

Square in Rome named after Martin Luther

by [Rosie Scammell](#) in the [September 30, 2015](#) issue

The Vatican has given its backing to naming a central Rome square after Martin Luther.

Luther, a German Catholic priest and theologian before he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1521, denounced the corruption he saw among clergy in Rome. Around the time of his visit to Rome in 1510, Luther reportedly repeated the saying, "If there is a hell, Rome is built over it."

Luther was not allowed to return to the Catholic Church in his lifetime, but now the Vatican's views on him have changed.

A hilltop square in Rome is being named Piazza Martin Lutero in memory of Luther's achievements. The site chosen is a park on the Oppian Hill that overlooks the Colosseum.

The naming has been six years in the making, following a request made by the Seventh-day Adventists, a Protestant denomination, Italian daily *La Repubblica* reported.

"Unbeknown to the Adventists, the Lutheran Church made a similar proposal to the city of Rome at the same time," the *Adventist Review* wrote. Both proposals received approval.

The original plan was to inaugurate the square in time for the 500th anniversary of Luther's historic trip to Rome. City officials were not able to discuss the process behind naming the square or the reason for the holdup.

Only 435,000 of Italy's 60 million citizens identify as Protestant, according to research published in 2012 by the Center for Studies on New Religions.

The Vatican reacted positively to news of the square's inauguration. "It's a decision taken by Rome city hall which is favorable to Catholics in that it's in line with the path of dialogue started with the ecumenical council," said *Ciro Benedettini*, deputy director of the Vatican press office, referring to a gathering of clergy to rule on faith

matters.

The Lutheran World Federation website states, “In 2017, Catholics and Lutherans will jointly look back on the event of the Reformation and reflect on 50 years of official worldwide ecumenical dialogue during which time the communion they share anew has continued to grow.” —Religion News Service

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