

## *Reformation Readings:*

### **Martin Luther (A.D. 1483-1546)**

Martin Luther was raised in the mining town of Mansfield, Germany. In keeping with his father's wishes, Luther enrolled at the University of Erfurt in 1501 to study law, but he abandoned his legal studies in 1505 and entered a monastery instead. It was a hard, disciplined life. He lived in an unheated cell, leaving only to receive instruction, take meals in silence, and join others in the chapel for services. Luther was ordained a Roman Catholic priest and celebrated his first mass in 1507. Luther continued his studies, and, by 1512, was a professor of biblical theology at the University of Wittenberg.



The Roman Catholic Church had developed indulgences as a way to release sinners from part of the penance for their sins. For example, instead of going on a pilgrimage as a penalty for one's sins, an indulgence permitted the person to make a contribution to a worthy cause. In 1515 the pope authorized the sale of indulgences to raise money to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

In response to what he saw as the abuse of indulgences, Luther wrote a letter explaining that by seeking escape from divine punishment through indulgences, people were led away from true sorrow from their sins and into a sense of false security. This letter became known as the Ninety-five Theses.

The Theses marked the beginning of Luther's disillusionment with the Church and the start of the Reformation. Luther went on to publish other highly influential works questioning the Church's teachings.

In April 1521, Luther was given a hearing before a meeting at Worms, Germany. Although urged to retract his teachings, Luther refused. The emperor then declared Luther an outlaw. Luther's supporters hid him at Wartburg Castle, where he spent time studying and writing. During his year there, he translated the Bible into German. He took care to write simply and in common everyday language. Together with hymns he had written, this German Bible was to become a mighty force of the Reformation.

Luther remained a professor at the university where some 16,000 students studied the teaching of Luther and his successors in the theological faculty, spreading the new Lutheran religion across Germany.

### **Johannes Gutenberg (c. A.D. 1397- 1468)**

The Gutenberg Bible, set and printed in 1455, is perhaps the most famous book in history. It is the product of the first successful attempt to use movable type and the printing press in an efficient way. These developments made it possible to print books and other materials quickly. During the centuries since then, the spread of books around the world –and the ideas they carry- has altered human life in profound ways. In developing the method of printing, Johannes Guttenberg secured his place in history.

Johannes Guttenberg was born to an aristocratic family in Mainz, Germany, in about 1397. Mainz was a center for goldsmiths, and Guttenberg may have been trained in goldsmithing as a young man. When he was about 40, Guttenberg began his experiments with printing. He combined movable type, type molds, oil based inks, and a special printing press to create a workable printing system. Many of these ideas existed, but Guttenberg improved, refined, and most important, combined them. The basic method of printing he developed remained in use well into the 1900s.

In 1446 Guttenberg entered a failed partnership with a man named Johannes Fust. Fust, a goldsmith, lent money to Guttenberg to help him pursue his printing work. When the partnership failed after five years- Gutenberg was apparently unable to repay the loan when Fust demanded it- Gutenberg was forced to surrender his printing equipment and supplies to Fust. Fust and his son-in-law continued printing.

Gutenberg found patronage under a wealthy man in Mainz, thus enabling him to continue to print. Apparently, he gave up printing in 1465, perhaps due to failing eyesight. When he died in 1468, at nearly 70 years old, he was not a wealthy man. He probably never knew, though he may have dreamed, how his work would affect the world in the centuries to come. Today, Mainz honors its most famous son through the Gutenberg Museum and the Johannes Gutenberg University. His original workshop has been restored and preserved. Fittingly, printing is an important industry in the hometown of Johannes Guttenberg.

