



October 31  
Festival: Reformation Day

Reformation Day is an important liturgical festival that is celebrated by Lutherans and Christians of many Protestant denominations. It commemorates Dr. Martin Luther's posting of his *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517. This act triggered the movement in world history known as the Reformation. While the historical date for the observance of Reformation is October 31st, most churches celebrate it on the last Sunday in October.

While it had profound and lasting impacts on the political, economic, social, literary, and artistic aspects of modern society, the Reformation was at its heart a religious movement. The Reformation was the great rediscovery of the doctrine of justification, that is, the good news of salvation by grace through faith for Christ's sake.

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had been plagued by false doctrines, superstition, ignorance, and corruption. Since most ordinary Christians were illiterate and had little knowledge of the Bible, they relied on their clergy for religious instruction and guidance. Tragically however, monks, priests, bishops, and even the popes in Rome taught unbiblical doctrines like purgatory and salvation through good works. Spiritually earnest people tried to justify themselves by charitable works, pilgrimages, and all kinds of religious performances and devotions, but they were left wondering if they had done enough to appease God's righteous anger and escape His punishment. The truth of the gospel -- the good news that God is loving and merciful, that He offers each and every one of us forgiveness and salvation not because of what we do, but because of what Christ has already done for us -- was largely forgotten by both clergy and laity. The Holy Spirit used an Augustinian friar and university professor named Martin Luther to restore the gospel to its rightful place as the cornerstone doctrine of Christianity.

