

SINGING WITH THE LUTHERANS

By Garrison Keillor

I have made fun of Lutherans for years – who wouldn't, if you lived in Minnesota?

But I have also sung with Lutherans and that is one of the main joys of life, along with hot baths and fresh sweet corn. We make fun of Lutherans for the blandness, their excess calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them. If you ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Lutheranless place, to sing the chorus of Michael Row the Boat Ashore, they will look daggers at you as if you had asked to strip to their underwear. But if you ask this among Lutherans they'll smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the Road!

Lutherans are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony. It's a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Lutherans to sing in harmony. I do believe this: People, these Lutherans, who love to sing in four-part harmony, are the sort of people you could call up when you're in deep distress. If you're dying, they'll comfort you. If you're lonely, they'll talk to you. And if you're hungry, they'll give you tuna salad!

If you laughed while reading this you must be a Lutheran.

The following list was compiled by a 20th century Lutheran who, observing other Lutherans, wrote down exactly what he saw and heard:

- Lutherans believe in prayer, but would practically die if asked to pray out loud.
- Lutherans like to sing, except when confronted with a new hymn or a hymn with more than four stanzas.
- Lutherans believe their pastors will visit them in the hospital, even if they don't notify them that they are there.
- Lutherans usually follow the official liturgy and will feel it is their way of suffering for their sins.
- Lutherans believe in miracles and even accept miracles, especially during their stewardship visitation programs or when passing the plate.
- Lutherans feel that applauding for their children's choirs would make the kids too proud and conceited.
- Lutherans think that the Bible forbids them from crossing the aisle while passing the peace.
- Lutherans drink coffee as if it were the Third Sacrament.
- Some Lutherans still believe that an ELCA bride and an LCMS groom make for a mixed marriage.

- Lutherans feel guilty for not staying to clean up after their own wedding reception in the Fellowship Hall.
- Lutherans are willing to pay up to one dollar for a meal at church.
- Lutherans think that Garrison Keillor stories are totally factual.
- Lutherans still serve Jell-O in the proper Liturgical color of the season and think that peas in tuna noodle casserole adds too much color.
- Lutherans believe that it is OK to poke fun at themselves and never take themselves too seriously.

And finally, you know when you're a Lutheran when:

- Its 100 degrees, with 90% humidity, and you still have coffee after the service.
- You hear something really funny during the sermon and smile as loudly as you can!
- Donuts are a line item in the church budget, just like coffee.
- The communion cabinet is open to all, but the coffee cabinet is locked up tight.
- All your relatives graduated from a school name Concordia.
- When you watch a "Star Wars" movie and they say, May the Force be with you, you respond, "And also with you."
- You actually understand those folks from Lake Wobegon, MN.

And lastly it takes ten minutes to say good-bye.