

Today is Reformation Sunday and we particularly remember Martin Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others who gave rise to the Protestant reformation movement. What were these reformers objecting about? They were objecting about the corruption within the church and particularly among the clergy. They spoke against the Pope who had given permission for the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were bought for a price which would relieve one of temporal punishments and move them out of purgatory. The protests against the corruption emanating from Rome began in earnest when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk at the university of Wittenberg, called in 1517 for a reopening of the debate on the sale of indulgences and the authority to absolve sin and move away one from purgatory. On 31 October 1517, in Wittenberg, Saxony, Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* to the door of the Castle Church, in Wittenberg challenging the indulgences. One of his thesis was that, 'there is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of the purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.' The reformers taught that salvation was by 'faith alone', by 'grace alone' and 'through Christ alone'. They also believed that Scripture contained all knowledge for salvation and holiness and therefore it must be made available in a language understandable to all and access given to all. The Reformers challenged the corruption which was at the heart of the Church, particularly with the clergy and the Bishops.

Just as much as the Reformers challenged corruption in the Church, today we too are called to stand up against corruption within the Church. Corruption has come to rest within the church and greed for money has come to plague the Church through the manipulation of accounts, nepotism, self-serving interests, quick money, unauthorized sale of property, and abuse of power. All of us as Bishops, Clergy, and Lay people have fallen prey to the God of Mammon and have forgotten the living God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The need of the hour is repentance and reformation within the Church. Bishops and clergy have forgotten their call to serve and instead are constantly looking out for ways and means to manipulate and make money. Many of our Christian institutions have become sources of corruption as their revenue is abused. It is in this type of context that we are called to bring reform from within. Any reformation can only take place when there is repentance backed up by prayer. Repentance in our context has to be of a corporate nature. We as a community need to corporately confess our sins of apathy and deliberate disobedience. Only when we do this and turn away from our sinful inclination will there be hope for reformation and renewal.

This morning God calls each one of us as his people to reform our ways and our actions. Reform needs to begin with repentance. May we turn to Christ and seek his forgiveness corporately this morning that we would be cleansed and made holy. We

are also called to stand up and to speak the truth without fear or favour. May God use us as his agents of reformation. The price for bringing reformation may be great. Many of the reformers were martyred. Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were burnt at a stake in Oxford. Cranmer and William Tyndale were also burnt at the stake, but because of their martyrdom reform came into the church and the bible has been made accessible to all of us. May we be willing to stand up as God's servants to bring reform within the church no matter what the cost may be.

Paul Swarup

28th October 2012