of God, what it means to follow and believe in Jesus Christ, what it means to love, forgive, and serve.

The baptismal vows made by their parents, sponsors, and this whole congregation to raise and nurture them in the Christian faith are fulfilled on this day as they affirm their baptisms, affirm their faith in the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and affirm their commitment to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Listen to their faith as I share with you excerpts from the faith statements each of them has written.

## **Matthew J. Ciryak**

**Bible Verse: Galatians 6:9** -- "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up".

This verse to me is about perseverance. A word I have heard often from my parents. I began to hear this word when I was in elementary school and the beginning of middle school when I would go to the nurse's office and want to come home. My mom would tell me I need to persevere as there was nothing wrong and I had to stay. I eventually got it and learned that school and my sports required perseverance. I must practice becoming good at certain stuff and this verse inspires me when I am tired or begin to wonder whether it's worth it.

I believe that God is always watching over me and helping me to make the right choices. His son Jesus has shown me that I can be humble leader and that I sometimes have to make sacrifices. I have learned from Jesus that I should put others first and it is not always about me. I believe that the Holy Spirit is in me and helps me to make those right choices and to do what is right.

I recently lost a good friend. When I first heard I did not know how to react. I just went silent. I had to "persevere" at that moment because I was just about to leave to go do volunteer work at the nursing home with my confirmation class. When my mom picked me up, I had many questions. I asked her where is Max? Is he in Heaven? Will I see him again? What is he doing? As we drove, I was looking up at the sky and the clouds and trying to see through them and maybe see Max. I was sad and confused. I do not know that I would have understood as clearly if I did not have faith and church in my life. I am glad that I do because it has helped me to get through this rough time.

I was able to sit with my team-mates at Max's church mass and listen to the Priest and understand what he was saying and how to act in a church and follow the service. But, just as importantly we were there for Max as a team as we were on the field and I know God was looking down on all of us and holding Max close. This gives me reason to continue to persevere.

I also had to persevere when I was hunting. I've always been brought up with religion and in this case Lutheran. But, to be honest nothing has changed since I was younger because I always know that God is with me. It has just made me know it more as I get older. I had to miss a few Sundays during hunting season because I was hunting with my dad, uncle and some friends. My uncle got one and my dad saw several over the time being out. When I was out there, I was praying and talking to God to let me see one. Then I heard something and what do I see but a ten point, looking right across the woods, but since the rut, bucks go after the does and this doe was behind me and the buck saw her, I did not get a chance. It made me mad why there had to be a doe coming out of the woods to distract the buck. But I just had to deal with it and hope another would come my way . . . it didn't.

A memorable sermon that talks about perseverance is a talk about the civil rights movement when Pastor Doug talked about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and how they stood up for what's right and did not give up and they kept on going. That is what I know I have to do when I want to give up . . . keep on going!

**Alana Encarnacion**

**Bible verse – Psalm 38:17-18** – “For I’m ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin”.

What this Bible verse means to me is that I'm ready to fall with my choices beside me. The outcome of my choices I shall stand by. I'm sorry for all the sin I have done and hope I'll be in the hands of God forever.

I remember many things from Sunday school, not sure I can say the same for sermon notes because of my short attention span. In Sunday school, I remember many lessons on respect and what it means to not only us, but for everyone in a community. There are those who don't give respect, but demand respect in return, those who give respect, and don't care if you give respect back, and those who give and want respect. Everyone is like this. I've had many friends do dumb decisions and give things to the wrong people. There are also many people who became such a distraction that they have become disliked in the class. All of those types of people have one thing in common: they all want respect... The thing is, if you want respect, you must give it first.

In the sermon notes, or at least one that I can remember, Pastor was preaching about different people in the world. Talking about diversity and how we could make a difference with the power of Christ by our side. Like Martin Luther and Martin Luther King Jr., both two different people, but they had one thing in common . . . Christ.

They wanted to change the world, and they did. They had a goal and achieved it. We all remember Luther's fight for the church and the people, and we also remember King's "I Have a Dream" speech and his fight for equality between whites and blacks. Do you know where they both started? In a simple church.

I believe that God and Jesus are always here to help us through tough times. The Holy Spirit is here to protect us.

To be completely honest, my faith is strong, but questionable. It's alright though, because everyone has questions. My faith has been the same ever since I started Sunday school. I've been to two churches, Bethany Lutheran Church and here. Bethany was the same church that my siblings and I have been baptized at. In Bethany, I loved going and learning more about my religion. My mom always wanted us to have good morals. To be honest, I want to be kind of like her when I grow up. She stayed strong no matter what was thrown at her. I want to have the knowledge and motivation like my dad and the will power, strength, and self-confidence like my mom.

A story I would like to share is all about my everyday life. Let's first look at my house. In our house in Geneva, there's my mom and dad, my sister Ayva, and my brother Bobby. We have 3 dogs named Karma, Xena, and Storm. We also have a bearded dragon named Titan, 2 snakes named Chubbs and Legs (Get it? Because snakes don't have legs?), a Savanna monitor named Raptor, and a cat named Gizmo. Our house is always a big bustling mess, whether that be another fight for a T.V. remote or another thing to fix in our house. No matter what, we always overcome challenges. We do the same for church. Every Sunday and Wednesday we commit to go out to church. We've been committed ever since.

Another story that I would like to share is a little personal, but I will share bits and pieces of it. I went through a point of my life where I became very depressed and I was spending time in my room a lot. I had lost all hope for everything. My parents found out and soon enough they told me to sit down and we had a long and hard discussion about me and what's been going on that made me like that. That day, I realized something. I do have people to talk to, even when I feel like nobody is there or wants to listen to me. Someone is always there for you.

All you have to do is speak up. I thank God for having parents like them. I'm so thankful for the both of them. They are the best parents I could ever have, and I thank God for this family.

Faith helps me because I know that God can be there for you, even in your times of need.

I believe that baptism is a good thing to do so you can have a starting connection with God. I believe the Lord's Supper is meant to bring us together by eating the bread and drinking wine. I believe the Apostles Creed is confessing what you believe in a small summary. I believe the Lord's Prayer is meant to be said before you eat, go to bed, and/or receive communion. It is to ask God for forgiveness and to be with us. Lastly, I believe the Ten Commandments are simple rules on how we should act or do every day.

Other than that, I'm happy that I got to write this and share this with you. I hope you enjoyed it because my hands hurt.

### **Justin Scanlon**

**Bible verse – Mark 1:10** – “And just as he was coming up out the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the spirit descending like a dove on him.”

I picked this Bible verse for a few reasons. I think this is a beautiful verse describing Jesus's Baptism. The spirit being with Jesus makes me think about my faith in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We are cleansed of our sins. No matter what we have, God and Jesus are here to forgive us, and the Holy Spirit is within us. Jesus died for our sins so that we could be free. I feel God and Jesus watch over me, my family, and friends from up above. I am so thankful to have been baptized, having my own special butterfly, and my wooden box all in my room.

All of these items are very special to me. They represent my faith and how glad I am to be a part of the Divinity Family.

My faith has grown stronger over the years of being at Divinity, going to Sunday school, and being a part of my Confirmation group. We learn about God's word and his teachings by reading the Bible verses and discussing them. I enjoy learning what the different verses mean, especially the stories of Jesus helping and healing the sick.

Going to the nursing homes and to Redeemer has also helped my faith grow over time. With prayer, visits, and food too, I have seen how these things can impact and make a difference to people who seem lonely and may or may not have much. It makes me appreciate all the things that my mom and dad have provided for me. It makes me happy by just singing songs of Jesus and sharing communion together with those nursing home residents. At redeemer, I helped wash dishes. I saw how happy those people were that we were there with them. With a prayer, visits, presents, and a good meal, I hope that helped to make the Christmas Season happier for each person that stood in line waiting for something to eat.

I will always be grateful to have my faith in God. I want to thank all my Sunday School teachers for helping my faith grow, especially Ms. Karen, Ms. Tracy, Mrs. Revilock, and Pastor Doug. I especially want to thank my mom for always being here for me, taking me to church, Sunday School, and confirmation class. Because of my mom, my faith has grown the strongest because of her. She has taught me God and Jesus are always with me, an no matter what path I choose, or wherever I go, Divinity Lutheran Church will always be my home.

May the peace of God . . .

#752 – “Lord, Listen to your children praying” 3X