

**Martin Luther (der 10. November 1483—der 2. Februar 1546)**

## **Luther and Protestant Reformation**

### **Martin Luther's daring revolution: The reformation 500 years on**

#### **New accents**

Despite his outlaw status, Luther returns to Wittenberg in March 1522 where he immerses himself in diverse projects and continues to surprise his contemporaries.

In 1525 the once celibate monk marries former nun Katharina von Bora. Together they raise six children and found the first Protestant parsonage, which serves as the model for a parish's spiritual and organizational center well into the 20th century.

In 1526 the Imperial Diet in Speyer makes the notable decision to allow princes and states to decide themselves whether to remain Catholic or convert. This leads to the first official Lutheran churches and Protestant schools.

#### **Basis of Belief**

During Luther's travels, he realizes that his most of his countrymen actually know very little about Christian belief. This spurs him in 1529 to write both the "Small Catechism" for the common man and the "Large Catechism" for the priesthood, together the fundamental instructive works of Protestant belief through today.

The same year reform-oriented princes in the Imperial Diet in Speyer protest the ongoing Edict of Worms. Their actions give "Protestantism" its name. Luther had previously referred to his movement as "Evangelistic."

#### **Luther's anti-Semitism**

Luther's opinion of Jews and their beliefs was in no way influenced by Christian charity and tolerance. In this respect, he typifies the times. He initially advised kindness towards Jews, given that Jesus himself was born one, and argued in 1523 that Jews who converted to Christianity should be allowed to work in all trades and not just in money lending.

Luther's outright hatred revealed itself some 20 years later. In his 1543 text "On the Jews and Their Lies," he took the Middle Age religious hatred of Jews one step further, labeling them "Christ's murders" and calling for their synagogues and homes to be destroyed and, finally, for their expulsion. Some researchers call Luther's statements "pre-modern anti-Semitism."

The reasons for Luther's change of mind remain pure speculation. The change may have stemmed from disappointment. He allegedly hoped that Jews would convert to the newly established Protestant belief — which they did not. Whatever the reason, this ugly side of Luther remains part of his legacy to this day.

#### **Luther's life work.**

When Martin Luther died on February 18, 1546 in his birth city of Eisleben, he left behind a giant body of work. The ideas of the Reformation had spread across the Christian realm. While a blessing for some and a curse for others, the changes he set into motion were unstoppable and reached all areas of social and political life. They opened the door to a new era — though no one at the time suspected how violent the resulting religious conflict would be.

It wasn't until 1999 that the Catholic Church acknowledged Luther's doctrinal justification. The moment was a milestone in Catholic-Protestant dialogue, since it meant tacit acceptance of Luther's unshakeable belief that Christians are holy through God's mercy alone, and not through acts — no matter how great they may be.