

Making A (Faith) Statement

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Reformation Sunday B – October 29, 2006

Christ Lutheran Church

Menomonie, Wisconsin

To our Confirmands, their family and friends, other guests, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from our triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I wish you could have been here on Wednesday night. Many of you were, I know, but most of you missed out on a very special time. Wednesday night, these fourteen confirmands, read their completed their faith statements before their families and our current 6th through 8th students in our Christ Time confirmation ministry.

This evening represents the pulling together of three years of learning about the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Holy Scriptures – all of the things that these your people's parents and sponsors and indeed the whole church promised to do for them on the day of their baptism.

Their faith statement is their response to that promise. It is also their own promise to continue the journey of faith which they proclaimed on Wednesday.

Had you been here you would have heard them confess and proclaim their faith in God in their own words, but you would have heard them connect that faith with their life experience. And in so doing they preached the gospel as surely and as truly as any pastor.

So let me give you a taste of the kind of faith these young people carry within them and the powerful ways they communicate it.

Faith – Why We Need It

God has his own ways of showing us things and sometimes we don't realize them all the time.

Never more so than in times illness, suffering and death.

Faith in the Midst of Sickness and Suffering

- *When my grandma was very sick with Alzheimer's disease and didn't know much about what was going on, she could still say the Lord's Prayer – even if it seemed like she was just sleeping. The Lord's Prayer was deep inside her [then] as it had been for her whole life. I hope that I will always have the same faith that my grandma had.*
- *About a year later, the cancer inside Christ was getting worse. We knew her time to go was coming closer and closer. I remember seeing her for the last time and I didn't even recognize her. It amazed me to see what cancer can really do to you. A couple of days*

after my visit, she passed away at the age of 26. I figured out that . . . the Lord was with Christ every step of the way because she would never hold a grudge against anyone and she forgave everyone for their trespasses. She knew she would not be led into temptation because she was going to heaven. And in a way she helped us feel the kingdom, power and glory of God.

Doubt in the Face of Grief and Loss

A few months ago my grandma died and I began to start questioning my faith and loyalty to God. I had felt almost betrayed, and couldn't understand why he had done what he had. My grandma had been somewhat sick for the past couple of years, but this caught me totally off-guard. Both her and my Mom always told me things happen for a reason. This time, though, I couldn't figure out what God's reasoning was. As a little time went on I finally started to understand what God had done. We wasn't trying to hurt my family or me – which I hadn't realized before. When I got past my anger I understood that God needed her at that time, and he was taking her out of the suffering she was going through. I know God helped me get through that point in my life, and I learned that he would always be there no matter what. Through the Holy Spirit I have been kept in true faith with God.

Faith in Relationships

- *My Mom and I sometimes have fights and most of the time it's about what I've done wrong, and I know it doesn't make sense because I get mad at her for getting mad at me and I run off. Then the apologizing starts. Sometimes I make a card that asks her for forgiveness and God helps me in that process. I don't think there is a time when my Mom and I haven't settled an argument! Thank God!*
- *When I get older and have kids the way I would show them I believe in God is by doing the same thing my grandma and grandpa did: I would take them to church, enroll them in Sunday school, and talk with them about things they need to know. That way they would learn about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.*

Faith and Life

- *I know God cares for me and is there because he gave me [the Lord's] prayer to live by. I think God gave us this prayer to ask for the important things in life. And no, it's not a pony or 50 bagagillion dollars or anything you can put a price on. He gave us this prayer to ask for a good life full of his love."*
- *" . . . there is a place for all of us after death and we should not be scared of dying. God put us on this earth for a reason. We should live up to that reason, and not waste our life sitting on the couch eating Doritos."*

You see what I mean about Wednesday night? The Doritos reference is SO Martin Luther. Because Luther saw the connection between faith and all of life: food, family, work and play, our relationships, our suffering and joys, life and death, and especially salvation – they all hinge simply on our faith that Jesus Christ is present in, under, and through each moment and

experience of our lives. Indeed, life itself is sacramental, made sacred, because the Son of God became one of us, suffered, died and was raised to new life for us. Sola fides. Faith alone.

And that's what you heard in those snippets of our confirmands' sermons. You heard the gospel. The good news of God among us. You heard real life stories of God's healing and transforming lives and relationships – even in the face of death – preached in your hearing. Sola verbum. Word alone.

And all of it. All of it is pure grace. The preaching, the healing, the transforming, the forgiveness, the hope, the sacraments. This rite of affirmation of baptism and the baptism it affirms. Sola gratia. Grace alone.

What better way of celebrating the Reformation than by affirming these young people's baptism and hearing the gospel from their hearts and heads? By faith, word, and grace are we saved. How can you waste your life sitting on the couch eating Doritos? There is a world waiting to see your faith, to hear the Word of God and know God's grace. Put the bag down and let's get moving! Amen.

