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Catechism Service

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Catechism Service

Jaron Melin

According to Charles Arand, Luther's ordering of the catechism provides an overarching narrative which provides a Law-Gospel, Trinitarian view of life in this world.¹ According to James Marriott, liturgy is the performance of faith in the story of everything through rites and ceremonies which enact God's means of grace.² The Catechism Service given here aims to provide a rite which is structured by the Small Catechism and to enact the catechism in worship. The ordering of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer as well as the ordering of Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar are interwoven into the very fabric of worship. Thus, the catechism provides the structure of worship rather than being just an element of worship, and that structure tells God's story in a Trinitarian, evangelical manner. Furthermore, as the practice of Lutheran worship cares deeply about the formation of disciples in the church,³ this service aims to form disciples with the basics of the Christian faith. Thus, the catechism also acts as liturgical formation, forming disciples to be witnesses for Christ in their daily lives throughout the whole week.⁴ This service could be paired with daily devotions which follow a similar structure.⁵ In this way, the Catechism Service can serve as a model and training ground for daily devotion and for Christian living in the world.

This service is organized in a simple manner for any congregation to use. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to use and adapt it for their worship. It was made brief to be printed as a worship-bulletin onto both sides of a single sheet of paper. Any part can be expanded to include more of the Small Catechism for further instruction and formation (e.g. questions and answers). Furthermore, Phillip Magness has put the Small Catechism to music which could be incorporated into this service so that people can learn the catechism by heart to music even in the midst of worship.⁶

As much as possible, portions of Luther's Small Catechism were taken from CPH's translation in 1986, which became available online in 2019.⁷ Some portions are based on Luther's Baptismal Booklet, which was included in some editions of

the Small Catechism.⁸ Words in italics indicate an insertion into the text, which was done only for the sake of clarity and significance. Words in bold are spoken by the congregation while words in regular font are spoken by the liturgist. When there are two columns, a pastor leads the service with the left column, and a non-ordained liturgist leads the service with the right column, in which case the Sacrament of the Altar is also omitted.

Endnotes

- 1 Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 129–141.
- 2 James Marriott, "How the Redeemed World Is Done: Charting the Relationship between Liturgy, Discipleship, and Mission," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 30, no. 1 (2022): 24–32.
- 3 Ibid., 27.
- 4 Ibid., 30.
- 5 For an example, see Jaron Melin, "Greek and Hebrew Catechetical Devotions," *Grapho: Concordia Seminary Student Journal* 4, no. 1 (2022), <https://scholar.csl.edu/grapho/vol4/iss1/8>.
- 6 Phillip Magness, *Sing the Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).
- 7 Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), catechism.cph.org. For example, the confession and absolution are primarily based on Luther's Short Form of Confession; however, a variation of the Jesus Prayer and the Kyrie are also included for smooth, liturgical flow. Quotations of Scripture are from *ibid.*, which uses *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).
- 8 WA 19:537–41; LW 53:106–9 with 101–3. See also Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 371.n147. For example, the blessing from Psalm 121:8 and the declaration after Titus 3:5–8 are based on their usage in Luther's Baptismal Booklet. For comparison, see *ibid.*, 374.18 and 375.30.

CATECHISM SERVICE

The service may begin with an opening hymn, psalm, or spiritual song.

WE BEGIN

Matthew 28:19b, Romans 6:4, Luther's Small Catechism

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Saint Paul writes in Romans chapter 6: “We were therefore buried with Him through Baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” *Baptism* indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 20:2–17

I am the LORD your God. **You shall have no other gods.**

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

CONFESSION

Luther's Small Catechism, Luke 18:13, Mark 10:47

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm? Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. *A moment of silence for reflection and personal confession.*

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, be merciful to me, a sinner. **I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. I am sorry for all of this, and I ask for grace. I want to do better. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.**

OFFICE OF THE KEYS

This is what Saint John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

John 20:22-23

By the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

POWER OF BAPTISM

As Saint Paul says in Titus, chapter three: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.”

Titus 3:5-8

Jesus Christ has given us new birth through water and the Holy Spirit and has forgiven us all our sins. The almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen us with His grace to everlasting life. **Amen.**

READINGS

A sermon may follow after the readings or after the Creed. A hymn may be sung.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose

again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER

Luther's Small Catechism

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

Luther's Small Catechism

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

PRAYERS

1 Timothy 2:1

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

If there is no Communion, then the service continues with the BLESSING.

SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

Luther's Small Catechism

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Saint Paul write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." *Mt. 26:26-28, Mk. 14:22-24, Lk. 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-25*

ASKING A BLESSING

Luther's Small Catechism

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

RETURNING THANKS

Luther's Small Catechism

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good.

His love endures forever.

Psalm 136:1

The LORD *bless* and keep
your coming in and going out
from now on and forevermore.

The LORD *bless* and keep our
coming in and going out from
now on and forevermore. *Ps. 121:8*

Go in peace. Amen.

Luke 7:50b

The service may end with a closing hymn.