

A Day Trip to Christuskirche

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Photos by Dagan Kay

On the afternoon of April 4th, Dr. Außermair took our theology class to visit Christuskirche. When we arrived, we met with Rev. Tom Preston, who introduced himself, told us his story, and got to know us. He then explained how 2017 is an important year in the Protestant church, as it is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's publication of his 95 Theses. From there, he discussed the history of the Church and how the corruption of the Catholic Church in the 15th and 16th centuries motivated Luther to push for reform. As the plague killed a third of the population, the Church had played off the fears of the people and claimed the plague was a result of their sins. The Church's abuse of power and money, in addition to the implementation of the Spanish Inquisition which forced people to comply with the Church, prompted Luther to call out the Church's corruption by posting his 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Door.



Next, Rev. Tom explained the split between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church and discussed the justification of faith that the Protestants made: *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola scriptura*. *Sola fide* refers to the awakening by the proclamation of the Word, *sola gratia* refers to the belief that God's love is free and does not need to be earned through works, and *sola scriptura* refers to the belief that the faith is not based on tradition, but rather through scripture. From here, Rev. Tom discussed the further splits within the Church, especially the Calvinist split. Before taking us over to the church, he mentioned some of the similarities between the Catholic and Protestant churches, including the importance of the Bible, the practice of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and confessions.

When we walked into the church, we observed the beautiful stained-glass windows above the altar. The upper stained-glass windows featured biblical references, while the lower ones had images depicting when Protestants were exiled from Salzburg. In the 17th century, under Ferdinand II, all Lutheran preachers were forced to leave the country within a month, and all others who were

Lutheran either had to convert to Catholicism or leave. Lastly, all Lutheran books, Bibles, and churches were to be burned. Rev. Tom also showed us two paintings at the back of the church that depicted the exile. From 1620 to 1781, Protestants either had to practice in hiding or emigrate out of Salzburg.



We had an amazing experience learning about the history of Protestantism. I personally really enjoyed learning about the history of Protestantism in Salzburg because I got to learn things that I never would have known otherwise. I also loved seeing how Christuskirche honors and acknowledges that history through its artwork, particularly the stained-glass windows and paintings. My hope is that future theology classes will have the same wonderful opportunity to learn about the history of Christuskirche and Protestantism.