

Why I will remain a Lutheran Christian (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Good morning, my name is Valery Castillo. I have been studying at Epiphany since I was six years old but only started going to the church services during sixth grade for confirmation. I used to attend a Roman Catholic church and identified as part of the catholic faith, but I now consider myself a Lutheran. Although both denominations believe in the same God, I have become very fond of the Lutheran faith and the Epiphany church specifically. I have 2 brothers who have both gone to this school previously. For hobbies, I like to do anything creative or hands-on like painting or being active outside. I mainly play basketball. I do enjoy listening to music and I also play the alto saxophone in my band class.

One of the many things that I love about this faith and way of life is the ever-present grace that God has gifted to every single one of us. And the thing is, I don't have to be perfect to receive His Grace, Jesus did that for me, He was the perfect one. And even if I tried...and tried...and tried, I would never be able to be perfect even if I did everything in my power to do so. I feel as if this church is much more forgiving compared to my old church. And I feel as if that's the way it should be, the Grace and forgiveness of God should be reflected through the church. I shouldn't feel pressured and alienated in my own faith. I never would have even started attending church here if I hadn't chosen to do confirmation. And I'm grateful for the way that that path has turned out.

The chief part that I have chosen to focus on is the sacrament of the altar. Sacraments are defined by having a visible element, being able to forgive sins, and being instituted by Christ. And I specifically like the emphasis on it being the absolute true body and blood of Christ. Not a symbol or representation, but the literal body and blood that was shed for us. Oftentimes, I think that people forget how involved God is in our lives. They think that he's disassociated and disconnected from us. When that's not true at all. Our God is omnipresent, meaning that He is able to be present anywhere, any place, at any time. And I think that communion is a good reminder for us that God is with us. Since we can't physically see God, It can be easy to forget that He is there. And I think the physical and visible element of communion is a reassurance that God is there and that He forgives sins.

Pastor Muchow once told us that confirmation is seen as a "graduation" of sorts. They do what they need to do and don't continue their spiritual journey. They quit attending church after receiving the wine and eucharist. And I really hope that I won't be guilty of having that same mindset. There really are days when I consider how much easier it would

be to just sit in bed and watch a movie instead of waking up and getting ready for church. Then I just think to myself, "Dude, how much has God done for you in a single week? How long has He provided for you? And how much time do you dedicate to Him throughout the week?" The answer is, not as much as I should. The least I can do is dedicate two and a half hours a week on a Sunday morning. Once I fight the temptation, I end up feeling better at church. And I already know that there will definitely be days when I succumb to the temptation to not go. But for now, I'm doing my best to fight it. I've made it a priority in my day to start and end my day with Jesus. Starting my day with a simple 20 minute podcast with bible reading and prayers, and ending my day with a small devotional before bed. I think the most interesting thing about this journey is that it's nowhere near the end. As long as I'm living, I am able to grow in my faith. I thank these two fantastic pastors, church leaders, and congregation for making this three-year confirmation such a blessing in my life. And Lastly, I thank my mom for forcing me to do confirmation, for it truly changed my life.