

# Editorial:

## Special Issue Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Our “In Focus” segment of this special issue of *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture* includes three articles that address the joint Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Next year, on October 31, 2017, the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s Protestant Reformation will be celebrated. The precise date is symbolic: that was the day, according to tradition, when 95 Theses on indulgences were pinned to the door of the church of Wittenberg Castle in Saxony.

The authors of the three articles on the topic of this special issues are senior participants in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue in Germany and Italy. The focus of their articles are on the background

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to and content of the document: *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. This document is the product of the Lutheran-Catholic Commission for Unity working on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

The authors include Hubertus Blaumeiser, lecturer in dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University and a scholar in Martin Luther studies. He has been an advisor to the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, and is the author of numerous books and articles on Martin Luther and the ecumenical dialogue between Catholic and Lutheran theologians.

The second article is by Theodor Dieter, a Lutheran scholar and director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. His research focuses on the theology of Martin Luther, and he is also engaged in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue representing the Lutheran World Federation. He is a member of the working group of Protestant and Catholic theologians interpreting Luther’s 95 Theses, and is a member of the International Catholic-Lutheran Commission for Unity that wrote the document *From Conflict to Communion*.

The third article is by Wolfgang Thönissen, a Catholic scholar and executive director of the Johann Adam Möhler Institute for Ecumenism. He, like Professor Dieter, is a member of the International Catholic-Lutheran Commission for Unity and participated in the writing of the document. He is also professor of ecumenical theology in the theological faculty of the University of Paderborn.

Claritas is proud to present these article translated from the German and Italian as substantial scholarship in preparation for

the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. For introductions to these three articles, see In Focus below.

### To the Source

- **Gérard Rossé (Sophia University Institute): “Revisiting Chiara Lubich’s Paradise ’49 in Light of the Letter to the Ephesians, Part III: The Holy Spirit, the Son of God, and the Cosmos”**

This is the third in a four-part study by the author. In this article, he explores Chiara Lubich’s mystical writings in light of the Letter to the Ephesians, focusing on the Holy Spirit, the Risen Christ, the church, and the cosmos. The Holy Spirit is seen as creating the conditions for unity between persons, in the church and throughout the cosmos according to the pattern of the Trinity that shows the “mothering face of God.” The Risen Christ is presented in his cosmic dimension that brings creation to its eschatological recapitulation, a “marriage of the Uncreated and the created.” The Risen Christ within the church is presented in terms of his upward movement to its fulfilment (*pleroma*) in God, bringing in its recapitulation the fullness of life to humankind and all creation. In addressing these topics, the author quotes both the Letter to the Ephesians and the writings of Chiara Lubich.

### In Focus

- **Hubertus Blaumeiser (Gregorian University): “‘Re-formatio’: The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and Church Reform Today”**

This article begins by noting that historians are still unclear as to whether Luther pinned 95 Theses on indulgences to the door of the church of Wittenberg Castle. Many historians believe that what actually happened is that on October 31 Luther sent his reflections to Archbishop Albrecht of Brandenburg and then to his colleague theologians for an academic discussion, as was the custom in his day. The author explains that in these theses Luther argues against a clear abuse that had spread owing to economic and other interests with no intention to attack the pope or to provoke a division within the church. The author then describes how a break in church unity did come about because of a complex of historical and ecclesial circumstances and other factors. The author turns his focus on Luther’s critiques and the theological anthropology that underlies the problems Luther addresses. With this historical and theological background, the author turns to the document *From Conflict to Communion* and addresses the importance of Luther’s theology for both Lutherans and Catholics today as an opportunity for joint discoveries of commonalities and steps toward ecumenical communion.

- **Theodor Dieter (Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg): “From Conflict to Communion: Introducing the Document of the International Catholic-Lutheran Commission for Unity in Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017”**

This article explains the history of the research and dialogue that have paved the way to composing the document, *From Conflict to Communion*, with which the Catholic-Lutheran International Commission for Unity has laid the groundwork for a joint commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the

Protestant Reformation. In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, that asks Catholics to recognize with joy the Christian values and views they share with their brothers and sisters of other churches, Catholics and Lutherans are invited to commemorate in 2017 important aspects of the Protestant Reformation that belong to a common Christian heritage. Mindful of the church's division in the sixteenth century, a commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is for both sides an invitation to welcome the new steps toward mutual understanding, respect, and even agreement. It is also a time for conversion and a mutual confession of sins that relate to those religious and political leaders who created the misunderstanding and division that led to the splitting of the Western church. Above all, as suggested by the "Five Ecumenical Imperatives" with which the document concludes, Catholics and Lutherans are called to be inspired in thought and action from a perspective of unity, not division, and to witness gospel life together.

- **Wolfgang Thönissen (Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism): "Reform and Reformation: Ecumenical Approaches in Light of the Document *From Conflict to Communion*"**

This article begins by recalling the path that Catholic and Lutheran theological and historical research has taken over the last century to liberate the image of Martin Luther from one-sided interpretations and distortions. The dialogue between the two churches demonstrates how much Luther and his theology are rooted in the great tradition of the church, although his

approach differs somewhat from the late scholasticism of his day. This way of proceeding proved ultimately fruitful in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, ratified by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1999. The article then explains how the document *From Conflict to Communion*, achieved through the same historical-critical-hermeneutic method, has addressed four topics that traditionally have been in dispute: the relationship of grace/freedom and faith/works in justification and sanctification; the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass; the divine origin of the ordained ministry and its relationship to the common priesthood of all the faithful; and the relationship among scripture, tradition, and the magisterium. Beginning from these insights, the document shows how the different doctrinal emphases of Lutherans and Catholics, freed from polemical emphases, should not be mutually exclusive and therefore should not preclude consensus on fundamental truths.

#### Book Reviews

- **Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy; A Conversation with Andrea Torielli*. Random House, 2016; reviewed by Paul Flaman (University of Alberta)**
- **Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights*. Fortress Press, 2014; reviewed by Brittney Nurse (University of Alberta)**

The editors of *Claritas* hope that our readers will appreciate the excellent articles in this final issue 2016. Please note that our journal is open access, with no subscription fees for our readers and no publication fees for our authors. We depend on the generosity of our readership. At our website, you will find a tab labeled “Support *Claritas*.” We hope that all who read *Claritas* will be inspired to contribute to our effort to build a more united and peaceful global culture.