

LCMS

Worship Library

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Title: Commemoration Biographies

Category: Church Year

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January

January 2

J. K. Wilhelm Loehe, Pastor

Although he never left Germany, Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, born in Fuerth in 1808, had a profound impact on the development of Lutheranism in North America. Serving as pastor in the Bavarian village of Neuendettelsau, he recognized the need for workers in developing lands and assisted in training emergency helpers to be sent as missionary pastors to North America, Brazil, and Australia. A number of the men he sent to the United States became founders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Through his financial support, a theological school was established in Fort Wayne, Ind., and a teachers' institute in Saginaw, Mich. Loehe was known for his confessional integrity and his interest in liturgy and catechetics. His devotion to works of Christian charity led to the establishment of a deaconess training house and homes for the aged.

January 10

Basil the Great of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa

Basil and the two Gregorays, collectively known as the Cappadocian Fathers, were leaders of Christian orthodoxy in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the later fourth century. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa were brothers; Gregory of Nazianzus was their friend. All three were influential in shaping the theology ratified by the Council of Constantinople of 381, which is expressed in the Nicene Creed. Their defense of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and Holy Trinity, together with their contributions to the liturgy of the Eastern Church, make them among the most influential Christian teachers and theologians of their time.

January 20

Sarah

Sarah was the wife (and half-sister) of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham (Gen. 11:29; 20:12). In obedience to divine command (Gen. 12:1), she made the long and arduous journey west, along with her husband and his relatives, from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran and then finally to the land of Canaan. She remained childless until old age. Then, in keeping with God's long-standing promise, she gave birth to a son and heir of the covenant (Gen. 21: 1-3). She is remembered and honored as the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac, the second of the three patriarchs. She is also favorably noted for her hospitality to strangers (Gen. 18:1-8). Following her death at the age of 127, she was laid to rest in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 49:13), where her husband was later buried.

January 27

John Chrysostom, Preacher

Given the added name of Chrysostom, which means "golden-mouthed" in Greek, Saint John was a dominant force in the fourth-century Christian church. Born in Antioch around the year 347, John was instructed in the Christian faith by his pious mother, Anthusa. After serving in a number of Christian offices, including acolyte and lector, John was ordained a presbyter and given preaching responsibilities. His simple but direct messages found an audience well beyond his home town. In 398, John Chrysostom was made Patriarch of Constantinople. His determination to reform the church, court, and city there brought him into conflict with established authorities. Eventually, he was exiled from his adopted city. Although removed from his parishes and people, he continued writing and preaching until the time of his death in 407. It is reported that his final words were: "Glory be to God for all things. Amen."

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February

February 5

Jacob (Israel), Patriarch

Jacob, the third of the three Hebrew patriarchs, was the younger of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. After wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, Jacob, whose name means "deceiver," was renamed "Israel," which means "he strives with God" (Gen. 25:26; 32:28). His family life was filled with trouble, caused by his acts of deception toward his father and his brother Esau and his parental favoritism toward his son Joseph (March 31). Much of his adult life was spent grieving over the death of his beloved wife Rachel and the presumed death of Joseph, who had been appointed by the Egyptian Pharaoh to be in charge of food distribution during a time of famine in the land. Prior to Jacob's death during the blessing of his sons, God gave the promise that the Messiah would come through the line of Jacob's fourth son, Judah (Genesis 49).

February 10

Silas, Fellow Worker with Paul

Silas, a leader in the church at Jerusalem, was chosen by Paul (Acts 15:40) to accompany him on his second missionary journey from Antioch to Asia Minor and Macedonia. Silas, also known as Silvanus, was imprisoned with Paul in Philippi and experienced the riots in Thessalonica and Berea. After rejoining Paul in Corinth, he apparently remained there for an extended time. Beyond that there is little further mention of Silas and his association with Paul.

February 13

Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos

Aquila and his wife Priscilla (Prisca), Jewish contemporaries of St. Paul, traveled widely. Because of persecution in Rome, they went to Corinth where they met the apostle Paul, who joined them in their trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:1-3). They, in turn, joined him in his mission of proclaiming the Christian Gospel. The couple later traveled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 18:18), where the two of them established a home that served as hospitality headquarters for new converts to Christianity. Apollos was one of their numerous Jewish pupils in the faith. An eloquent man, Apollos "spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25). He later traveled from Corinth to the province of Achaia, where he "showed by the Scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus" (Acts 18:28). Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos are all remembered and honored for their great missionary zeal.

February 14

Valentine, Martyr

A physician and priest living in Rome during the rule of the Emperor Claudius, Valentine became one of the noted martyrs of the third century. The commemoration of his death, which occurred in the year 270, became part of the calendar of remembrance in the early church of the West. Tradition suggests that on the day of his execution for his Christian faith, he left a note of encouragement for a child of his jailer written on an irregularly-shaped piece of paper. This greeting became a pattern for millions of written expressions of love and caring that now are the highlight of Valentine's Day in many nations.

February 15

Philemon and Onesimus

Philemon was a prominent first-century Christian who owned a slave named Onesimus. Although the name "Onesimus" means "useful," Onesimus proved himself "useless" when he ran away from his master and perhaps even stole from him (Philemon 18). Somehow Onesimus came into contact with the apostle Paul while the latter was in prison (possibly in Rome), and through Paul's proclamation of the Gospel he became a Christian. After confessing to the apostle that he was a runaway slave, he was directed by Paul to return to his master and become "useful" again. In order to help pave the way for Onesimus' peaceful return home, Paul sent him on his way with a letter addressed to Philemon, a letter in which he urged Philemon to forgive his slave for having run away and "to receive him as you would receive me" (v. 17), "no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother" (v. 16). The letter was eventually included by the church as one of the books of the New Testament.

February 16 (birth date)

Philip Melanchthon, Confessor

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) was a brilliant student of the classics and a humanist scholar. In 1518 he was appointed to teach along with Martin Luther at the University of Wittenberg. At Luther's urging, Melanchthon began teaching theology and Scripture in addition to his courses in classical studies. In April of 1530, Emperor Charles V called an official meeting between the representative of Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism, hoping to effect a meeting of minds between two opposing groups. Since Luther was at that time under papal excommunication and an imperial ban, Melanchthon was assigned the duty of being the chief Lutheran representative at this meeting. He is especially remembered and honored as the author of the Augsburg Confession, which was officially presented by the German princes to the emperor on June 25, 1530, as the defining document of Lutheranism within Christendom. Melanchthon died on April 19, 1560.

February 18

Martin Luther, Doctor and Reformer

Martin Luther, born on November 10, 1483, in Eisleben, Germany, initially began studies leading toward a degree in law. However, after a close encounter with death, he switched to the study of theology, entered an Augustinian monastery, was ordained a priest in 1505, and received a doctorate in theology in 1512. As a professor at the newly-established University of Wittenberg, his scriptural studies led him to question many of the church's teachings and practices, especially the selling of indulgences. His refusal to back down from his convictions resulted in his excommunication in 1521. Following a period of seclusion at the Wartburg castle, Luther returned to Wittenberg, where he spent the rest of his life preaching and teaching, translating the Scriptures, and writing hymns and numerous theological treatises. He is remembered and honored for his lifelong emphasis on the biblical truth that for Christ's sake God declares us righteous by grace through faith alone. He died on February 18, 1546, while visiting the town of his birth.

February 23

Polycarp of Smyrna, Pastor and Martyr

Born c. 69, Polycarp was a central figure in the early church. A disciple of the evangelist John, he linked the first generation of believers to later Christians. After serving for many years as bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp was arrested, tried, and executed for his faith on February 23, c. 156. An eyewitness narrative of his death, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, continues to encourage believers in times of persecution.

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March

March 7

Perpetua and Felicitas, Martyrs

At the beginning of the third century, the Roman emperor Septimus Severus forbade conversions to Christianity. Among those disobeying that edict were Perpetua, a young noblewoman, and her maidservant Felicitas. Both were jailed at Carthage in North Africa along with three fellow Christians. During their imprisonment, Perpetua and Felicitas witnessed to their faith with such conviction that the officer in charge became a follower of Jesus. After making arrangements for the well-being of their children, Perpetua and Felicitas were executed on March 7, 203. Tradition holds that Perpetua showed mercy to her captors by falling on a sword because they could not bear to put her to death. The story of this martyrdom has been told ever since as an encouragement to persecuted Christians.

March 17

Patrick, Missionary to Ireland

Patrick is one of the best-known of the missionary saints. Born to a Christian family in Britain around the year 389, he was captured as a teenager by raiders, taken to Ireland, and forced to serve as a herdsman. After six years he escaped and found his way to a monastery community in France. Ordained a bishop in 432, he made his way back to Ireland, where he spent the rest of his long life spreading the Gospel and organizing Christian communities. He strongly defended the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in a time when it was not popular to do so. His literary legacy includes his autobiography, *Confessio*, and several prayers and hymns still used in the church today. Patrick died around the year 466.

March 31

Joseph, Patriarch

Joseph was the son of the patriarch Jacob (February 5) and Rachel. The favorite son of his father, he incurred the jealousy of his older brothers, who sold him into slavery in Egypt and told their father he was dead (Genesis 37). In Egypt he became the chief servant in the home of Potiphar, a military official. Because Joseph refused to commit adultery with his master's wife, he was unjustly accused of attempted rape and thrown into jail (Genesis 39). Years later, he interpreted dreams for Pharaoh, who then freed him from prison and placed him in charge of the entire country. When his brothers came from Canaan to Egypt in search of food, they did not recognize him. He eventually revealed his identity to them, forgave them, and invited both them and his father to live in Egypt. He is especially remembered and honored for his moral uprightness (Genesis 39) and for his willingness to forgive his brothers (Genesis 45 and 50).

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April

April 6

Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Durer, Artists

Lucas Cranach (1472-1557), a close friend of Martin Luther, was a celebrated painter of portraits and altar pieces and a producer of woodcuts of religious subjects. Albrecht Durer (1471-1528), a native of Nuernberg, Germany, was one of the most learned of Renaissance artists and also an ardent admirer of Martin Luther. His paintings and woodcuts include examples of the splendor of creation and skilled portrayals of biblical narratives. Both Cranach and Durer are remembered and honored for the grandeur of their works of art that depict the glory and majesty and the grace and mercy of the triune God.

April 20

Johannes Bugenhagen

Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558), from Pomerania in northern Germany, was appointed pastor of Wittenberg in 1523 through the efforts of Martin Luther and thus served as Luther's own pastor and confessor. One of the greatest scholars of the Reformation era, he helped translate the New Testament into Low German and wrote a commentary on the Psalms. He also worked to organize the Lutheran Church in northern Germany and Denmark, journeying to Copenhagen where he crowned both King and Queen and consecrated seven men to the offices of superintendent and bishop.

April 21

Anselm of Canterbury

Born in Italy in 1033, Anselm is most closely associated with England, where he served as Archbishop of Canterbury for many years. A brilliant scholar and writer, Anselm used his political skills with the British kings on behalf of the established Christian church, affirming that it is the leadership of the church and not the state which has the responsibility of establishing structure and maintaining order among the clergy. Anselm is especially remembered for his classic book, *Why God Became Man*, which taught that the reason for the incarnation was that Jesus, the Son of God, would suffer and die in place of sinners.

April 24

Johann Walter, Kantor

Johann Walter (1496-1570) began service at the age of 21 as a composer and bass singer in the court chapel of Frederick the Wise. In 1524, he published a collection of hymns arranged according to the church year. It was well received and served as the model for numerous subsequent hymnals. In addition to serving for 30 years as kantor (church musician) in the cities of Torgau and Dresden, he also assisted Martin Luther in the preparation of the *Deutsche Messe* (1526). Walter is remembered as the first Lutheran kantor and composer of church music.

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May

May 2

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius was born in Alexandria in Egypt in A.D. 295. He served as a church leader in a time of great controversy and ecclesiastical disagreements. At the Council of Nicaea in 325, he defended Christian orthodoxy against the proponents of the Arian heresy, which denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. During his 45-year tenure as bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius wrote numerous works that defended the orthodox teaching. His enemies had him exiled five times; on two occasions he was almost murdered. Yet Athanasius remained steadfast and ended his days restored fully to his church responsibilities. The Athanasian Creed, though not composed by Athanasius, is named in his honor because it confesses the doctrinal orthodoxy he championed throughout his life.

May 4

Friedrich Wyneken, Pastor and Missionary

Friedrich Wyneken is one of the founding fathers of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, along with C.F.W. Walther and Wilhelm Sihler. Born in 1810 in Germany, he came to Baltimore in 1838 and shortly thereafter accepted a call to be the pastor of congregations in Friedheim and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Supported by Wilhelm Loehe's mission society, Wyneken served as an itinerant missionary in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan, particularly among Native Americans. Together with Loehe and Sihler, he founded Concordia Theological Seminary in 1846 in Fort Wayne, Ind. He later served as the second president of the LCMS during a period of significant growth (1850-64). His leadership strongly influenced the confessional character of the LCMS and its commitment to an authentic Lutheran witness.

May 5

Frederick the Wise

Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony from 1486 to 1525, was Martin Luther's sovereign in the early years of the Reformation. Were it not for Frederick, there might not have been a Lutheran Reformation. Born in Torgau in 1463, he became so well known for his skill in political diplomacy and his sense of justice and fairness that he was called "the Wise" by his subjects. Though he never met Luther, Frederick repeatedly protected and provided for him. In all likelihood he saved the reformer from a martyr's fate. Frederick refused the pope's demand to extradite Luther to Rome for a heresy trial in 1518. When Emperor Charles V declared Luther an outlaw in 1521 at the Diet of Worms, Frederick provided sanctuary for Luther at the Wartburg castle. On his deathbed, Frederick received the Lord's Supper in both kinds--a clear confession of the evangelical faith.

May 7

C.F.W. Walther

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1811-87), the father of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, served as its first president from 1847 to 1850 and then again from 1864 to 1878. In 1839 he emigrated from Saxony, Germany, with other Lutherans, who settled in Missouri. He served as pastor of several congregations in St. Louis, founded Concordia Seminary, and in 1847 was instrumental in the formation of the LCMS (then called the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States). Walther worked tirelessly to promote confessional Lutheran teaching and doctrinal agreement among all

Lutherans in the United States. He was a prolific writer and speaker. Among his most influential works are Church and Ministry and The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel.

May 9

Job, Patriarch

Job was a blameless and upright man who came from Uz (Job 1:1), a land northeast of Canaan. The Book of Job examines the depths of his faith, which was severely tested through the sufferings God permitted. Despite the sudden death of his ten children and the loss of all his wealth and his health, Job refused to curse God: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:21). Still, in the midst of his tribulations Job questioned the meaning and purpose of suffering to the point of asserting his own righteousness (34:5-6). Finally, the Lord revealed that a man cannot know the mysteries of God (chapters 38-41). Job's faith in his Redeemer and the resurrection prevailed (19:25-27). In the end the Lord restored his wealth and blessed him with another seven sons and three daughters.

May 11

Cyril and Methodius, Missionaries to the Slavs

Cyril (826-69) and Methodius (c. 815-85) were brothers who came from a Greek family in Thessalonica. The younger brother took the name "Cyril" when he became a monk in 868. After ordination, Cyril became librarian at the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople. In 862 the brothers were sent by the emperor as missionaries to what is now the Czech republic, where they taught in the native Slavic tongue. Cyril invented the alphabet today known today as "Cyrillic," which provided a written language for the liturgy and Scriptures for the Slavic peoples. This use of the vernacular established an important principle for evangelical missions.

May 21

Constantine, Emperor, and Helena, his mother

Constantine I served as Roman Emperor from A.D. 306 to 337. During his reign the persecution of Christians was forbidden by the Edict of Milan in 312, and ultimately the faith gained full imperial support. Constantine took an active interest in the life and teachings of the church and called the Council of Nicaea in 325 at which orthodox Christianity was defined and defended. His mother, Helena (ca. 255-329), strongly influenced Constantine. Her great interest in locating the holy sites of the Christian faith led her to become one of the first Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. Her research led to the identification of Biblical locations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and beyond, which are still maintained as places of worship today.

May 24

Esther

Esther is the heroine of the biblical book that bears her name. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means "myrtle." Her beauty, charm, and courage served her well as queen to King Ahasuerus. In that role she was able to save her people from the mass extermination that Haman, the king's chief advisor, had planned (2:19--4:17). Esther's efforts to uncover the plot resulted in the hanging of Haman on the very same gallows that he had built for Mordecai, her uncle and guardian. Then the king named Mordecai minister of state in Haman's place. This story is an example of how God intervenes on behalf of his people to deliver them from evil, as here through Esther he preserved the Old Testament people through whom the Messiah would come.

May 25

The Venerable Bede

Bede (673-735) was the last of the early church fathers and the first to compile the history of the English church. Born in Northumbria, Bede was given by his parents to a monastery in Northern England at the age of seven. The most learned man of his time, he was a prolific writer of history, whose careful use of sources provided a model for historians in the Middle Ages. Known best for his book, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, he was also a profound interpreter of Scripture; his commentaries are still fresh today. His most famous disciple, Cuthbert, reported that Bede was working on a translation of John's Gospel into English when death came, and that he died with the words of the *Gloria Patri* on his lips. He received the title "Venerable" within two generations of his death and is buried in Durham Cathedral as one of England's greatest saints.

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June

June 1

Justin, Martyr

Born at the beginning of the second century, Justin was raised in a pagan family. He was student of philosophy who converted to the Christian faith and became a teacher in Ephesus and Rome. After refusing to make pagan sacrifices, he was arrested, tried and executed, along with six other believers. The official Roman court proceedings of his trial before Rusticius, a Roman prelate, document his confession of faith. The account of his martyrdom became a source of great encouragement to the early Christian community. Much of what we know of early liturgical practice comes from Justin.

June 5

Boniface of Mainz

Boniface was born in the late seventh century in England. Though he was educated, became a monk, and was ordained as a presbyter in England, he was inspired by the example of others to become a missionary. Upon receiving a papal commission in 719 to work in Germany, Boniface devoted himself to planting, organizing, and reforming churches and monasteries in Hesse, Thuringia, and Bavaria. After becoming an archbishop, Boniface was assigned to the See of Mainz in 743. Ten years later he resigned his position to engage in mission work in the Netherlands. On June 5, 754, while awaiting a group of converts for confirmation, Boniface and his companions were murdered by a band of pagans. Boniface is known as the apostle and missionary to the Germans.

June 12

The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325

The first Council of Nicaea was convened in the early summer of 325 by the Roman Emperor Constantine at what is today Isnuk, Turkey. The emperor presided at the opening of the council. The council ruled against the Arians, who taught that Jesus was not the eternal Son of God but was created by the Father and was called Son of God because of his righteousness. The chief opponents of the Arians were Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, and his deacon, Athanasius. The council confessed the eternal divinity of Jesus and adopted the earliest version of the Nicene Creed, which in its entirety was adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

June 14

Elisha

Elisha, son of Shaphat of the tribe of Issachar, was the prophet of God to the northern kingdom of Israel ca. 849-786 B.C. Upon seeing his mentor Elijah taken up into heaven, Elisha assumed the prophetic office and took up the mantle of his predecessor. Like Elijah, Elisha played an active role in political affairs. He also performed many miracles, such as curing the Syrian army commander Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27) and restoring life to the son of a Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37). A vocal opponent of Baal worship, Elisha lived up to his name, which means "my God is salvation."

June 25

The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession

The Augsburg Confession, the principal doctrinal statement of the theology of Martin Luther and the Lutheran reformers, was written largely by Phillip Melanchthon. At its heart it confesses the justification of sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, for the sake of Christ alone. Signed by leaders of many German cities and regions, the confession was formally presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at Augsburg, Germany, on June 25, 1530. A few weeks later Roman Catholic authorities rejected the Confession, which Melanchthon defended in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531). In 1580 the Unaltered Augsburg Confession was included in the Book of Concord.

June 26

Jeremiah

The prophet Jeremiah was active as God's prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah ca. 627 to 582 B.C. As a prophet he predicted, witnessed, and lived through the Babylonian siege and eventual destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. In his preaching he often used symbols, such as an almond rod (Jer. 1:11-14), wine jars (13:12-14), and a potter at work (18:1-17). His entire prophetic ministry was a sermon, communicating through word and deed God's anger toward his rebellious people. He suffered repeated rejection and persecution by his countrymen. As far as can be known, he died in Egypt, having been taken there forcibly. He is remembered and honored for fearlessly calling God's people to repentance.

June 27

Cyril of Alexandria, Pastor and Confessor

Cyril (ca. A.D. 376-444) became archbishop of Alexandria, Egypt, in 412. Throughout his career he defended a number of orthodox doctrines, among them the teaching that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is "rightly called and truly is the Mother of God"--Theotokos, "the God-bearer" (Formula of Concord, VIII, Ep VIII, 12). In 431 the Council of Ephesus affirmed this teaching that the Son of Mary is also true God. The writings of Cyril on the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ reveal him to be one of the most able theologians of his time. Cyril's Christology influenced subsequent church councils and was a primary source for Lutheran confessional writings.

June 28

Irenaeus of Lyons, Pastor

Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 130-200), believed to be a native of Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey), studied in Rome and later became pastor in Lyons, France. Around 177, while Irenaeus was away from Lyons, a fierce persecution of Christians led to the martyrdom of his bishop. Upon Irenaeus' return, he became bishop of Lyons. Among his most famous writings is a work condemning heresies, especially Gnosticism, which denied the goodness of creation. In opposition, Irenaeus confessed that God has redeemed his creation through the incarnation of the Son. Irenaeus also affirmed the teachings of the Scriptures handed down to and through him as being normative for the Church.

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July

July 6

Isaiah

Isaiah son of Amoz is considered to be the greatest of the writing prophets and is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament prophet. His name means “Yahweh [the Lord] saves.” Isaiah prophesied to the people of Jerusalem and Judah from about 740 B.C. to 700 B.C. and was a contemporary of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Isaiah was a fierce preacher of God's Law, condemning the sin of idolatry. He was also a comforting proclaimer of the Gospel, repeatedly emphasizing God's grace and forgiveness. For this he is sometimes called the “Evangelist of the Old Testament.” No prophet more clearly prophesied about the coming Messiah and his saving kingdom. He foretold the Messiah's miraculous birth (Is 7:14; 9:6), his endless reign (Is 2:1–5; 11:1–16), and his public ministry (Is 61:1–3), but most notably his “Suffering Servant” role and atoning death (52:13–53:12). The apostle John's description of Isaiah, that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him (John 12:41), is an apt summary of Isaiah's prophetic ministry.

July 16

Ruth

Ruth of Moab, the subject of the biblical book that bears her name, is an inspiring example of God's grace. Although she was a Gentile, God made her the great grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17), and an ancestress of Jesus himself (Mt 1:5). A famine in Israel led Elimelech and Naomi of Bethlehem to emigrate to the neighboring nation of Moab with their two sons. The sons married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth, but after about ten years, Elimelech and his sons died (Ruth 1:1–5). Naomi then decided to return to Bethlehem and urged her daughters-in-law to return to their families. Orpah listened to Naomi's but Ruth refused, replying with the stirring words: “Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). After Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, Boaz, a close relative of Elimelech, agreed to be Ruth's “redeemer” (Ruth 3:7–13; 4:9–12). He took her as his wife, and Ruth gave birth to Obed, the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:13–17), thus preserving the Messianic seed. Ruth's kindness and selfless loyalty toward Naomi, and her faith in Naomi's God, have long endeared her to the faithful and redounded to God's praise for his merciful choice of one so unexpected.

July 20

Elijah

The prophet Elijah, whose name means, “My God is Yahweh [the Lord],” prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel, mostly during the reign of Ahab (874–853 B.C.). Ahab, under the influence of his pagan wife Jezebel, had encouraged the worship of Baal throughout his kingdom, even as Jezebel sought to get rid of the worship of Yahweh. Elijah was called by God to denounce this idolatry and to call the people of Israel back to the worship of Yahweh as the only true God (as he did in 1 Kgs 18:20–40). Elijah was a rugged and imposing figure, living in the wilderness and dressing in a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt (2 Kgs 1:8). He was a prophet mighty in word and deed. Many miracles were done through Elijah, including the raising of the dead (1 Kgs 17:17–24), and the effecting of a long drought in Israel (1 Kgs 17:1). At the end of his ministry, he was taken up into heaven as Elisha, his successor, looked on (2 Kgs 2:11). Later on the prophet Malachi proclaimed that Elijah would return before the coming of the Messiah (Mal 4:5–6), a prophecy that was fulfilled in the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist (Mt 11:14).

July 21

Ezekiel

Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was a priest, called by God to be a prophet to the exiles during the Babylonian captivity (Ez. 1:3). In 597 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army brought the king of Judah and thousands of the best citizens of Jerusalem—including Ezekiel—to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:8–16). Ezekiel's priestly background profoundly stamped his prophecy, as the holiness of God and the Temple figure prominently in his messages (for example, Ezekiel 9–10 and 40–48). From 593 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied the inevitability of divine judgment on Jerusalem, on the exiles in Babylon, and on seven nations that surrounded Israel (Ezekiel 1–32). Jerusalem would fall, and the exiles would not quickly return, as a just consequence of their sin. Once word reached Ezekiel that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, his message became one of comfort and hope. Through him God promised that his people would experience future restoration, renewal and revival in the coming Messianic kingdom (Ezekiel 33–48). Much of the strange symbolism of Ezekiel's prophecies was later employed in the Revelation to St. John.

July 28

Johann Sebastian Bach, Kantor

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) is acknowledged as one of the most famous and gifted of all composers past and present in the entire western world. Orphaned at the age of ten, Bach was mostly self-taught in music. His professional life as conductor, performer, composer, teacher, and organ consultant began at the age of 19 in the town of Arnstadt and ended in Leipzig, where for the last 27 years of his life he was responsible for all the music in the city's four Lutheran churches. In addition to his being a superb keyboard artist, the genius and bulk of Bach's vocal and instrumental compositions remain overwhelming. A devout and devoted Lutheran, he is especially honored in Christendom for his lifelong insistence that his music was written primarily for the liturgical life of the church to glorify God and edify his people.

July 29

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany were disciples with whom Jesus had a special bond of love and friendship. John's Gospel records that “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus” (John 11:15). On one occasion Martha welcomed Jesus into their home for a meal. While she did all the work, Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to his Word and was commended by Jesus for choosing the “good portion which will not be taken away from her” (Lk 10:38–42). When their brother Lazarus died, Jesus spoke to Martha this beautiful Gospel promise: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live? (John 11:25–27). Ironically, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the death, the Jews became more determined than ever to kill Jesus (John 11:39–54). made Jesus' enemies more determined than ever to kill him (John 11:39–54). Six days before Jesus was crucified, Mary anointed his feet with a very expensive fragrant oil and wiped them with her hair, not knowing at the time that she was doing it in preparation for Jesus' burial (John 12:1–8; Mt 26:6-13).

July 30

Robert Barnes, Confessor and Martyr

Remembered as a devoted disciple of Martin Luther, Robert Barnes is considered to be among the first Lutheran martyrs. Born in 1495, Barnes became the prior of the Augustinian monastery at Cambridge, England. Converted to Lutheran teaching, he shared his insights with many English scholars through writings and personal contacts. During a time of exile to Germany he became a friend of Luther and later wrote a Latin summary of the main doctrines of the Augsburg Confession titled "Sententiae." Upon his return to England, Barnes shared his Lutheran doctrines and views in person with King Henry VIII and initially had a positive reception. In 1529 Barnes was named royal chaplain. The changing political and ecclesiastical climate in his native country, however, claimed him as a victim; he was burned at the stake in Smithfield in 1540. His final confession of faith was published by Luther, who called his friend Barnes "our good, pious table companion and guest of our home, this holy martyr, Saint Robertus."

July 31

Joseph of Arimathea

This Joseph, mentioned in all four Gospels, come from a small village called Arimathea in the hill country of Judea. He was a respected member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious council in Jerusalem. He was presumably wealthy, since he owned his own unused tomb in a garden not far from the site of Jesus' crucifixion (Mt 27:60). Joseph, a man waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went to Pontius Pilate after the death of Jesus and asked for Jesus' body (Mk 15:43). Along with Nicodemus, Joseph removed the body and placed it in the tomb (John 19:39). Their public devotion contrasted greatly to the fearfulness of the disciples who had abandoned Jesus.

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August

August 3

Joanna, Mary, and Salome--Myrrhbearers

Known in some traditions as “the faithful women,” the visit of these three persons and other women to the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter morning is noted in the Gospel records of Matthew (28:1), Mark (16:1), and Luke (24:10). Joanna was the wife of Cuza, a steward in Herod's household (Lk. 8:3). Mary, the mother of James (the son of Alphaeus), was another of the women who faithfully provided care for Jesus and His disciples from the time of His Galilean ministry through His burial after the crucifixion. Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt. 27:56), joined with the women both at the cross and in the bringing of the spices to the garden tomb. These “faithful women” have been honored in the church through the centuries as examples of humble and devoted service to the Lord.

August 10

Laurence, Deacon and Martyr

Early in the third century A.D., Laurence, most likely born in Spain, made his way to Rome. There he was appointed chief of the seven deacons and was given the responsibility to manage church property and finances. The emperor at the time, who thought that the church had valuable things worth confiscating, ordered Laurence to produce the “treasures of the church.” Laurence brought before the emperor the poor whose lives had been touched by Christian charity. He was then jailed and eventually executed in the year 258 by being roasted on a gridiron. His martyrdom left a deep impression on the young church. Almost immediately, the date of His death, August 10, became a permanent fixture on the early commemorative calendar of the Church.

August 16

Isaac

Isaac, the long promised and awaited son of Abraham and Sarah, was born when his father was 100 and his mother 91. The announcement of his birth brought both joy and laughter to his aged parents (so the name “Isaac,” which means “laughter”). As a young man, Isaac accompanied his father to Mount Moriah, where Abraham, in obedience to God's command, prepared to sacrifice him as a burnt offering. But God intervened, sparing Isaac's life and providing a ram as a substitute offering (Gen. 22:1–14), and thus pointing to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world. Isaac was given in marriage to Rebekah (24:15), and they had twin sons, Esau and Jacob (25:19–26). In his old age Isaac, blind and feeble, wanted to give his blessing and chief inheritance to his favorite—and eldest—son, Esau. But through deception Rebekah had Jacob receive them instead, resulting in years of family enmity. Isaac died at the age of 180 and was buried by his sons, who by then had become reconciled, in the family burial cave of Machpelah (35:28–29).

August 17

Johann Gerhard, Theologian

Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) was a great Lutheran theologian in the tradition of Martin Luther (1483–1546) and Martin Chemnitz (1522–86) and the most influential of the 17th-century dogmatists. His monumental *Loci Theologici* (23 large volumes) is still considered by many to be a definitive statement of Lutheran orthodoxy. Gerhard was born in Quedlinburg, Germany. At the age of 15 he was stricken with a life-threatening illness. This experience, along with guidance from his pastor, Johann Arndt, marked a turning point in his life. He devoted the rest of his life to theology. He became a professor at the University of Jena and served many years as the Superintendent of Heldberg. Gerhard was a man of

deep evangelical piety and love for Jesus. He wrote numerous books on exegesis, theology, devotional literature, history, and polemics. His sermons continue to be widely published and read.

August 19

Bernard of Clairvaux, Hymnwriter and Theologian

A leader in Christian Europe in the first half of the 11th century A.D., Bernard is honored in his native France and around the world. Born into a noble family in Burgundy in 1090, Bernard left the affluence of his heritage and entered the monastery of Citeaux at the age of 22. After two years he was sent to start a new monastic house at Clairvaux. His work there was blessed in many ways. The monastery at Clairvaux grew in mission and service, eventually establishing some 68 daughter houses. Bernard is remembered for his charity and political abilities, but especially for his preaching and hymn composition. The hymn texts "O Jesus, King Most Wonderful" and "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" are part of the heritage of the faith left by Saint Bernard.

August 20

Samuel

Samuel, last of the Old Testament judges and first of the prophets (after Moses), lived during the 11th century B.C. The child of Elkanah, an Ephraimite, and his wife Hannah, Samuel was from early on consecrated by his parents for sacred service and trained in the house of the Lord at Shiloh by Eli the priest. Samuel's authority as a prophet was established by God (1 Sam. 3:20). He anointed Saul to be Israel's first king (10:1). Later, as a result of Saul's disobedience to God, Samuel repudiated Saul's leadership and then anointed David to be king in place of Saul (16:13). Samuel's loyalty to God, his spiritual insight, and his ability to inspire others made him one of Israel's great leaders.

August 27

Monica, Faithful Mother

A native of North Africa, Monica (A.D. 333–387) was the devoted mother of Saint Augustine. Throughout her life she sought the spiritual welfare of her children, especially that of her brilliant son, Augustine. Widowed at a young age, she devoted herself to her family, praying many years for Augustine's conversion. When Augustine left North Africa to go to Italy, she followed him to Rome and then to Milan. There she had the joy of witnessing her son's conversion to the Christian faith. Weakened by her travels, Monica died at Ostia, Italy on the journey she had hoped would take her back to her native Africa. On some church year calendars, Monica is remembered on May 4.

August 28

Augustine of Hippo, Doctor of the Church

Augustine was one of the greatest of the Latin church fathers and a significant influence in the formation of Western Christianity, including Lutheranism. Born in A.D. 354 in North Africa, Augustine's early life was distinguished by exceptional advancement as a teacher of rhetoric. In his book *Confessions* he describes his life before his conversion to Christianity, when he was drawn into the moral laxity of the day and fathered an illegitimate son. Through the devotion of his sainted mother Monica and the preaching of Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (339–97), Augustine was converted to the Christian faith. During the great Pelagian controversies of the 5th century, Augustine emphasized the unilateral grace of God in the salvation of mankind. Bishop and theologian at Hippo in North Africa from A.D. 395 until his death in 430, Augustine was a man of great intelligence, a fierce defender of the orthodox faith, and a prolific writer. In addition to the book *Confessions*, Augustine's book *City of God* had a great impact upon the church throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

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September

September 1

Joshua

Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, is first mentioned in Exodus 17 when he was chosen by Moses to fight the Amalakites, whom he defeated in a brilliant military victory. He was placed in charge of the Tent of Meeting (Ex. 33:11) and was a member of the tribal representatives sent to survey the land of Canaan (Num 13:8). Later, he was appointed by God to succeed Moses as Israel's commander-in-chief. He eventually led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land and directed the Israelites' capture of Jericho. He is remembered especially for his final address to the Israelites, in which he challenged them to serve God faithfully (Josh 24:1–27), concluding with the memorable words, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”(24:15).

September 2

Hannah

Hannah was the favored wife of Elkanah, the Ephraimite, and the devout mother of the prophet Samuel. He was born to her after years of bitter barrenness (1 Sam 1:6–8) and fervent prayers for a son (1:9–18). After she weaned her son, Hannah expressed her gratitude by returning him for service in the House of the Lord at Shiloh (1:24–28). Her prayer (psalm) of thanksgiving (2:1–10) begins with the words, “My heart exults in Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord.” This song foreshadows the Magnificat, the Song of Mary centuries later (Lk 1:46–55). The name Hannah derives from the Hebrew word for “grace.” She is remembered and honored for joyfully having kept the vow she made before her son's birth and offering him for lifelong service to God.

September 3

Gregory the Great, Pastor

One of the great leaders in Europe at the close of the sixth century, Gregory served in both the secular and sacred arenas of his era. As mayor of Rome, he restored economic vitality to his native city, which had been weakened by enemy invasions, pillage, and plague. After he sold his extensive properties and donated the proceeds to help the poor, he entered into full-time service in the Church. On September 3, 590 A.D., Gregory was elected to lead the church in Rome. As Bishop of Rome he oversaw changes and growth in the areas of church music and liturgical development, missionary outreach to northern Europe, and the establishment of a church-year calendar still used by many churches in the western World today. His book on pastoral care became a standard until the 20th century.

September 4

Moses

Moses was born in Egypt several generations after Joseph brought his father Jacob and his brothers there to escape a famine in the land of Canaan. The descendants of Jacob had been enslaved by the Egyptians and were ordered to kill all their male children. When Moses was born his mother put him in a basket and set it afloat in the Nile River. He was found by Pharaoh's daughter and raised by her as her own son (Exod 2:1–10). At age 40 Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster and fled to the land of Midian, where he worked as a shepherd for forty years. Then the Lord called him to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh, “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness” (5:1). Eventually Pharaoh gave in and, after the Israelites celebrated the first Passover, Moses led them out. At the Red Sea the Egyptian army was destroyed and the Israelites passed to safety on dry land (Exodus 12-15). At

Mount Sinai they were given the Law and erected the Tabernacle (Exodus 19-40). But because of disobedience they had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Moses himself was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, although God allowed him to view it (Deuteronomy 34). In the New Testament Moses is referred to as lawgiver and prophet. The first five books of the Bible are attributed to him.

September 5

Zechariah and Elizabeth

Zachariah and Elizabeth were “righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord” (Lk 1:6). Zechariah, a priest in the Jerusalem temple, was greeted by the angel Gabriel who announced that Zechariah and Elizabeth would become parents of a son. Initially Zechariah did not believe Gabriel's announcement because of their old age. For his disbelief, Zechariah became unable to speak. After their son was born, Elizabeth named her son John. Zechariah confirmed his wife's choice and his ability to speak was restored. In response, he sang the Benedictus, a magnificent summary of God's promises in the Old Testament and a prediction of John's work as forerunner to Jesus (Lk. 1:68–79). Zechariah and Elizabeth are remembered as examples of faithfulness and piety.

September 16

Cyprian of Carthage, Pastor and Martyr

Cyprian (A.D. ca. 200–258), was acclaimed bishop of the north African city in Carthage around 248. During the persecution of the roman Emperor Decius, Cyprian fled Carthage but returned two years later. He was then forced to deal with the problem of Christians who had lapsed from their faith under persecution and now wanted to return to the Church. It was decided that these lapsed Christians could be restored but that their restoration could take place only after a period of penance that demonstrated their faithfulness. During the persecution under Emperor Valerian, Cyprian at first went into hiding but later gave himself up to the authorities. He was beheaded for the faith in Carthage in the year 258.

September 22

Jonah

A singular prophet among the many in the Old Testament, Jonah the son of Amittai was born about an hour's walk from the town of Nazareth. The focus of his prophetic ministry was the call to preach at Nineveh, the capital of pagan Assyria (Jonah 1:1). His reluctance to respond and God's insistence that his call be heeded is the story of the book that bears Jonah's name. Although the swallowing and disgorging of Jonah by the great fish is the most remembered detail of his life, it is addressed in only three verses of the book (1:17; 2:1, 10). Throughout the book, the important theme is how God deals compassionately sinners. Jonah's three-day sojourn in the belly of the fish is mentioned by Jesus as a sign of his own death, burial, and resurrection (Mt. 12:39–41).

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September 30

Jerome, Translator of Holy Scripture

Jerome was born in a little village on the Adriatic Sea around the year A.D. 345. At a young age he went to study in Rome, where he was baptized. After extensive travels, he chose the life of a monk and spent five years in the Syrian desert. There he learned Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament. After ordination at Antioch and visits to Rome and Constantinople, Jerome settled in Bethlehem. From the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, he used his ability with languages to translate the Bible into Latin, the common language of his time. This translation, called the Vulgate, was the authoritative version of the Bible in the western Church world for over 1,000 years. Considered one of the great scholars of the early church, Jerome died on September 30, 420. He was originally interred at Bethlehem but his remains were eventually taken to Rome.

October

October 7

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, Pastor

Moving from the Old World to the New, Muhlenberg established the shape of Lutheran parishes for America during a 45-year ministry in Pennsylvania. Born at Einbeck, Germany, in 1711, he came to the American colonies in 1742. A tireless traveler, Muhlenberg helped to found many Lutheran congregations and was the guiding force behind the first American Lutheran synod, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, founded in 1748. He valued the role of music in Lutheran worship (often serving as his own organist) and was also the guiding force in preparing the first American Lutheran liturgy (also in 1748). Muhlenberg is remembered as a church leader, a journalist, a liturgist, and—above all—a pastor to the congregation in his charge. He died in 1787, leaving behind a large extended family and a lasting heritage: American Lutheranism.

October 9

Abraham, Patriarch

Abraham (known early in his life as Abram) was called by God to become the father of a great nation (Genesis 12). At the age of 75 and in obedience to God's command, he, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot moved southwest from the town of Haran to the land of Canaan. There God established a covenant with Abraham (15:18), promising the land of Canaan to his descendants. At the age of 100 Abraham and Sarah were finally blessed with Isaac, the son long promised to them by God. Abraham demonstrated supreme obedience when God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. God spared the young man's life only at the last moment and provided a ram as a substitute offering (22:1–19). Abraham died at the age of 175 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah, which he had purchased earlier as a burial site for Sarah. He is especially honored as the first of the three great Old Testament Patriarchs—and for his “righteousness before God through faith” (Romans 4:1–12).

October 11

Philip, Deacon

Philip, also called the Evangelist (Acts 21:8), was one of the seven men appointed to assist in the work of the twelve Apostles and of the rapidly growing early church by overseeing the distribution of food to the poor (6:1–6). Following the martyrdom of Stephen, Philip proclaimed the Gospel in Samaria and led Simon the Sorcerer to become a believer in Christ (8:4–13). He was also instrumental in bringing about the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–39), through whom Philip became indirectly responsible for bringing the Good News of Jesus to the people on the continent of Africa. In the town of Caesarea he was host for several days to the Apostle Paul, who stopped there on his last journey to Jerusalem (21:8–15).

October 17

Ignatius of Antioch, Pastor and Martyr

Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in Syria at the beginning of the second century A.D. and an early Christian martyr. Near the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (98–117), Ignatius was arrested, taken in chains to Rome, and eventually thrown to the wild beasts in the arena. On the way to Rome, he wrote letters to the Christians at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, and also to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. In the letters, which are beautifully pastoral in tone, Ignatius

warned against certain heresies (false teachings). He also repeatedly stressed the full humanity and deity of Christ, the reality of Christ's bodily presence in the Lord's Supper, the supreme authority of the bishop, and the unity of the Church found in her bishops. Ignatius was the first to use the word catholic to describe the universality of the Church. His Christ-centeredness, his courage in the face of martyrdom, and his zeal for the truth over against false doctrine are a lasting legacy to the Church.

October 25

Dorcas, Lydia, and Phoebe, Faithful Women

These women were exemplary Christians who demonstrated their faith by their material support of the Church. Dorcas (also known as Tabitha) was well-known and much loved for her acts of charity in the city of Joppa, especially for her making clothes for the poor. When Dorcas died suddenly, the members of her congregation sent to the neighboring city of Lydda for the Apostle Peter, who came and raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36–41). Lydia was a woman of Thyatira, who worked at Philippi selling a famous purple dye that was so much in demand in the ancient world. She was also a “worshiper of God” at the local synagogue. When the Apostle Paul encountered her in prayer among other proselyte women, his preaching of the Word brought Lydia to faith in Christ. She and her friends thus became the nucleus of the Christian community in Philippi (16:13–15, 40). Phoebe was another faithful woman associated with the Apostle Paul. She was a deaconess from Cenchrae (the port of Corinth) whom Paul sent to the church in Rome with his Epistle to the Romans. In it he writes of her support for the work of the early Church (Rom 16:1).

October 26

Philipp Nicolai, Johann Heermann, and Paul Gerhardt, Hymnwriters

Philipp Nicolai (1556–1608) was a pastor in Germany during the Great Plague, which took the lives of 1,300 of his parishioners during a sixth-month period. In addition to his heroic pastoral ministry during that time of stress and sorrow, he wrote the texts for “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying” and “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright,” known, respectively, as the king and queen of the Lutheran chorales. Johann Heermann (1585–1647), also a German pastor, suffered from poor health as well as from the ravages of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). His hymn texts are noted for their tenderness and depth of feeling. Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676) was another Lutheran pastor who endured the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. By 1668 he lost his pastoral position in Berlin (for refusing to compromise his Lutheran convictions), and endured the death of four of his five children and his wife. He nevertheless managed to write 133 hymns, all of which reflect his firm faith. Along with Martin Luther he is regarded as one of Lutheranism's finest hymn writers.

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November

November 8

Johann von Staupitz, Luther's Father Confessor

Johann von Staupitz (ca. 1469–1524), vicar-general of the Augustinian Order in Germany and friend of Martin Luther, was born in Saxony. He studied at the universities in Leipzig and Cologne and served on the faculty at Cologne. In 1503 he was called by Frederick the Wise to serve as dean of the theological faculty at the newly founded University of Wittenberg. There he encouraged Luther to attain a doctorate in theology and appointed Luther as his successor to professor of Bible. During Luther's early struggles to understand God's grace, it was Staupitz who counseled Luther to focus on Christ and not on himself.

November 9

Martin Chemnitz, Pastor and Confessor

Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) is regarded after Martin Luther as the most important theologian in the history of the Lutheran Church. Chemnitz combined a penetrating intellect and an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Scripture and the church fathers with a genuine love for the church. When various doctrinal disagreements broke out after Luther's death in 1546, Chemnitz determined to give himself fully to the restoration of unity in the Lutheran Church. He became the leading spirit and principal author of the 1577 Formula of Concord, which settled the doctrinal disputes on the basis of the Scriptures and largely succeeded in restoring unity among Lutherans. Chemnitz also authored the four volume Examination of the Council of Trent (1565–1573), in which he rigorously subjected the teachings of this Roman Catholic Council to the judgment of Scripture and the ancient church fathers. The Examination became the definitive Lutheran answer to the Council of Trent, as well as a thorough exposition of the faith of the Augsburg Confession. A theologian and a churchman, Chemnitz was truly a gift of God to the Church.

November 11

Martin of Tours, Pastor

Born into a pagan family in what is now Hungary around the year A.D. 316, Martin grew up in Lombardy (Italy). Coming to the Christian faith as a young person, he began a career in the Roman army. But sensing a call to a church vocation, Martin left the military and became a monk, affirming that he was "Christ's soldier." Eventually, Martin was named bishop of Tours in western Gaul (France). He is remembered for his simple lifestyle and his determination to share the Gospel throughout rural Gaul. Incidentally, on St. Martin's Day in 1483, the one-day-old son of Hans and Margarete Luther was baptized and given the name "Martin" Luther.

November 14

Justinian, Christian Ruler and Confessor of Christ

Justinian was emperor of the East from A.D. 527 to 565 when the Roman Empire was in decline. With his beautiful and capable wife, Theodora, he restored splendor and majesty to the Byzantine court. During his reign the Empire experienced a renaissance, due in large part to his ambition, intelligence, and strong religious convictions. Justinian also attempted to bring unity to a divided church. He was a champion of orthodox Christianity and sought agreement among the parties in the Christological controversies of the day who were disputing the relation between the divine and human natures in the

Person of Christ. The Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in A.D. 533 was held during his reign and addressed this dispute. Justinian died in his eighties, not accomplishing his desire for an empire that was firmly Christian and orthodox.

November 19

Elizabeth of Hungary

Born in Pressburg, Hungary, in 1207, Elizabeth was the daughter of King Andrew II and his wife Gertrude. Given as a bride in an arranged political marriage, Elizabeth became the wife of Louis of Thuringia in Germany at the age of 14. She had a spirit of Christian generosity and charity, and the home she established for her husband and three children in the Wartburg Castle at Eisenach was known for its hospitality and family love. Elizabeth often supervised the care of the sick and needy and even gave up her bed to a leper at one time. Widowed at the age of 20, she made provisions for her children and entered into an austere life as a nun in the Order of Saint Francis. Her self-denial led to failing health and an early death in 1231 at the age of 24. Remembered for her self-sacrificing ways, Elizabeth is commemorated through the many hospitals named for her around the world.

November 23

Clement of Rome, Pastor

Clement (ca. A.D. 35–100) is remembered for having established the pattern of apostolic authority that governed the Christian Church during the first and second centuries. He also insisted on keeping Christ at the center of the Church's worship and outreach. In a letter to the Christians at Corinth, he emphasized the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection: "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ, realizing how precious it is to His Father, since it was poured out for our salvation and brought the grace of repentance to the whole world" (1 Clement 6:31). Prior to suffering a martyr's death by drowning, he displayed a steadfast, Christ-like love for God's redeemed people, serving as an inspiration to future generations to continue to build the Church on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with Christ as the one and only cornerstone.

November 29

Noah

Noah, the son of Lamech (Gen 5:30), was instructed by God to build an ark, in which his family would find security from the destructive waters of a devastating flood that God warned would come. Noah built the ark, and the rains descended. The entire earth was flooded destroying "every living thing that was on the face of the ground, both man and beast" (7:23). After the flood waters subsided, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. When Noah determined it was safe, and God confirmed it, he and his family and all the animals disembarked. Then Noah built an altar and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for having saved his family from destruction. A rainbow in the sky was declared by God to be a sign of His promise that never again would a similar flood destroy the entire earth (8:20). Noah is remembered and honored for his obedience, believing that God would do what He said He would.

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December

December 4

John of Damascus

John (ca. 675–749) is known as the great compiler and summarizer of the orthodox faith and the last great Greek theologian. Born in Damascus, John gave up an influential position in the Islamic court to devote himself to the Christian faith. Around 716 he entered a monastery outside of Jerusalem and was ordained a priest. When the Byzantine emperor Leo the Isaurian in 726 issued a decree forbidding images (icons), John forcefully resisted. In his Apostolic Discourses he argued for the legitimacy of the veneration of images, which earned him the condemnation of the Iconoclast Council in 754. John also wrote defenses of the orthodox faith against contemporary heresies. In addition, he was a gifted hymnwriter (“Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain”) and contributed to the liturgy of the Byzantine churches. His greatest work was the Fount of Wisdom which was a massive compendium of truth from previous Christian theologians, covering practically every conceivable doctrinal topic. John's summary of the orthodox faith left a lasting stamp on both the Eastern and Western churches.

December 6

Nicholas of Myra, Pastor

Of the many saints commemorated by the Christian Church, Nicholas (d. A.D. 342) is one of the best known. Very little is known historically of him, although there was a church of Saint Nicholas in Constantinople as early as the sixth century. Research has affirmed that there was a bishop by the name of Nicholas in the city of Myra in Lycia (part of Turkey today) in the fourth century. From that coastal location, legends about Nicholas have traveled throughout time and space. He is associated with charitable giving in many countries around the world and is portrayed as the rescuer of sailors, the protector of children, and the friend of people in distress or need. In commemoration of “Sinte Klaas” (Dutch for Saint Nicholas, in English “Santa Claus”), December 6 is a day for giving and receiving gifts in many parts of Europe.

December 7

Ambrose of Milan, Pastor and Hymnwriter

Born in Trier in A.D. 340, Ambrose was one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great). He was a prolific author of hymns, the most common of which is Veni, Redemptor gentium (“Savior of the Nations, Come”). His name is also associated with Ambrosian Chant, the style of chanting the ancient liturgy that took hold in the province of Milan. While serving as a civil governor, Ambrose sought to bring peace among Christians in Milan who were divided into quarreling factions. When a new bishop was to be elected in 374, Ambrose addressed the crowd, and someone cried out, “Ambrose, bishop!” The entire gathering gave their support. This acclaim of Ambrose, a 34-year-old catechumen, led to his baptism on December 7, after which he was consecrated bishop of Milan. A strong defender of the faith, Ambrose convinced the Roman emperor Gratian in 379 to forbid the Arian heresy in the West. At Ambrose's urging, Gratian's successor, Theodosius, also publicly opposed Arianism. Ambrose died on Good Friday, April 4, 397. As a courageous doctor and musician he upheld the truth of God's Word.

December 13

Lucia, Martyr

One of the victims of the great persecution under the Roman emperor Diocletian, Lucia met her death at Syracuse on the island of Sicily in the year A.D. 304, because of her Christian faith. Known for her charity, “Santa Lucia” (as she is called in Italy) gave away her dowry and remained a virgin until her execution by the sword. The name Lucia means “light,” and, because of that, festivals of light commemorating her became popular throughout Europe, especially in the Scandinavian countries. There her feast day corresponds with the time of year when there is the least amount of daylight. In artistic expression she is often portrayed in a white baptismal gown, wearing a wreath of candles on her head.

December 17

Daniel and the Three Young Men

Daniel the prophet and the Three Young Men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were among the leaders of the people of Judah who were taken into captivity in Babylon. Even in that foreign land they remained faithful to the one true God in their piety, prayer, and life. On account of such steadfast faithfulness in the face of pagan idolatry, the Three Young Men were thrown into a fiery furnace, from which they were saved by the Lord and emerged unharmed (Daniel 3). Similarly, Daniel was thrown into a pit of lions, from which he also was saved (Daniel 6). Blessed in all their endeavors by the Lord—and in spite of the hostility of some—Daniel and the Three Young Men were promoted to positions of leadership among the Babylonians (Dan 2:48–49; 3:30; 6:28). To Daniel in particular the Lord revealed the interpretation of dreams and signs that were given to King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar (Daniel 2, 4, 5). To Daniel himself the Lord gave visions of the end times.

December 19

Adam and Eve

Adam was the first man, made in the image of God and given dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:26). Eve was the first woman, formed from one of Adam's ribs to be his companion and helper (2:18–24). God placed them in the Garden of Eden to take care of the creation as his representatives. But they forsook God's Word and plunged the world into sin (3:1–7). For this disobedience God drove them from the Garden. Eve had to suffer the pain of childbirth and be subject to Adam; Adam had to toil amid thorns and thistles and return to the dust of the ground. Yet God promised that the woman's Seed would crush the serpent's head (3:8–24). Sin had entered God's perfect creation and changed it until God would restore it again through Christ. Eve is the mother of the human race, while Adam is representative of all humanity and the Fall, as St. Paul writes, “For in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

December 20

Katharina von Bora Luther

Katharina von Bora (1499–1552) was placed in a convent when still a child and became a nun in 1515. In April 1523 she and eight other nuns were rescued from the convent and brought to Wittenberg. There Martin Luther helped return some to their former homes and placed the rest in good families. Katharina and Martin were married on June 13, 1525. Their marriage was a happy one and blessed with six children. Katharina skillfully managed the Luther household, which always seemed to grow because of

his generous hospitality. After Luther's death in 1546, Katharina remained in Wittenberg but lived much of the time in poverty. She died in an accident while traveling with her children to Torgau in order to escape the plague.

December 29

David

David, the greatest of Israel's kings, ruled from about 1010 to 970 B.C. The events of his life are found in 1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2 and in 1 Chronicles 10—29. David was also gifted musically. He was skilled in playing the lyre and the author of no less than 73 psalms, including the beloved Psalm 23. His public and private character displayed a mixture of good (for example, his defeat of the giant Goliath, 1 Samuel 17) and evil (as in his adultery with Uriah's wife, followed by his murder of Uriah, 2 Samuel 11). David's greatness lay in his fierce loyalty to God as Israel's military and political leader, coupled with his willingness to acknowledge his sins and ask for God's forgiveness (2 Samuel 12; see also Psalm 51). It was under David's leadership that the people of Israel were united into a single nation with Jerusalem as its capital city.

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Original Source: LSB Lectionary Committee

Published by: LCMS Worship

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