

“Martin Luther's Seal” or “The Luther Rose”

While he was a professor at Wittenberg University, Martin Luther designed this seal which he declared was meant to be "expressive of his theology."

The following letter was written to his friend, Herr Spangler, town clerk in Nuremberg, Germany.

July 8, 1530

Grace and peace in Christ!

Honorable, kind, dear Sir and Friend!

Since you ask whether my seal has come out correctly, I shall answer most amiably and tell you of those thoughts which now come to my mind about my seal as a symbol of my theology.

There is first to be a cross, black, and placed in a heart, which should be of its natural color (red), to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saved us. For if one believes from the heart, he will be justified. Even though it is a black cross, which mortifies and which also should hurt us, yet it leaves the heart in its natural color and does not ruin nature ... that is, the cross does not kill, but keeps man alive. For the just shall live by faith, by faith in the Savior.

Such a heart is to be in the midst of a white rose, to symbolize that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. In a word, it places the believer into a white joyful rose, for this faith does not give peace and joy as the world gives. Therefore, the rose is to be white, not red, for white is the color of the spirits and of all angels.

This rose, moreover, is fixed in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that such joy in the Spirit and in faith is a beginning of the future heavenly joy. It is already a part of faith, and is grasped through hope, even though not yet manifest.

And around this field is a golden ring, to signify that such bliss in heaven is endless, and more precious than all joys and goods, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.

May Christ, our dear Lord, be with your spirit until the life to come. Amen.

(From Luther's Works, American Edition, Volume 49, pp. 356 - 359)

Luther's seal is not used as an official symbol of The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. It is, however, incorporated into the Synod's official seal to show our acceptance of Luther's doctrines. The seal is used by Lutherans worldwide.

