

New Understanding Marks Luther's Birthday

By Cindy Wooden
NC News Service

In November many Catholics in the United States will join in observances marking the 500th birthday of Martin Luther, a man they were once taught to revile as a heretic who led millions from the faith.

Behind this shift is a new understanding of the man who started out to reform Roman Catholicism but ended up forming his own church. Behind it also is a new understanding of the doctrines he taught and of the faults in the church that he was seeking to correct.

Martin Luther was born Nov. 10, 1483, to Hans and Margaret Luther in Eisleben in what is now East Germany. Baptized the next day, the feast of St. Martin of Tours, he received the name Martin.

Though he was the son of a miner in an age when few outside the noble and merchant classes could read and write, he began school at age 7.

At the University of Erfurt he received his bachelor's and master's degrees before beginning law studies in 1504.

Like St. Paul, Luther could mark a dramatic event as a turning point in his life. In July 1505, while returning to Erfurt from home, he was thrown to the ground by a lightning bolt. Praying to St. Anne, Luther promised to become a monk if his life were spared.

That same month, he entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt and began studies for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest on April 4, 1507.

Luther taught moral philosophy at Wittenburg University while he completed his theological studies, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1509.

His only journey to Rome took place in 1510 when he was sent there with his order's vicar general. At the time St. Peter's Basilica was under construction, funded heavily by the selling of indulgences.

While the Church later saw the selling of indulgences as an abuse, it believes that Christ and the communion of saints have accumulated a treasure of merits.

The indulgences were sold believing that the faithful can draw upon those merits and credit them to sinners, thus lessening the time they would spend in purgatory.

Luther returned to Germany in 1511 and received his doctorate in theology from Wittenburg in 1512. For the next five years he was professor of Scripture there and district vicar of the Augustinian order.

In what is traditionally called Luther's Tower Experience, his insight into how people are justified in the eyes of God and so obtain eternal life was clarified.

One of Luther's chief concerns was the "terrified consciences" of people who not only had faith and tried to live moral lives, but also scrupulously followed many Church rules and penances, and paid for Masses and indulgences to ensure their salvation.

Focusing on the words of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Luther taught that humanity's entire hope of justification rests on God's merciful judgment, made known in Christ and the Gospel. Justification by faith alone became the major doctrinal basis of the Protestant Reformation.

In the medieval spirit of a scholastic debate, Martin Luther formulated his famous 95 theses, a list of topics on which, he believed, the church needed to reform.

He hung the theses "out of love and zeal for



the elucidation of truth" on the castle church at Wittenburg on Oct. 31, 1517. It marked the beginning of debates and inquisitions which led to his excommunication and the start of the Reformation less than four years later.

In seeking to reform the practices of the Church, Luther threatened the power, income and intertwined interests of princes, Church leaders and priests.

One of the chief targets of Luther's attacks, for example, was the Dominican Johann Tetzel, who was selling indulgences near the northern border of his territory. It was Tetzel who preached, "As the coin in the coffer rings, so the soul from purgatory springs."

Luther was not aware that Tetzel was selling indulgences at the request of Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Magdeburg. Half the money collected by Tetzel went for the construction of St. Peter's and the other half went to the archbishop who was in debt after buying multiple bishoprics against Church law.

Archbishop Albrecht called Rome's attention to Luther's theses, expanding what could have been an isolated, local Church conflict.

The theologian Johann Eck was appointed to face Luther at a 1519 debate at the university in Leipzig. Since several of Luther's theses called for reform of practices endorsed by the pope, it took little effort for Eck to prompt Luther into admitting his belief that the pope's authority in Church teaching was not ultimate.

Eck then went to Rome where he helped Pope Leo X write the papal bull issued in 1520 ordering Luther to recant in 60 days or be excommunicated. When the 60 days had passed, Luther and his students burned the document.

Leo issued the final decree of excommunication on Jan. 3, 1521.

In April of 1521 Luther was summoned to the imperial Diet at Worms — a legislative assembly of the seven most powerful civil and religious magistrates in the empire.

When asked if he would revoke the "heresies" contained in his writings, Luther replied that he could not. Saying that "my conscience is captive to the word of God," Luther would not deny his belief that neither the pope nor church councils were infallible; Scripture was the ultimate authority.

The Edict of Worms condemned Luther as an outlaw in the empire, but he was given safe conduct to Wartburg Castle and protective custody by one of the imperial electors, Frederick the Wise.

Luther believed in the priesthood of all believers, that the Mass should be celebrated in the vernacular, that celibacy for priests should be optional and that the faithful should receive Communion under both species.

Luther married a former nun, Katherine von Bora, in 1525 and had six children. In 1532 the monastery at Wittenburg was secularized and deeded to Luther. He and his family lived there along with relatives and needy students.

A prolific writer, Luther's major Reformation teachings were written in 1520: "Freedom of the Christian," "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," and "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation."

Working at the Wartburg Castle, Luther wrote 14 works, including his German translation of the New Testament which was published in 1522. From the Wartburg he also kept informed of developments of the Reformation and wrote several exhortations based on what he heard.

In 1530, the Diet of Augsburg met, but Luther was not granted safe conduct. In his stead, Philip Melancthon went in a final attempt to reconcile the views of Luther and Rome.

Melancthon drafted the Augsburg Confession, a summary of Lutheran beliefs. However, the church of Luther and the Church of Rome would not come to an agreement on the confession for another 450 years.

The statement issued by the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission in 1980 explains that "the express purpose of the Augsburg Confession is to bear witness to the faith of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

The international commission continued, "Its concern is not with peculiar doctrines nor indeed with the establishment of a new church, but with the preservation and renewal of the Christian faith in its purity."

But the eyes of the 16th century could not see the striving for agreement. Eck helped write the church's refutation of the confession.

In June 1983 the commission issued a joint statement on the "legacy" of Martin Luther, saying that "any thought of dividing the church was far from his mind and was strongly rejected by him." But as Luther's teachings increasingly came into conflict with the Church, the question of final authority became most prominent. And in the mind and heart of Luther Scripture won out.

Not only was the Lutheran Church to divide from the Roman Catholic, but many divisions grew within the Reformed churches as well.

When it was evident that separation from Rome was inevitable, Luther compiled a book of devotions, published a hymnal containing many of his own compositions and two catechisms summarizing the principles of his faith.

Immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia brought Lutheranism to North America in the early 1600s. The Lutheran churches in the United States have 8.5 million members and are divided into 18 bodies, or synods. There are 68.9 million Lutherans in the world.

The Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of American Evangelical Churches are working toward a merger expected in 1988.

DEATHS

James Dagon Dies at 56

Hornell — Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Nov. 3 at St. Ann's Church for James J. Dagon who died Oct. 30, 1983. Mr. Dagon had been ill for five months.

At the time of his death Mr. Dagon was 56 years old.

A native of Hornell, he graduated from St. Ann's School and Hornell High School and served two years with the U.S. Army before entering Siena College. He also studied at Alfred University and the Renouard School of Embalming in New York.

Mr. Dagon was the owner and operator of the Dagon Funeral Home, a family

Sister Josina Norman

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Josina Norman, SSJ, Nov. 2 in the motherhouse chapel. Sister Josina died Oct. 31, 1983 at the age of 92.

Born in Rochester, she entered her congregation from Blessed Sacrament Parish in 1908. She was a graduate of Nazareth Academy and earned her life teaching certificate at Nazareth Normal School, receiving state certification in 1913. She taught at Holy

business for four generations.

Well known in the community for his promotion of local sports, Mr. Dagon was past president of the Hornell Little League, a former coach of 7th and 8th grade basketball at St. Ann's School, and was instrumental in organizing the annual Hornell Sports Night at the Knights of Columbus for the benefit of the Special Olympics.

In addition, he served on a number of committees and boards both religious and civic and was a member of civic, professional and religious organizations.

Mr. Dagon is survived by

Apostles School, St. Charles School in Bridgeport, Conn., St. Patrick's Girls Home in Rochester, and its successor, St. Joseph's Villa, where she remained until ill health forced her to retire in 1964.

She is survived by one sister, Sister Mary Francis SSJ, several nieces and nephews.

Msr. William Shannon presided at the funeral Mass. Father James F. Slattery was present.

his wife, Marieka Dagon; James Jr. and John N.; five daughters, Mrs. Ellen Schumann of Erie, Pa., Mrs. Mary Clark of North Hornell, Mrs. Molly Andolina, Mrs. Sally Crowe and Miss Anne Dagon; two sisters, Mrs. Lucy Ellen Livingston and Mrs. Joan Diehl; a brother, Dr. John McRoberts of North Palm Beach, Fla.; eight grandchildren and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Father William V. Spilly presided at the funeral rites, celebrated by Fathers Ronald Antinarelli, Michael Bausch, James Cosgrove, Albert Delmonte, Charles Drexler, Paul Gibbons, Robert Hammond, John P. O'Malley, Eugene Emo, Robert C. MacNamara, Jeremiah Moynihan, Benedict Riccardo, Elmer J. Schmidt, Donald Schwab, Louis Siriani, Louis Vasile and James Willsey.

Memorial Service

Elmira — A memorial worship service for persons who have died at St. Joseph's Hospital over the past two months will take place at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 9 (tonight) in the Dunn Memorial Chapel.

Merle Sweet Memorial Set

The second annual Merle Sweet Memorial Dinner Dance will take place Saturday, Nov. 14, at Sweet's Party House, Holt Road, Webster. Sweet, one of the area's most widely known restaurateurs and sports enthusiasts, died in May 1982.

Dick Heveron, general chairman, said that the Penfield Rotary Show Band, a 19-piece group, will donate its talents to the event, the proceeds of which go to the American Cancer Society. Hal Ratcliffe will receive the Merle Sweet Award for volunteer work with the American Cancer Society.

Cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 with dinner at 8 and dancing at 9. Tickets are available at Sweet's Party House, 872-4000, and the American Cancer Society, 288-1950.

Good Shepherd Craft Sale
E. Henrietta Rd., 1 Mi. S. of Fairgrounds, Rt. 15A.
Expanded to over 100 Crafters,
Friday, November 11, 1983
Free Admission • Parking • Babysitting
Master Charge • Visa Welcome • Refreshments
Baked Food Sale

Natural Family Planning Class Set

A Natural Family Planning Class will begin Tuesday, Dec. 6, at St. James Church, 130 Brett Road. Enrollment is limited and pre-registration, from (716)464-8705, is required.

The class is sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester.

Vespers

Father Steven Kraus, associate pastor of St. Ann's Church will preside at a celebration of Vespers (Evening Prayer) 4 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 13 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Sister Kathleen Millikan will be homilist. The choir of St. Paul's in Webster under the direction of Jura Litchfield and organist John Kubiniac will accompany the sung prayer. The rite, planned as a monthly event, is sponsored by the music committee of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

COVENANT BOOKSTORE INC.
Rochester's Newest and most attractive Christian Book Store

Advent Wreath Set starting at **\$6.99**

Nativity Scene starting at **\$6.00**

Christmas Cards Box of 25 **\$2.25**

564 Titus Avenue
266-4058
New Holiday Hours
10:00-5:30 Tuesday-Wednesday
10:00-8:30 Monday-Thursday-Friday
10:00-5:00 Saturday



November
15
15
16
30
December
7
14
We encourage St., Rocheste

SSJ Sista

The central of the diocesan Joseph issued support for a congregation in the civil Seneca Army

Two memt gregation, Pray and Cosgrove, e property d monstration weapons and of Pershing missiles. S

Nuke But S

Washington Senate reject Oct. 31 to freeze resol related piec but left ope that the free resurrected next.

On a 58-4 agreed to t attach the fr a measure tional debt l

Later it v a motion alternative nuclear w But the bi ment was v final vote i the debt extraneous

The acti non-binding still could Senate floor or as ar

Mer
128 Pr
Hen