



So, in addition to “God’s Work. Our Hands.” and Make a Difference and Rally Sunday, tomorrow will also begin our Confirmation classes: our Lutheran way of still doing our share of baptisms of individuals who are not quite of the age to understand what on earth we’re doing with water and font and bread and wine and worship and all-around church operation; so, we hope come ages 12 or 13, we can give enough of an overview of such faith basics to then allow them to make their own public affirmation of their baptismal vows, once its

all said and done. The key words being *we hope*, of course.

Granted, I am sure all of you in the room (or watching online), who were blessed to sit in on such learning experiences during your adolescent years: that you remember absolutely everything your pastor or Confirmation teacher said about the Creeds and the Ten Commandments and Scripture, and you still have everything memorized from what Martin Luther wrote in his *Small Catechism* with all his “What does this mean” responses from his original writing only a few years ago in 1529. And for those of you who do, I am sure your Confirmation leaders are incredibly proud of you, to say the least; but for the rest of us mere mortals, those rather lengthy weekend mornings or Wednesday evenings were not always the easiest to comprehend during our middle school years.

Now, there are many rather interesting callings in the all-around church operation, but one of those I am least envious of is the group of people who have to somehow come up with a curriculum to make the Creeds and the Ten Commandments and Scripture and what Martin Luther wrote nearly half a millennia ago; to not only make such lessons interesting enough for 12 and 13 year olds, but to have them convinced that there is something in all of this for them; and not only that, but to somehow reel in a bunch of junior high students into the holy idea that when they affirm their baptism, and they believe they can somehow go along with this whole God and Jesus and Holy Spirit activity; that when they affirm their baptism, the church and God grants them the holy permission to make this gift of faith their own personal stake in feeling God’s love and sharing it with the world.

Safe to say, we have not always managed to pull off the interesting and the relevance and the empowerment of such teachings to the adolescent age group especially, but, at least, for right now, before the new year even starts for the Confirmation end of things, too, I have this slight ray of hope with whoever the brave collection of souls were who came up with yet another new curriculum to somehow reel in junior high youth into the Greatest News of all eternity. It’s not just about the modernized layout and language. It’s even about what they call the welcome page.

The church’s latest attempt at reaching these just as precious children of God, is called, quite simply, *Lutheran Yes!* And I wonder if a few portions from that welcome page should in some way be part of every faith community’s welcome on every bulletin and website and social media page and any form of communication with its church family and any child of God who stops by, even slightly curious about this whole God business: “God says YES to you as a beloved child... You can say YES to being part of the body of Christ in this congregation, your community, and all around the world... You will encounter God’s YES on your faith journey throughout your whole life... As you begin this journey of learning... remember this: God always says YES to you!” And I wonder if, in the end, that is what today is all about for us.

Today is about us recognizing that we don’t have this whole church operation figured out. We don’t know everything about the Creeds or the Ten Commandments or Scripture or what Martin Luther wrote back in the 16th century, but we say, “Yes!” anyway to all of this. We know our Confirmation classes aren’t as packed as they used to be. We know we don’t have as many hands to bring ministry action together as centuries past, but we say “Yes!” anyway. We say “Yes!” because we still experience

joy in the learning and the worshiping and the singing and the praying and the serving together. We say “Yes!” because we don’t just want Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry and the Redeemer Crisis Center and food pantries to only be words on newsletter pages and websites for us to say we support; but we cannot help ourselves but be under the sacred impression, that when our hands take part in such Divine work, we might just fulfill the words of the Psalmist: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God’s holy name,” the same holy One who thoroughly adores the precious children of God who depend on those absolutely pivotal organizations in our surrounding community.

But it is also that same Psalm that reminds us today is about God saying, “Yes!” to us, too. The God who sees that we may have had our fair share of moments of not exactly living up to Christ-like love and compassion and grace and mercy, as we are called to embody as the church; and yet, God says “Yes!” to us anyway. The God who came to life in Jesus Christ, and insisted on a sacred responsibility to care for such individuals who turn to LMM and the Redeemer Crisis Center and food pantries, and Jesus says “Yes!” to inviting us to be part of that most tremendous “God’s Work.” that is still going on today. This is the God who has witnessed a seemingly endless line of saints from the beginning; and not just the Martin Luthers, but Confirmation and Sunday school teachers and students, choir directors and musicians, service leaders and office volunteers and countless more from all the generations past, and God says “Yes!” to each of you in being part of that holy line of all those who said “Yes!” to being part of a Divine blessing to share with Divinity and well, well beyond. So, we thank you for in whatever way you take part in God’s work here and wherever you go; and to be rest assured of the Gospel that will never be taken away from you: that in Jesus Christ, God has and will always emphatically say, “Yes!” to you with a love that took on sin and death and rose from the dead to be with you forever. And so for that Greatest News for us all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!