

## Minor Festivals of the Christian Church Year

Perhaps you have noticed through the years that on certain Sundays, rather than celebrating the Sunday of the Christian Church Year, we have celebrated Minor Festivals. These festivals seek to praise God for the work that he accomplished through the apostles and others mentioned in the Bible. Some of the festivals commemorate special events in the Bible and in church history.

Those who are commemorated through these Minor Festivals are labeled *saints*. Do not confuse the biblical term *saint* with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching about saints. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that saints are those who did so many good works in their life that they made up for all of their sins, so when they died they didn't have to go to purgatory but went straight to heaven. As a matter of fact, they did extra good works that the church can credit to a person's account and get time out of purgatory. Of course, this teaching flies in the face of God's holy Word which mentions nothing about purgatory and teaches that people cannot earn forgiveness for themselves. Rather, it's a free gift purchased with the blood Jesus shed on the cross. Paul wrote, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The biblical term *saint* means "A holy person." We are holy in God's sight, not because of our own righteousness, but because we have been wrapped in Christ's righteousness. The church is called the *Communion of Saints* because it is made up of all believers everywhere in heaven and on earth. Just like we can call the martyr Stephen *Saint Stephen*, it is also proper to call living Christians *saints*. It is biblical to call my wife *Saint Pamela* because she too is holy in God's sight through faith in Jesus.

In the coming weeks we will have a devotion on all of the Minor Festivals of the Church Year which Lutherans celebrate. *Christian Worship Manual* has this to say about the topic: "Some of the most ancient festivals of the church were the commemorations of its martyrs on the traditional day of their death. Several of these died already in New Testament times (for example: James, Stephen). As the church spread and persecutions increased, each congregation kept a record of those of its number who had met death for their faith. The names of such martyrs, and in time also the names of some persons who were not martyrs, were added to the calendar....The Lutheran church calendars generally retained only the festivals of those saints named in the Scriptures and of noteworthy events related to our faith. *Christian Worship* includes a total of thirty-three Minor Festivals. Of first rank are those related to Christ and his apostles. In addition, the evangelists (gospel writers) and other early Christian men and women are recalled. Among the Minor Festivals are included also the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession, Reformation Day, All Saints' Day, and New Year's Eve." (Page 377)

Tomorrow our first Minor Festival devotion will be *The Name of Jesus*, which is celebrated on January 1.

*After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read Hebrews 11.*

Pastor Zuberbier