



# Luther's Transformation of the Medieval Church in Worship

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Introduction: The unique place of worship in the medieval church

## Worship Life in the Medieval Church

1. The medieval *ordo missae*
  - a. Clergy as actors
  - b. The extraordinary Ordinary
  - c. The canon of the mass
2. The Church Year
  - a. Christocentric festivals
  - b. Marian festivals
  - c. Connection with community life
3. The Daily Office
  - a. The canonical hours
  - b. Monastic and university life

## Luther's Key Worship Principles

List as many of Luther's key theological themes as you can.

Now consider how those theological themes drove Luther's key worship principles below.

1. Centrality of Scripture and the gospel
  
2. "Keep the baby"
  - a. The extraordinary Ordinary
  
  - b. The Christocentric festivals
  
3. "Drain the dirty bathwater"
  - a. Stripped down version of the canon of the mass
  
  - b. Marian and saint festivals (but not completely)
  
4. But... concern for the people
  
5. Get the people active in worship

## Luther's Unique Use of Music and Hymnody

Consider the following quotes. What insights do they give us into Luther's understanding of the use of music and hymnody? What evidence do you see of Luther's unique use of music?

*We can mention only one point (which experience confirms), namely, that next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise.*

“Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae*  
LW 53:323

*After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.”*

“Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae*  
LW 53:323-4

*Ceremonies should be observed both so that people may learn the Scriptures and so that, admonished by the Word, they might experience faith and fear and finally even pray. For these are the purposes of the ceremonies. We keep the Latin for the sake of those who learn and understand it. We also use German hymns in order that the [common] people might have something to learn, something that will arouse their faith and fear.*

Apology XXIV:3

*I would gladly have a German mass today. I am also occupied with it. But I would very much like it to have a true German character. For to translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn't sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise all of it becomes an imitation, in the manner of the apes.*

“Against the Heavenly Prophets in the  
Matter of Images and Sacraments”  
LW 40:141

### 1. Luther's reintroduction and emphasis on congregational hymn singing

*Husband and wife, young women and men, so many people have learnt [Luther's hymns] that his Germans hymns and psalms became so well known that they were sung by the people daily in all churches before the sermons commenced, publicly, over and over again.*

Town chronicle of Magdeburg

*Following the example of the prophets and fathers of the church, I intend to make German Psalms for the people, i.e., spiritual songs so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people.*

Letter to Spalatin

2. Luther's recognition of the educational, edifying, and psychological benefits of hymnody
3. Examples of Luther's hymnody
4. The flowering of hymn writing and music composition in Lutheranism

### The Influence of Luther's Liturgical Reforms

1. The *Formula Missae* and the *Deutsche Messe*
2. A malleable framework
3. The importance of preaching

### Conclusion