

The “real Lutheran view” about Mary? One moment, please!

“...Mary prays for the Church, and the saints do, too [?]....I no longer get bent when I hear of prayers to Mary....since she and the saints do pray with and for the Church.” According to Russ Saltzman, this is the “real Lutheran view,” what Lutherans “actually” and “officially” hold.¹

Just one moment, please!

As we all know, authorities great and small can be cited to bolster almost any claim. But “officially” is something entirely different.

What Lutherans “officially” hold has been unanimously spelled out by the Lutheran members of the official Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States.

After six years of careful study, they concluded:

“Normative Lutheran teachings, collated in the *Book of Concord* in 1580, are based on the CA, Ap, and SA, which affirm commemorative veneration of the saints and Mary, but **reject any invocation of them.**”²

That’s the “real Lutheran view.”³ “Officially.”

¹ Pastor Russell Saltzman, “Flying Hosts and Consecrated Weevils,” *First Things*, April 28, 2011. Saltzman, formerly ELCA, now NALC (*North American Lutheran Church*), is representative of the Evangelical-Catholic leanings of the NALC.

² *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, Eds. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992) 33 (¶38) (emphasis added). (CA 21; Ap 21: 9-13; SA 2, 3, 25-28). See also p. 36 (¶40g):

“In speaking of the Christian dead, Lutherans trust the witness of Scripture and the hope of the resurrection, but do not find scriptural support for encouraging or requiring the invocation of saints who have died or of Mary to intercede for us. Prayer, Lutherans have insisted, must come from faith and faith must rest on promise. Since Scripture makes no explicit promise in this regard, the practice can have no sure basis (Ap 21:10) and could trouble consciences if required.”

Further, Luther:

“When physical and spiritual benefit and help are no longer expected, the saints will ease to be molested in their graves and in heaven, for no one will long remember, esteem, or honor them out of love when there is no expectation of return” (Smalcald Articles 2, 3, 28; *Book of Concord* [Tappert edition] 297).

“Let the dear saints rest where they are....Let them be, and let God take care of them. We can neither know nor understand how they live in the world beyond. That world is quite different from this one” (WA 17, 2:255).

³ We concur that Mary is to be honored as the “God-bearer” (*theotokos*, Council of Ephesus 431 A. D.) and commend Luther’s magnificent Magnificat, which praises God’s grace toward Mary rather than Mary herself. For a comprehensive survey of the literature, see Eric W. Gritsch, “The Views of Luther and Lutheranism on the Veneration of Mary,” *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII* (235-48). See also the study prepared for the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue, *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (ed. R. E. Brown, K. P. Donfried, J. A. Fitzmyer, and J. Reumann; Philadelphia: Fortress; New York: Paulist, 1978).