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Adapting and Field-Testing the Ancient Catechumenate at Hope Ev. Lutheran Church, Saint Louis, Missouri

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ADAPTING AND FIELD-TESTING THE ANCIENT CATECHUMENATE
AT HOPE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI.

A Major Applied Project
presented to the faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry

by

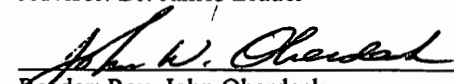
Dennis F. Lucero

April, 1998



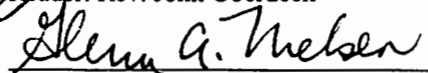
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the ages the Church has struggled to teach the faith to new disciples and converts alike. As time has passed, various programs have been tried and discarded as individual congregations and church bodies have sought effective means to communicate the faith. Now, as the Church faces the twenty-first century, it searches how to continue to communicate the faith in an ever increasingly hostile environment. So, we ask, “How does the Church communicate the truth of the Gospel to its present culture?” This is the challenge of a new century as well as it was the challenge of the past.

Purpose

This Major Applied Project will explore a centuries old process of communicating the faith. This project faces many challenges since most parish pastors and congregations wrestle with their process of catechetical preparation of youth and adults. There is not consistent standard in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for this preparation. Generally, congregational preparation and participation in the instruction of youth and adults is left in the hands of the pastor alone. There is little, if any, lay involvement in mentoring and guidance of new members. There is a low sense of “ownership” on the part of the membership in the mission and ministry of the church both at home and at

large. The church is called to make disciples of all the nations. Yet, so little of our time and resources are committed to this specific ministry of the church. Hope Ev. Lutheran Church is typical of this pattern.

The purpose of this project is to adapt and field test the catechumenate in a way that is theologically consistent with the Lutheran Confessions and employs excellent teaching methodology and practice. Through my research I intend to do the following: to demonstrate a higher level of understanding of the process of catechetical formation in the early church, to develop a higher level of theological understanding of the basis for the catechumenate process, to appreciate the theological formation of the process of catechesis, to heighten awareness of the impact of theological education in the life of the Christian congregation, to make clear the need for spiritual formation through the practice of the disciplines of the catechumenate, to implement a theology of education in the practice of the catechumenate, and to study the specific roles of the catechist and sponsor in the process of the catechumenate.

I do not intend to engage in debate over what other congregations are doing or not doing in the area of confirmation preparation, compromise the theology and doctrine of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, or conduct an exhaustive study of the theology of teaching or of teaching methodology. The things that are out of my control are these: the level of commitment of those who participate in the process of the Catechumenate, the number of participants, the level of commitment on the part of the catechists and sponsors, the personal growth on the part of the catechumens as they experience the Ancient Catechumenate, or dramatic events in the world or community that might impact the action phase of the project.

Actions

For the past several years I have been concerned for the depth of instruction given to new members of the Lutheran Church. I have been compiling information on the process of adult instruction and confirmation in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and in the St. Louis area in particular. In addition, as part of my Doctor of Ministry program I have taken course work in the area of worship, leadership, and exegesis which generally apply to the topic of Christian education.

For this project I have researched the theology of education, how this theology is evidenced in praxis in adult and junior confirmation programs and various materials published on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as practiced in the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian traditions. I have interviewed parish priests in the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian traditions on the practice of the RCIA. With this in mind I developed a plan for the catechumenate in an LCMS congregation in the heartland of the United States. I have examined group process, teaching methodologies, and spiritual formation. I am conducting entrance and exit questionnaires to evaluate the methodology of the catechumenate in order to gauge the effectiveness of the project in an objective and efficient manner.

Much of the work has centered around the development of a manual for the use of the process of the catechumenate in the Lutheran parish. Having researched the subject I adapted, rewrote, and printed specific guidelines for the role of the catechist and for the role of the sponsor. I have been conducting the catechumenate using these guidelines since the First Sunday in Advent of 1997 and will conclude on the Day of Pentecost 1998. Evaluations are being gathered from personal reflections, from the catechumens,

from the catechists, from the sponsors, and from colleagues who have received the materials.

My involvement has been varied and continuous. I have publicized the catechumenate through parish communication mediums such as bulletins, newsletters and oral announcements. During the months of July, August, and September I did the basic research and writing of the guidelines for catechists and sponsors. During August, I held informational meetings with parents of confirmation age youth to inform them of the process in the day school curriculum and the catechumenate component. I recruited and trained catechists and sponsors during the months of September, October and November. I have adapted and prepared a manual for the catechumenate process and distributed the manual to colleagues. I conducted and guided the catechumenate from the First Sunday in Advent and will continue this until the Day of Pentecost. I administered and evaluated questionnaires. From field testing, personal evaluation, participants' questionnaires and colleagues' evaluations I have developed recommendations for a future rewrite of the manual and guidelines.

I have asked the participants to evaluate the interactions during the catechumenate sessions, the personal value of the catechumenate process in their spiritual journey and growth, my leadership in the project, and their own growth or changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes about the Christian faith and about the theology and disciplines of the Christian faith as practiced in the Lutheran Church. I have asked colleagues to assess the value of the catechumenate manual as a usable resource (affirming its strengths and making recommendations for improvement), the theological content as measured against the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, the structure and practice of educational

methodologies, and the practicality of the resources for use in other parishes of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I have made a self-evaluation of the manual for the catechumenate, the guidelines for catechists and sponsors, participants in the catechumenal process, colleagues, and the process of field testing and implementation.

This project has increased the level of catechetical instruction that is being used at Hope Ev. Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri. Through the process of the catechumenate, various members of the congregation have grown spiritually as they have practiced the disciplines of the Christian faith. Through setting an example in worship, reflective bible study, prayer, and service in the community, the catechists and sponsors have a deeper appreciation of who they are as God's people. The catechumens are being thoroughly equipped for living out their Christian faith. They are becoming more familiar with the lectionary portion of the scriptures than most long-time members. They are growing to appreciate the width and depth of their faith. They are becoming involved in serving the Lord through the various ministries of the congregation. And they are actively worshipping in the Lord's house.

Value

This project has made a worthwhile, significant contribution to my ministry in my present setting by field testing the process of the catechumenate in a traditional parish struggling to actively involve its membership in the ministry of the church, by providing a practical catechetical resource for use in my ministry and the ministry of others that is based on the disciplines of the Christian faith, by increasing my learning and teaching skills in catechetical instruction, by enriching the spiritual life of those who participate,

by facilitating ease in the practice of the disciplines of the Christian faith, by making available to other pastors and congregations a potential resource for teaching the disciplines of the Christian faith.

One may reflect on the meaning of the Christian church and on that which we do together as Christians. The things we do most when we are together are worship, bible study, prayer, and service work. Yet we often spent relatively little time in these pursuits and with little or no purpose in mind. For most of us the disciplines of the Christian faith are done in a haphazard sort of way and we are left feeling guilty and desiring a deeper and richer spiritual life. This project has contributed to my practice of the pastoral ministry in a significant way by assisting me toward a deeper understanding and appreciation of the disciplines of the Christian faith.

In short, it has been my purpose to review the ways in which the faith was communicated in the Old and New Testaments, to examine the Church as a living organism in which the faith is being shared, to examine “The Catechumenate: An Apprenticeship in Christian Living” as a contemporary model in which the faith can be experienced today, and to explore the role of the catechist and the role of the sponsor. This is what has been done through this project.

The Scriptures state, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48 NIV). This Word of God speaks to us quite clearly of the challenges and the tasks that continually lie before us as we seek to communicate the faith.

Chapter two reviews The Catechumenate: An Apprenticeship in Christian Living. The catechumenate is an ancient process of communicating the faith that is being revised,

adapted, and used in a number of faith expressions in the United States and Canada. The catechumenate encourages the making of disciples rather than simply enrolling individuals as members of a local congregation. The process incorporates a significant number of the laity in various roles. Significant to our examination of the catechumenate is the role of the pastor, our understanding of the pastoral office, and the role of the catechist and sponsor.

Chapter three shares the process of adapting and implementing the catechumenate at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saint Louis, Missouri. The struggles to bring in a new concept to a traditional, conservative congregation in the heartland of the United States are not unique or unusual. Change does not come easily or quickly.

Chapter four gives recommendations for other congregations to explore adapting and implementing the catechumenate. While each congregation is unique, there are similar needs that one ought to be aware of in order to more easily implement and use the process of the catechumenate in other parishes. We offer several suggestions for an easier implementation.

CHAPTER II

COMMUNICATING THE FAITH USING “THE CATECHUMENATE: AN APPRENTICESHIP IN CHRISTIAN LIVING”

As we seek to communicate the faith taught to us in the Old and New Testaments, we need to be sensitive to the culture in which we live and teach. Societies change and the receptivity to the Gospel changes within the various aspects of the society and culture. As Christians seeking to fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28, we endeavor to “make disciples” of all of the peoples of the earth. In order to reach the multiplicity of the culture today, we need to begin with the individual and family cultural understanding of religion and spirituality. We need to establish a common ground of understanding and language in order for us to communicate effectively with one another.

To this scenario comes the Catechumenate—the historic process by which Christ’s church engages unbaptized and/or uncatechized adults and prepares them for the event of Holy Baptism and/or baptismal living. The Catechumenate is not a newly-devised program. In fact, it is not a program at all. It is a journey—a pilgrimage—as one who is not yet joined to Christ becomes so enjoined. Through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, the journey begins with the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

William Harmless gives us a perspective on the history of the catechumenate from the third century when he writes,

In chapters 15-21 of *The Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus set out guidelines for the catechumenate and baptism. First, he insisted that when newcomers were brought

to the church, teachers were to conduct an interview, questioning not only the newcomers, but also “those who brought them.” The latter—we would call them sponsors—were to “bear witness about them, whether they are capable of hearing the word.” This probe, at least as far as Hippolytus details it, focused less on motive and more on lifestyle: Did these new inquirers have a mistress? Were they slaves trying to please a master? Were they charioteers, gladiators, sculptors of idols, actors, brothel-keepers, [sic] theatre producers, city magistrates—in other words, anyone connected with the pervasive apparatus of paganism, its idolatry, its violence, its impurity? If so, then—in what seems to be a ringing refrain—“let them cease or be rejected.” Some people (prostitutes, eunuchs, magicians, astrologers) were rejected outright; others (teachers and soldiers) were accepted under certain strict conditions. The tone set by Hippolytus was stern, uncompromising. In his view the new convert had to be willing to make a sharp and probably costly break from the larger culture, and the turnabout was to take place not after some months, but from the very outset. Clearly Hippolytus worried less about the size of his congregation and more about the standards it lived by.¹

This is a far cry from the twentieth century minimalist approach to church membership. In far too many congregations and denominations many are concerned with membership rosters, while the early church had a concern for an understanding of the faith and a commitment to that faith. Again Harmless writes,

The rigorist strain one finds in Hippolytus is even more prominent in his North African contemporary, Tertulian (d. after 220). It is not clear precisely what role Tertulian played in the Church of Carthage, whether he served as presbyter, as Jerome claims, or whether he was a layman. Whatever the case, his writing displays an abiding and passionate concern for the formation of catechumens, those “recruits who have just recently begun to give ear to the flow of divine discourse and who, like puppies newly born, creep about uncertainly, with eyes as yet unopened.” . . . For example, Tertulian addressed one of his early works, *the Spectacles*, explicitly to catechumens and neophytes and warned that they inhabit a demon-possessed world: “There is no place—whether streets or marketplace or baths or taverns or even our own homes—that is completely free of idols: Satan and his angels have filled the whole world.” In this work Tertulian tried to convince his hearers to avoid four popular locales and the entertainment they offered: horse races in the circus; gladiatorial combats and wild-animal hunts in the amphitheater; athletic competitions in the stadium; and bawdy plays in the [sic] theatre. The linchpin of his argument was that these amusements were at base “pomps of the devil” and thus were contrary to the baptismal vows:

“I shall now appeal to the prime and principal authority of our seal itself. When we step into the water and profess the Christian faith in the terms prescribed by its

law, we bear public witness that we have renounced the Devil and his pomp and angels. . . . So, if it shall be proved true that the entire apparatus of the spectacles originates from idolatry, we will have reached a decision in advance that our profession of faith in baptism refers also to the spectacles, since they belong to the Devil and his pomp and his angels because of the idolatry involved.”²

At the heart of the Catechumenate are the basic fundamental disciplines of the Christian faith—worship, prayer, reflective Bible study, and community life. These are disciplines employed not to punish, but to daily strengthen the believer in his or her confrontations with the powers of darkness and the temptations of the evil one. The Catechumenate is an *apprenticeship in the faith* in that these faith disciplines are consciously and intentionally modeled by those who know and use them regularly—sponsors and catechists.

There are four distinct times in the catechumenal journey: (1) *Inquiry*, (2) *Catechumenate*, (3) *Lent: Baptismal Preparation*, and (4) *Easter: Baptismal Living*. These times are punctuated by liturgical rites celebrated publicly as part of Christian worship. The rites include a *Welcome to the Catechumenate*, an *Enrollment for Baptism*, the *Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Eucharist*, and an *Affirmation of Vocation*. Time and flexibility are variable elements. For some this journey through times and rites may be relatively brief. For others it may be lengthy. Flexibility is standard for each individual and is determined by the one seeking baptism as well as the pastor and the faith community in which the baptism will occur.

At the heart of the catechumenate process is the Paschal Mystery—the crossing over from death to life—Christ’s passing over at Easter, and ours in Holy Baptism. Joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are crossing over daily from death to new life. It is this understanding that is at the central core of our Lutheran understanding of

Baptism and baptismal living. St. Paul set forth the basis when he wrote to the Church at Rome:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:1-5 NIV).

Baptism is a crossing over from the death that is the consequence of sin, to a new life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, a magnificent God-given transformation occurs through this means of grace. God Himself takes a lost and condemned creature and snatches him from the pangs of sin, death, and the devil and delivers him into a new covenant and relationship with Him. In this new relationship the newly baptized is then built up by the members of the faith community to live in a new way guided by the eternal Word of God. Clarifying this understanding of baptism as a sacrament and a beginning in the Christian faith, John Theodore Mueller writes,

Baptism, according to Scripture, is not a mere ceremony or church rite, but a true means of grace (*aqua divino mandato comprehensa et Verba Dei obsignata*), by which God offers and conveys to men the merits which Christ secured for the world by His vicarious satisfaction, Acts 2, 38. . . . Very aptly our dogmaticians have called Baptism "a means of justification" (*medium iustificationis sive remissionis peccatorum*), which belongs into the Gospel, not into the Law. That is to say, Baptism does not save as a work which *we* perform unto God (not as the fulfillment of an obligation), but rather as a work of God in which *He deals with* and blesses us. "There is here no work *done by us*, but a treasure which *He gives us*." (Luther, *Triglot*, p.741) (emphasis original)³

This Paschal Mystery, this passing from death into life, forms the whole basis for the process of the catechumenate as those who are lost in sin are brought to newness of life through Word and Sacrament. In the midst of the baptizing community, this faith created

by the Holy Spirit through the Word is nurtured and guided. It is not a program or a set of classes that one attends in order to “join” the local congregation, but rather, it is a journey of faith that begins with the life-changing experience with Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

The catechumenate, as an apprenticeship in the Christian faith, is a journey involving successive time frames or stages each of which are marked by liturgical rites. The time frames are not fixed to a specific portion of the calendar year but are designed so that those experiencing the process might fully come to know the ebb and flow of the liturgical seasons. While each person’s journey is unique and individual, there are certain common themes. Each person will go through a questioning stage of inquiry, a learning stage of catechumenate, a preparatory stage of specific baptismal preparation, and the final stage of baptismal living. While these stages are best conducted in harmony with the liturgical year, they can be used at any time that suits the individual parish and situation. The concern and focus of the catechumenate is on the spiritual life of the individual and on that person’s relationship with Christ. This cannot be artificially produced and may not fit the mold of a canned program. It is a process of development and growth led by the Spirit of God to bring the individual into a saving faith and an active fellowship within the faith community. Robert Hofstad writes,

We should be clear on one point: the catechumenate is not simply a program whereby a Christian congregation adds to its list of its members. Rather, it is a way of welcoming, nurturing, and supporting those who are new to the Christian faith. For those not yet joined to Christ, it is an encounter with Christ’s dying and rising—the cosmic struggle between God and the powers of darkness—an encounter which takes on life and breath in the faithful participation and practice of the Christian life. The catechumenate is not a necessary prerequisite to the gracious gifts of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Understood rightly, it is a

welcoming—an opportunity to grow in the faith as one makes adult choices about the Christian faith and about being joined to Christ and to his body, the church.⁴

Inquiry: A Time of Exploration

The question has often been asked, “Why do people join the church?” There have been many studies given to this question and probably just as many answers. The basic issue for the individual is to seek a relationship with a “higher power” usually precipitated by an external stimuli. Perhaps it was a marriage, a baptism of a friend’s child, the death of someone close or some other life changing event. Whatever the cause, the individual begins to contemplate who they are and what their place might be in the grand scheme of events. They have shared their concerns with a friend, family member or colleague and now they have come into contact with the church. They are seeking sanity in an insane world and they have questions of eternal consequence. They are investigating who they are and who God is. These individuals are called *inquirers*.

The inquirer asks questions which can be of a primary or of a secondary nature. Primary questions might include: “Is there a God?” “How do we know that God created the universe, and only one God” “How do we know that the God of Christianity is the true God? Could there be others?” “If there is a God, and He cares for people, why did He let my baby die?” “Where does evil and suffering come from when God supposedly made everything good?” Obviously, there are no simple answers to these primary questions. Some may have no answer. Yet, for the inquirer these are extremely important ones as they grasp the significance of the God who loves them.

Secondary questions are just that, secondary. These types of questions come later and flow from a basic understanding of the faith. Some secondary questions might be: “Is it

preferable to use the common cup or the individual cup at Holy Communion?” “Why do we stand at the reading of the Gospel and not for the other readings?” “What is the significance of seven candles on each side of the altar and why do you add two extra candles at communion?” “Do you use special water or holy water at baptisms?”

Whatever the questions might be, it is inherent that the sessions during the stage of inquiry be focused on the learner’s question rather than on those of the catechist, teacher, or pastor. In our catechumenal sessions we want to open our hearts and minds to those who are inquiring and help them grapple with the fundamental heart of the faith. We want to help them answer the “so what” questions. “So what if I do not believe?” “So what if I die and have not been baptized?”

The inquirers are invited to meet weekly at a mutually agreeable time in a small group in order to have a safe environment to ask their questions. The small group is facilitated by a trained catechist or the pastor who will seek to help them find answers to their questions. The inquirer is introduced to a member of the church who will then become their sponsor on their faith journey. Often, the sponsor will already be someone they know and possibly be the one who invited them to the church. The sponsor’s role is that of a fellow-traveler on the journey, who will be with them through all the times and stages of the catechumenate.

When the inquirer comes to a place in their life where they wish to more formally seek church affiliation, they are invited to enter the stage of the catechumenate. The inquiry stage ends with a rite of welcome.

First Rite: Welcome to the Catechumenate

When it is the appropriate time, the inquirer and the sponsor are prepared for the public rite of welcome into the catechumenate. Normally the catechumenate, a period of more focused formation in the faith, will lead to full incorporation into the church through the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Yet the shift from general inquiry to catechumenal formation should not be construed as an irrevocable decision to receive baptism. The flexibility and openness that characterize the time of inquiry continue during the time of catechumenal formation.⁵

The rite of welcome is connected to the liturgical rhythm of the church. Possible times include the First Sunday in Advent, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday or some similar period. The best time to conduct this rite is on the First Sunday in Advent so that the catechumens experience the festival half of the church year as they prepare for reception into the church. The rite occurs in a principal worship service of the congregation and includes questions concerning the inquirers intent to seek baptism as well as questions of the congregation as to their intent to support and pray for those seeking baptism or affirmation of their baptism. During this rite the inquirers are presented with a copy of the Holy Scriptures and are marked with the sign of the cross by their sponsor as they begin the second stage of their spiritual journey.

Catechumenate: Deeper Exploration of Faith and Ministry

Following the rite of welcome, the catechumens and their sponsors will continue meeting weekly in small groups with a catechist and/or the pastor. The focus of the catechumenate sessions will be on the lectionary readings and a systematic study of the basic doctrines of the church. It is during this stage that the core teachings of the faith are presented and discussed. The Bible is used extensively as well as the catechism and

confessions of the church. The catechists will seek to answer the catechumen's questions and guide them to sources that answer their questions. The pastor will spend considerable time with catechists, sponsors, and catechumens as he presents, clarifies, and affirms the Christian faith. It is in this stage that deep spiritual and intellectual understandings are nourished and encouraged. As an apprenticeship in the Christian faith, the disciplines of the faith are modeled and taught, as all worship, study, pray and serve the Lord together. At the end of the catechumenate stage the catechumen, the sponsor, the pastor, and the catechumenal leadership team will confer regarding the catechumen's desire to proceed into the next stage: Baptismal Preparation. This transition is celebrated in the second rite of the catechumenate.

Second Rite: Enrollment for Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism

At the principal worship service of the congregation on Ash Wednesday or the First Sunday in Lent, the names of the catechumens are presented to the congregation and the time for their baptism is declared. During this rite the sponsors will present their catechumens, and the catechumens inscribe their name into a special book. They may also be presented with a copy of the catechism, a copy of the Creed, and prayers will be offered for them.

Third Stage: Preparation for Baptism or Affirmation

During Lent, the catechumens and sponsors will continue meeting weekly with their small group to explore the richness of the lectionary readings during the Passion of our Lord. They will worship together, pray together, and reflect on the divine Word. This is

a time of deeper study and preparation for the event of Holy Baptism or, in the case of the previously baptized who are being taught the faith, the Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant.

Candidates for baptism are beginning a time of intense preparation for baptism. Through the lectionary and the Catechism, candidates will reflect on how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus transform relationship to home and family, work and co-workers, church, and brother and sister Christians. There will be emphasis on what must die in us in order that God's new life might burst forth in our lives. Candidates will be asked to live for God, recognize and fight evil, and become, through Baptism, part of God's new life and creation.⁶

This stage of the catechumenate continues the journey of the two previous stages, but the focus begins to narrow down and becomes more intense. It is a time of introspection as well as preparation for the catechumen. It is in this stage that the individual comes to grip with their personal commitment to Jesus Christ and their appreciation of the events of his/her life. Robert Hofstad writes,

This third phase of the process is not different than the second; it is a matter of degree rather than kind. To use the analogy of birth, if inquiry is a conception of faith, and the catechumenate its gestation, then Lenten preparation for baptism is like the weeks before birth—more visible and involving more growth.⁷

Throughout this stage, the community of faith prays daily for those coming to the waters of baptism and encourages them in their journey. In the weekly worship services the pastor or liturgist prays for each person by name asking God to guide them and to touch their hearts as they are “transformed by the renewing of their mind.” It is this same concern that was at the heart of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the believers at Rome. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2 NIV).

Third Rite: Baptism or Affirmation of Baptismal Covenant

The third rite in the process of the catechumenate is the reception into the body of Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. This is a movement from death into life, from darkness into light, from sin into grace. It is here that the centrality of the Christian faith is evidenced by the act of God. Baptism is the entrance rite to the new life of faith and service in the kingdom of God.

This rite also incorporates those who have been previously baptized, who are now undergoing catechesis, and present themselves for affirmation of the covenant God made with them in their baptism.

Baptism during Palm Sunday, Easter Vigil, at Epiphany, or on the Baptism of our Lord allows for a full expression of being baptized into Christ's death, resurrection and new life. Christ's death, resurrection and new life is our new life, our death and our hope of resurrection. Candidates come to be baptized into this way of Christian life. Those already baptized come to be renewed and strengthened in this death, resurrection, and new life. This vigil is a celebration of new life for individuals, within the celebration of new life for the whole community of those buried and raised with Christ.⁸

Fourth Stage: Baptismal Living—The Call to Mission

The fourth stage of the catechumenate takes place in the festival cycle from Easter until Pentecost. During these fifty days the newly baptized continue to meet in weekly sessions with members of the faith community to explore the meaning of their new life in Christ. The focus is on how one lives and on what one knows. The emphasis on continued growth in the Word of God and faithfulness at the Lord's Table is stressed. An understanding of the liturgy is stressed as the individual is guided to a deeper understanding of the richness of the church's worship. The Sunday lectionary continues to be a primary resource for continued catechesis. The newly confirmed are encouraged

in their faith life to understand their spiritual growth as a living witness which involves the whole person: intellect, spirit, emotions and actions. They come to appreciate that our relationship with Christ is an ongoing process, not a one time program, class or event.

During this time of Baptismal living the entire Christian community continues to bear responsibility for the spiritual formation of the individuals. Members of the local congregation come to share with the new members various opportunities where they can use their gifts, talents and abilities in the Lord's service. The newly confirmed are introduced to the structure of the visible church and how they can serve. They explore their own gifts and then begin to seek opportunities to use these gifts. The central concern is to explore where the individual can continue to live out their faith in daily life and service.

Taking on the work of the priesthood of all believers is the focus of the newly baptized. With sponsors and catechists, they will meet to explore the nature of baptism and Holy Communion as a call to mission and a model for daily living. How I live as a baptized communing Christian, offering my gifts and talents as a living sacrifice in the Christian community and the world, will be the central question. The lectionary and Catechism will provide material for discussion and reflection.⁹

Fourth Rite: Affirmation of Vocation in the World

On the Day of Pentecost the community of faith gathers to send out the newly baptized and confirmed to be living witnesses to the world. The "sent ones" are invited to bring their baptismal candles to the service and to re-light them from the baptismal sconce or from the Paschal candle. They are reminded of their calling in Christ as servants of the Lord, as witnesses to His majesty, and as ambassadors to the world. In this rite they are presented to the congregation once again, and then are affirmed in their

area of service in the congregation. A blessing is given and prayers are offered. The catechumenate process formally comes to a close and a life-time of service to the Lord begins.

The Pastor and the Pastoral Office

An understanding of the pastor and the pastoral office is critical to the implementation and administration of the catechumenate in the congregation. It is the understanding of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that the pastoral office is a unique, divine institution and is the only office in the church ordained by God. Francis Pieper writes,

It is not a human, but a divine command that Christians perform the works of their spiritual priesthood; accordingly, preach the Gospel not merely in their homes, but also in their intercourse with their brethren and with the world. Likewise it is not merely a human, but a divine regulation that Christians who live at one place fellowship with one another, form a congregation, and appoint men equipped with the necessary teaching ability to preach God's Word in the name of the congregation both publicly (in the public assembly) and privately (to individual Christians).

As Scripture proof we have not only the example of the Apostles, who "ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23) with the duty to supply the congregations publicly and privately with God's Word, but also the practice of Paul, who, when the congregations in Crete had failed to call elders, or bishops, charged Titus, whom he had left there, to ordain such in every congregation. Titus 1:5: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee [R.V., "gave thee charge"]." "Elders" and "bishops" designate pastors in Scripture, for these terms are used *promiscue* (Titus 1:5,7; Acts 20:17,28).¹⁰

While there is only one office, we also recognize that all Christians have a *vocatio*, a calling to serve the Lord in whatever circumstances they may be placed. We recognize that all can contribute to the mission and ministry of the church.

One definition of these roles in the catechumenate is stated in an ELCA document:

Integral to the effectiveness of the catechumenate is the role the pastor plays as preacher and the leader of congregational worship. Ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the pastor serves the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens the people of God. And it is through the means of grace, the ministry of Word and Sacrament, that adults become disciples of Jesus Christ.¹¹

It is the Word of God that gives life, and it this same Word that creates the church and the ministry. The Church is described most simply and beautifully in the Smalcald Articles. “In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word.”¹² The Word of God, the Gospel and the Sacraments, the means of grace are alone that which creates the Church. “As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth” (Isaiah 55:10-11 NIV). The Spirit creates the Church through the Word.

We accept that the Word of God gives birth to the Church; the Word of God nourishes the Church; the Word of God strengthens the Church; the Word of God preserves the Church; the Word of God sustains the Church to the end.

We might ask, “What is the method that God uses to proclaim this Word?” For Luther it is the Office of the Pastoral Ministry. This is not to say that the Word of God cannot be taught or applied by someone other than the pastor. However, the Office of the Pastoral Ministry has been instituted precisely so that the function of preaching and teaching the Word, the function of applying the means of grace will always be present in the Church. The Word is God’s means and the pastoral ministry is God’s method.

Luther writes on the Office of the Pastoral Ministry:

I hope, indeed, that believers, those who want to be called Christians, know very well that the spiritual estate (the office of the ministry) has been established and instituted by God, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood and bitter death of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ [I Peter 1:18-19] . . . He paid dearly that men everywhere have this office of preaching, baptizing, loosing, binding,

giving the sacrament, comforting, warning, and exhorting with God's Word, and whatever else belongs to the pastoral office. . . . Indeed, it is only because of the spiritual estate that the world stands and abides at all; if it were not for this estate, the world would long since have gone down to destruction.¹³

The Office of the Public Ministry has been instituted by God and is to be distinguished from the ministry that God has given to all Christians. The public ministry involves the Office of the Keys—the privilege and duty to proclaim the Good News of salvation, the authority to forgive or not forgive sins, and the responsibility to administer those means of grace called the Sacraments.

God, however, has not called each Christian to exercise the keys *publicly*. Scripture clearly refers to God's establishment of a special office for that purpose. Several passages in the Scriptures speak of this "setting apart" of individuals for the pastoral office. Luke writes, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:2-4 NIV). These individuals who were "set apart" were to take up their responsibilities with love and compassion. Led by the Spirit of God, they were to concern themselves with those placed under their care and to guide them as a shepherd tends a flock of sheep. Again Luke writes, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28 NIV). This calling was not from men, nor by an agency of men, but was a calling from God himself working through the believing community. This position was one of servant-leader. This individual

willingly served those who had called him. We see this depicted in the relationship which Paul had as an apostle of the heart. “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God . . .” (Romans 1:1 NIV).

At the center of the servant-leader’s heart is a concern for the spiritual well-being of the members of the gathered community of faith. The called servant of the Lord is one who recognizes that he has a specific responsibility before the Lord, and that he is sent to proclaim the Gospel of grace. Paul writes, “And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Romans 10:15 NIV). This calling is manifested by gifts of the Spirit which are given by God. Not all individuals, not all men, have this calling. There are many different areas of service in the community of faith. Not all are called to be pastors, nor teachers, or to use other specific gifts. God is the one who has set aside specific individuals to serve in special ministries. Paul admonishes one of the early Christian congregations, torn by strife and division, to use the gifts which God had given to them, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?” (1 Corinthians 12:28-29 NIV).

We must note, however, that care must be taken in recognizing those who have been given this gift of being a minister to the gathered community of faith, and that only after examination should they be set apart for service as a pastor. Paul writes to his young colleague, Timothy, and gives him advice when setting aside men for the work of the pastoral ministry, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins;

keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22 NIV), and then to use their gift for the building up of the people of God. Paul writes, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6 NIV).

This understanding of the pastoral office continued throughout the history of the Christian church. Over the centuries the church developed its identity, guided by those who were called, trained, and set apart as public servants in the church. The Church understands that God speaks through the pastor and that the pastor truly stands in the place of Christ. Therefore, because God loves the sheep, Luther says about pastors,

It is their duty to tend His sheep and give them pasture. Therefore to give pasture is nothing else than to preach the Gospel, by which souls are fed and made fat and fruitful, and that the sheep are nourished with the Gospel and God’s Word. This alone—this alone—is the office of a bishop.¹⁴

The proper work of the pastor, therefore, is, in the words of Martin Luther, to speak, “. . . a word of salvation, a word of grace, a word of comfort, a word of joy, a voice of the bridegroom and the bride, a good word, a word of peace,”¹⁵ that the church may rejoice in the knowledge of her salvation. Again, Luther states, “All who bring the Word of God, who are preachers and ministers of the Word are called messengers (or angels) of God . . . It is a very great glory for a miserable human being to be called a messenger of God and to have his name in common with the heavenly spirits.”¹⁶

The Lutheran Confessions state: “It is taught among us that no one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.”¹⁷

Again the Confessions state: “In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the

Word and sacraments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.”¹⁸

The clarity of the Confessions was further developed and expanded as the church redefined its identity in a turbulent time. The concern over who could serve in the pastoral office was expanded by Martin Chemnitz who wrote: “The public ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12). For a special or particular call is required for this (Romans 10:15 NIV).”¹⁹

When the Lutheran Church migrated to the United States of America in the late nineteenth century, concern for the pastoral office developed. The first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was a guiding influence in defining the difference between the ministry that all Christians have and the unique office of the pastor. C. F. W. Walther wrote, “The holy ministry of the Word or pastoral office is . . . distinct from the priestly office which all believers have.”²⁰ And “The public ministry (Predigtamt) has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments as well as the power of spiritual judgment.”²¹ And again, “The holy ministry (Predigtamt) is the power conferred by God through the congregation of all ecclesiastical power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office in the name of the congregation.”²²

From the above, we understand that the Office of the Holy Ministry is a divine institution established by God and placed in the congregation for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While all believers will want to read and grow in the Word of God, the Office of the Holy Ministry has the specific charge to proclaim the Gospel purely and to administer the Sacraments in accordance with the Word of God. This

differs from the responsibility of the individual to share the love of Christ in all that he or she does as a part of the priesthood of all believers. The pastoral office has special responsibility for the oversight of the ministry in the local faith community. This responsibility includes the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the care for the sick, the dying and the infirm, and the administration of the Sacraments.

Thus, in the structure of the catechumenate team, it is the pastor who has the ultimate oversight for the teaching of the divine Word and for leadership in the rites of the church. The pastoral office is the only divinely mandated office in the church and therefore has the responsibility for the catechetical teaching in the local community of faith. All other positions in the church, such as elder, director of Christian education, teacher are auxiliary offices to the one divinely mandated office of the pastor. It must be noted that this office is not one of “lordship” over the laity, but is rather one of “servant-leader” in the midst of the community of believers. It is this balance of team ministry which must be recognized and administrated with love, gentleness, and compassion.

The Role of the Catechist and the Sponsor

The catechumenate focuses on the Church as a living organism, a community of believers sharing the Word of forgiveness with one another. The catechumenate process begins with a search highlighted in the inquiries of Jesus. On their journey together, often Jesus asks the disciples pointed questions. In one instance, He turns to Peter and asks, "Who do the crowds say I am?" (Luke 9:18 NIV) That is how Jesus lovingly deals with inquirers, catechumens and those of us in the process called the catechumenate. He again turns to Peter and asks, "Who do *you* say that I am?" (Luke 9:20 NIV). Jesus looks each of us straight in the eye, as we travel on our journeys and says, "Who do you say that I am? What does My story have to do with your story?"

The catechumenate involves a community seeking to know and love God. It touches a community seeking identity and direction in their lives. "It is quite possible that the entire catechumenate is a process of moving from stories to Story, from fragments to wholeness, pericopes to Gospel."²³

This entire process is one of putting together the fragments: the individual events in our own lives, the lives of Jesus and His people, the lives of the catechumenal community as they share faith—sharing one Story of dying and rising in Christ. This seeking for wholeness, for completeness, for a sense of identity is what leads us to gather in communities. Thomas Downs writes:

Objectively speaking, story is simply a narrative that links various sequences. Subjectively and to the point, to have a story is to be a person. Or to turn the phrase, to be a person is to have a story. . . Without my story, I have no identity. I do not know who I am, or what I am about. If you have no story, how do you know where you're going; and if you're going somewhere, how will you know when you get there?²⁴

The catechumenate is about relationship: the individual's relationship with God and our relationship with one another. In this journey of faith there are many in the community who have special roles. The pastor is administrator of the catechumenate and presiding minister at all liturgical rites. The catechumenal director guides the catechumenal team. The catechists function as facilitators for the small groups. The sponsors walk alongside the seekers or catechumens, while the inquirers are supported in their faith journey.

The roles of the catechist and the sponsor are crucial to the catechumenal process. These individuals are to be selected with care and prayer as they serve to witness to and guide the catechumen. These individuals have unique gifts, talents, and qualities which are used by the Holy Spirit to guide the formation of the catechumen as they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Catechist

A catechist is first and foremost a child of God. Having been brought to faith through water and the Word, the catechist is also on the journey of faith and seeks to grow in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle John writes, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10 NIV).

The catechist understands his/her relationship with the Lord and strives to live out that relationship. Wherever this individual serves in the world, he/she reflects the love of

God to those around them, and puts his/her faith into action. Georganne Robertson writes:

The catechist is a member of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, baptized, called to service, and growing in faith. A firm sense of this baptismal identity allows the individual to enter into this ministry with the assurance of God's presence. As a baptized child of God, the catechist carries the mark of the cross which promises the presence of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. The child of God walks on this, trusting that Christ will speak the truth that leads to new life.²⁵

The one who serves as a catechist is also a dedicated Christian who is practicing the disciplines of faith: worship, reflective Bible study, prayer and service. The apostle James writing to the people of his day encouraged them also to have a vital faith characterized by good deeds and a faith that is active in works.

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:21-25 NIV).

Genuine faith must and will be accompanied by a life that is consistent with that faith. It is inherent, therefore, that the catechist be one who models the faith for those around them, models a servant's heart, and is willing to participate in this serving ministry. This is a matter of relationship—how the catechist interacts with those coming to the faith as well as with his/her fellow catechists. Jesus said,

You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45 NKJV).

As a servant, then, the catechist exhibits the heart of Christ and accepts others for who they are and where they are in their life. He or she will be open to the other person and seek to know them and love them even as Jesus has loved them from all eternity. Jesus said, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34 NIV). This love is not just expressed in words but also in deeds. Jesus loved the world so much that He was willing to give His life for even those who would ultimately reject Him. Jesus loved those whom others rejected and condemned because of their behaviors and lifestyles.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8: 3-11 NIV).

The catechist is to have this kind of accepting love—not accepting the sin, but loving the sinner. This openness and honesty will create an environment among those who do not yet know Christ and His kind of love. In this manner, a catechist is seen as trusting and respectful of others. He/she engenders hope for those who see their life as having no hope. Paul said, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13 NIV).

The catechist is also one who seeks to increase his/her knowledge of his/her faith and his/her relationship with Christ. As a learner, the catechist is able to understand the needs, fears, and desires of the catechumens and therefore is able to lead more effectively.

The catechist is a lifelong learner, a curious person. Some people ask questions and have no interest in struggling for answers. The catechist has been on this road a while and brings to the journey of faith a commitment to growth as well as a sense of humility.²⁶

This is not confined to the catechist and the catechumen alone. All members of the body of Christ, the Church, are to be life-long learners. In our journey of faith we are seeking to love and be loved, to know and be known. We are seeking love from God and from others. We are seeking to know God and be known by Him and others. As children of God, we manifest many of the same needs and desires of children. We are children searching for love and acceptance and striving to understand our world. Georganne Robertson states, "Indeed, the church is continually learning how to be people of the gospel, people of good news."²⁷

Therefore, as a growing child of God the catechist exhibits a spirit of courage that reflects a reliance on God's strength. The apostle Paul wrote,

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NKJV).

The catechist, then, is a child of God practicing the disciplines of the Christian faith in worship, Bible study, corporate and private prayer, and service to the Lord and to the community of faith. He/she models the love of Jesus Christ and accepts others as Christ

has accepted and forgiven him/her in His grace. The catechist is curious about the world around them and how his/her faith is exhibited in daily life. When the catechist is in doubt, filled with fear and despair he/she turns to the Lord who gives strength.

Robertson sums up the catechist well:

Each catechist brings natural and acquired abilities to this ministry and serves as a living example that people from all walks of life live in a relationship with God and with one another. A catechist is one who knows who he or she is and where he or she is going, yet doesn't force personal values on others. A catechist is called to teach by speaking with candor, listening with compassion, and faithfully sharing God's promises.²⁸

The Sponsor

The sponsor is a believer in Christ who has committed himself/herself to traveling on the journey of faith with the catechumen. The sponsor has many of the same qualities of the catechist but a different focus. The sponsor works one-on-one with the catechumen and personally models the disciplines of the Christian faith—worship, reflective Bible study, prayer, and community life. The sponsor is a fellow learner who seeks to be a witness and a guide to the one seeking a new life in Christ.

As a witness, the sponsor “witnesses to” the catechumen of what it means to belong to the Lord in faith. The sponsor is also a “witness for” the catechumen before the community.

As a guide, the sponsor helps the person enter into the life, the customs, and the ongoing activities and celebrations of the community of faith. The sponsor seeks to answer the concrete questions the catechumen might have about church practices, especially prayer, liturgy, institutions and structures of the church and local congregation.

To be a sponsor for someone on his/her faith journey is a ministry that involves many kinds of people. The role does not have to be limited to the religious “expert” or enthusiast, the professional theologian, the intellectual giant or the trained spiritual guide. A person need only be convinced of the value of his/her experience, and then desire to share that experience freely with another for the process to begin.

The foundation of the catechumenate sponsor’s ministry is a person’s conviction of having something meaningful to share, and the willingness to share it. The question of freedom, however, is of utmost importance here. One must share freely *without* the enthusiasm that scares people away, *without* a form of emotional blackmail either explicitly or implicitly that one’s experience of faith must be the same. The sponsor needs to involve himself/herself in a ministry of hospitality that welcomes a diversity of beliefs and experiences, rather than one that tries to fit everyone into the same mold.

Another aspect of sponsor ministry is that of gratitude. The psalmist writes, “Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness” (Psalm 107:8-9 NKJV). As social beings, we naturally want to share experiences that we consider good and worthwhile. In our gratitude for the paraphernalia and the people who have given our life meaning, we eagerly reach out to others who are interested in our faith and fellowship. Becoming a sponsor is one way to share our personal, meaningful experiences in a mature way. We celebrate our life of faith while acknowledging our personal and communal limitations.

Sponsorship, in its most basic form, is simply one of befriending another human being who, like ourselves, is in search of holiness.

What then does it mean to be a sponsor for one seeking a personal relationship with Christ? The sponsor is a representative of the community of faith, the Church, and in personal ways speaks for the church. The sponsor is a witness of the faith, and models the faith in word and in deed. The sponsor is a fellow traveler and learner, and walks alongside of the one who is seeking. Simply put, a sponsor is a companion on the journey of faith. The sponsor is one who prays for and on behalf of the catechumen, and models prayer in his/her own faith journey. The sponsor is one who listens. He/she listens to the Word of the Lord, and listens to the words and heart of the catechumen. The sponsor is one who respects the catechumen and serves as a bridge to the believing community of the baptized. The sponsor is one who seeks to assist the new person in the faith to understand the stories, traditions, structure and institution of the church. The sponsor witnesses to and guides the catechumen in order that he/she can connect his/her story with Christ's story. Ultimately, the catechist, sponsor, pastor, and members of the believing community seek to point the unbaptized and the uncatechized to Christ as did Philip and Andrew in this account of John:

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless of grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12: 20-26 NKJV).

CHAPTER III

THE PROCESS AT HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH, ST. LOUIS

As a parish pastor, and as pastor at Hope Ev. Lutheran Church for the last twelve and a half years, I have been involved in the catechetical process at all levels. I oversee all the educational ministries of the congregation especially in regards to the Word of God. I teach adults in Bible Class, Lifelight, and through informational topics presented at all board meetings and gatherings. I teach new member classes, junior confirmation classes and work with all the teachers in our day school to ensure that our young people receive a thorough grounding in Holy Scripture. In addition, I work with our Sunday School and Vacation Bible School to guide their curriculums so that they coincide with the rest of the parish ministry's curriculum plans.

Over the last several years I have become increasing concerned with the methods that we use, with a minimalist understanding of the Christian faith, and a lack of commitment to the Christian life amongst our members. I have expressed that concern to the District President, the Circuit Counselor, to professors at the St. Louis seminary, to our congregational leaders and our professional staff. While many express the same concerns that I have, few have constructive solutions or plans to address these concerns.

During these last few years, I have been involved in pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree and have sought guidance on how I can put this education to use in the parish. During this time I also became aware of the Catechumenate and the Rite of Christian

Initiation of Adults. I did reading in these areas and determined that this was an area I wanted to explore with possibly developing a Major Applied Project for the Doctor of Ministry Degree. I met several times with professors at the seminary, other doctoral students, teachers, district officials and parents. Out of these many conversations and much prayer came a vision for a different approach to parish religious instruction and practice of the disciplines of the Christian faith.

Over a period of a year and a half, I shared this vision with the Board of Elders of Hope Ev. Lutheran Church, with the Board of Christian Education, with the teaching staff in our congregation and with parents of our day school. The general concept was well received, though I believe that many did not understand the ramifications of the changes that would take place, the work that would be involved, and the level of commitment that would be needed. I do not believe that I understood the immensity of the undertaking. Sometimes ignorance is bliss indeed.

The actual springboard for the catechumenate at Hope involved two events. First, I was invited to attend the Catechumenate Training Days in Oviedo, Florida, in April of 1997. The training days were conducted by people from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, who have been involved in the process of the catechumenate for some years. Secondly, in the late spring of 1997 I was teaching an Adult Information Class on the Bible and the Teachings of the Lutheran Church. I shared the concept of the catechumenate with the class and they expressed a desire to participate immediately and encouraged me to do so at the beginning of the summer. Not knowing exactly what that meant, I plunged into the process.

The basic planning for the catechumenate at Hope began immediately after the training days in Florida. I reviewed the master church calendar and made the decision that the best time to conduct the process would be from September through May of the following year. I realized that a lot of information needed to be disseminated to the congregation, that catechists and sponsors needed to be recruited, team members needed to be selected, and much writing needed to be done.

While conducting the catechumenate sessions over the summer, I recruited a number of parents of the upcoming eighth grade class to experience the process. Over the summer, we met weekly and shared the disciplines of the faith. I laid out the timetable of the catechumenate to be conducted from the First Sunday in Advent, and continuing through Pentecost. During this preparation time, I came to the realization that it would be helpful to incorporate many members in the process. I also realized that it would be important to involve both Hope School and the Sunday School.

Out of this concern, came a complete revision of the memory curriculum for the day school. It was my thinking that by having all of our children studying the same thing each week, we could incorporate the common lessons into weekly worship and the school chapel services. I designed and wrote a new curriculum which required memorizing the entire Small Catechism each year, memorizing portions of the Gospel lesson each week, and memorizing stanzas from the sermon hymn for each week (Appendix, pp.74-86). I was delighted to see the eagerness with which this concept was received by the teaching staff, as well as by the parents, especially those parents who had children in different grades at our school. A side benefit was that now the families could use their children's memory work as a devotional emphasis, as all children would be memorizing the same

lesson each week. In addition, this unified approach prepared the families for Sunday worship, while enhancing participation in the service as the weekly lectionary readings and the hymn of the week had already been studied and were familiar.

The overall plan was to spend August through November in the stage of inquiry, to begin the catechumenate stage with the First Sunday in Advent, to begin the Lenten stage on Ash Wednesday, and then to culminate the process on Pentecost with the Rite of Vocation. At the time of this writing, the timing is working well and appears to be applicable for a parish with a day school.

One of the major concerns in the planning was how to incorporate doctrinal training into the process. I decided to conduct doctrinal training during the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany seasons. For a period of ten weeks, I incorporated the material from my adult information classes into this process (Appendix, pp.169-190). Following the Epiphany season, the plan will be to meet after the Lenten services, to share in reflective Bible Study using the African Method (an ancient reflective, experiential method pioneered and used in an oral society where only a few could read; see Appendix, pp.68-69) and to teach prayer, liturgy, and hymnology. I envision that these weeks will be a time for fellowship building, while incorporating the new members into the congregation. This process will involve the catechists who were recruited and trained in the summer and fall, as they lead the small groups and develop a sense of community.

Baptisms and the Rite of Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant (Confirmation) will take place on Palm Sunday, with the groups continuing to meet weekly until Pentecost. During the Easter season, I will continue to use the African Bible Study, while bringing in representatives of the congregation and outside agencies to introduce the new members

to the ministry of the local congregation and the church at large. It is my belief that this will be a time of awareness where the new members will come to understand their calling in the church. To enhance this process, I will administer an inventory to help the new Christians to explore where and how they can serve the Lord.

As part of the process of incorporating the catechumenate into the congregation, I needed to share the concept and structure with the membership and leadership. I wrote an overview for the Board of Elders, and then published an article in our monthly newsletter, *The Hope Lutheran*, in order for all of the members to receive the same information. Following the publication of the newsletter article, I met with our faculty and shared with them the whole concept. I then led them in the African Bible Study. It was well received and I believe that it was at that point that the faculty gave their support to the process, as they transversed from an academic, intellectual focus to an experiential understanding of the process. They came to better appreciate the “relationship factor” (our relationship with Christ and our relationship with one another) that I believe is at the heart of the catechumenate.

Someone once said, “In the church it is always easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission.” No more true statement has ever been uttered in a traditional, conservative congregation like Hope in St. Louis, Missouri. The constant concern of the “powers that be” is that we not upset the “status quo” nor do anything that is different than what other congregations are doing. In sharing the concept of the catechumenate with the leadership and membership of Hope Lutheran, I had to struggle with the rationale for making a change, the natural resistance to change, and a church polity system which guards against haste.

I decided that in order to receive support for the catechumenate, it would be best to meet one-on-one with the leaders, and then with the parents who would be affected in the process. I called and met with over fifty people privately and personally enlisted their support of the process. I showed them how this process was not “brand new” but was, in fact, an ancient process which the early church used in a non-Christian world to bring men, women, and children into a personal relationship with Christ. As one can imagine, this was a very time-consuming task. I believe that it was necessary to do so in this congregation or the concept would not have been readily accepted or the impact in their lives understood.

Over the course of the summer, while sharing the various components of the catechumenate with individuals, I also asked for their participation in the process. The beauty of the catechumenate is that it involves a number of people, and causes an attitude change from being just a “church” to being a “baptizing community under Christ.” Obviously, if one understands the doctrine of the church properly, we would understand ourselves as a “great commission” church, an outreach church, a caring church, a baptizing community under Christ which is centered in Word and Sacrament.

Necessary for the process of the catechumenate are several positions. The catechumenal director, the catechists, and the sponsors are all important to insure that the process will be effectively carried out. I decided that the key pivotal person was the director, as that person would be the one I would depend upon greatly for many of the details of the implementation. I recognized that this person had to be a committed, dedicated, active Christian who had gifts in the area of administration, hospitality, and prayer. I was blessed by having one woman in our congregation who possessed those

gifts and was seeking at that time how to best serve the Lord. I met with her, shared the concept of the process, gave her my independent study on the catechumenate to read, and asked her to pray about the position of the director. After several weeks, she responded that she believed this is where she would like to serve, and so we began the process. We identified sponsors; I adapted a sponsor's manual (Appendix, pp.128-168), and then we recruited sponsors for both our adults as well as our eighth grade students. In addition, out of the group that had been meeting all summer and fall, we recruited several to be catechists (small group leaders), so that when we entered the Lenten time period, they would be ready to guide the small groups as they shared in the reflective Bible studies and disciplines of the Christian faith. This is probably one of the most important components in the process. The sponsors (spiritual mentors) and catechists are crucial for the success of the catechumenate "process" to insure that it does not become another "program" conducted by the pastor or professional staff.

As stated above, part of the process at Hope Ev. Lutheran Church was a change in the memory curriculum for the day school. It was my concept to have all of the students and staff of the school studying and memorizing the same sections of the Scriptures, the catechism, and the hymnal each week of the school year. In addition, I thought by tying this study and memory into the church's lectionary it would help educate young and old alike in the ebb and flow of our worship life. Added to this thinking was the desire to enhance the school chapel services by incorporating the weekly themes. After discussion with the faculty, they were excited about the concept, and saw the validity of having a common curriculum, especially as I was going to write it for them. They could then adjust it to make it grade-appropriate. I spent several weeks in this process, as it meant I

had to have a year's worship and sermon plans done, so that the weekly readings and hymns could be incorporated into the memory book.

In late August, we conducted the parent-faculty meetings in which we met with all of our school parents and shared the changes in the memory curriculum. It was readily accepted and several of the parents voiced their enthusiasm at having all of their children studying the same material at the same time regardless of grade. At this writing, that enthusiasm continues among the parents. I am not sure that it is as eagerly embraced by the children since their parents and siblings all know what they are to be learning on any given week. It has eliminated some stress in the families and has encouraged them to be more faithful in their studies and in their worship attendance.

Our plans for the future are to continue this pattern, as well as develop and write memory curriculums for each of the A, B, and C cycles of the church lectionary. Once this is completed, we will be able to repeat the cycles easily. The advantage to this memory curriculum is that it is tied to the church year, to Sunday worship, and to a unified study of the Scripture within the congregation. The disadvantage is that the lectionary does not present a number of the Bible stories which have been traditionally taught in the day school. One decision which we made was to allow the teachers the flexibility to incorporate other lessons into their teaching, not to limit it to just the memory book. This did cause some crisis as several of our teachers are rigid and legalistic, that if it is not specifically permitted they interpret that it must be forbidden. They seem to have a difficulty in handling the freedom of the Gospel and prefer the security and familiarity of the letter of the law.

Necessary for a complete parish connection was that the Sunday School needed to be incorporated into the loop. It was decided that the Sunday School openings would combine all classes, youth and adult, in a common opening which would include the catechism, the readings, and the hymn. Again, the importance of familiarity and repetition in the process of learning, as well as reinforcing the message of the Holy Scriptures was foremost in this planning. There has been some resistance to this process, especially in having all the classes meeting for a common opening. The complaints vary from cutting back of the teaching time for individual lessons, moving classes to enable them all to be involved, and accepting change. The leadership team responded by emphasizing that it was being done in order to have a common program. We wanted them to try the new approach and see how it works. At this writing, the complaints are minimal, and the advantages are more widely recognized.

As stated previously, key to the process of the catechumenate in the parish is the catechumenate team. I believe that having good, visionary leadership is important when changes of this magnitude are undertaken. The most important individual on the team is the catechumenate director who assists the pastor in all of the details of the catechumenate. It is my belief that the director needs be a dedicated, committed Christian who is also a person of prayer. We have been blessed at Hope Church in having a gifted director who has grasped the vision for the church and has an understanding of the whole process.

The director works closely with the pastor in all of the planning and details of the catechumenate. It is the director's responsibility to care for the administrative details, guide the catechists, and train and guide the sponsors. As pastor, I, in turn, train and

teach the catechists who work with the sponsors and inquirers in the small group sessions. The catechist functions as a small group leader and fields questions from the group. It is the responsibility of the director to be in constant communication with the catechists and the pastor. In all of this structure, it is to be remembered that the key word is flexibility. This is a team effort and the goal of the team is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to make disciples of all the nations.

Over all, the implementation of the catechumenate at Hope has gone well. The timetable seems to be working according to concept and the process of growth seems to be occurring. I believe many who are participating in this process are more aware of the flow of the church year, the depth of the Scriptures, the need to practice the disciplines of the Christian faith, and the responsibility to continue these disciplines all of their life. A few difficulties in the implementation of the process included adapting manuals on time, revising the rites from the ELCA, and covering all the material. However, the major difficulty has been an attitudinal barrier, thinking in terms of “program” or “class” rather than in terms of “process.” Many who are not involved still think of confirmation preparation as a “class” and the Adult Instruction Class as a “program” for a set period of time. Understanding that the catechumenate is not a rigid set of rules and regulations has caused some concern for those that believe that everything must fit into a certain mold. If I were going to start over, I would spend another six months to one year in educating the members and leaders of the congregation on the basis of the catechumenate and its benefits. I would not have started until all the manuals were done, and I would have conducted training sessions for the catechists and sponsors before beginning the first

stage. I believe if we had done this some of the “idle gossip” and “corner grumbling” would have been alleviated.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS

As we consider the catechumenate for use in other congregations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, it would be helpful to consider changes and recommendations for the introduction and implementation of the process. We will make these recommendations in the following categories: Preparation, Planning, and Implementation. Preparation will include all that is involved in laying the groundwork for the catechumenate in a parish setting. Planning will focus on those changes which would enable the catechumenate to function better. Finally, recommendations for a smoother implementation than we experienced in our particular setting will be made.

Preparation

It cannot be stressed enough; preparation is the key to a smooth implementation of the catechumenate in the local congregation. We believe preparation needs to begin with the pastor and the catechumenate team. It is important to realize that if a parish leadership team takes sufficient time to understand the whole scope of the process and experiences of the catechumenate themselves, the introduction of the concept to the congregational membership is enhanced.

First, we recommend that the pastor and leadership team spend time reading and sharing together, praying together using the African Method, and using the lectionary for

at least a year before the introduction to the congregation begins. This will enable the pastor and leaders to have not only an intellectual understanding of the process but will also give them an experiential appreciation. The catechumenate is a process, it involves relationships. This relationship begins with Christ and then flows down to and through us to the world around us.

Second, we recommend that the catechumenate team publish monthly newsletter articles to heighten the awareness of the congregation of what it means to be a baptizing community under Christ. Integrated in this communication is an understanding of the doctrine of the church, an understanding of original sin, the means of grace, and the great commission. As the community of faith becomes more conscious of who they are, they become more aware of the need to share the Gospel and to reach out to the lost among us. Stating the obvious, in all that we do, we are to glorify God as we seek to make disciples of all the nations.

Third, we recommend that the process of identifying and training catechists and sponsors begin as soon as possible. It takes time to explain and model the concepts of the catechumenate process. We have found that time has a tendency to go by quickly, and there is much preparation yet to be done when start-up deadlines arrive. Six months before the first rite is to take place, identify the sponsors and begin instructing the catechists to help them in the process of facilitating small groups in the catechumenate stage. Three months before the first rite, ascertain the identity of, and meet with, “seekers” in the inquiry stage of the catechumenate. Then, two months before the startup, meet and train the sponsors and review the sponsors manual with them. At this same time, begin publishing weekly bulletin announcements and offering prayers in the

worship service for those who will soon begin the process of the catechumenate. Ask congregational prayer chain members to remember the “seekers” in daily prayer also.

Planning

As the pastor and catechumenate team begin to implement the process of the catechumenate in the congregation, there are several recommendations we would make to help in the process. Someone has once said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” This applies to the catechumenate as well as to many areas of our life. Careful planning will enable the catechumenate process to proceed smoothly.

First, determine the general timetable that is to be followed. We have used the Festival Season Cycle and have found that this works best for us. It ties our parish schedules with the school schedules and allows all of us to experience the fullness of the liturgical year. Whatever cycle a congregation adopts, select that cycle early and set your time frames accordingly.

Second, double and triple check all the dates for the catechetical sessions, the rites, and celebrations so as to have as few conflicts with other activities as possible. We originally chose to meet on Wednesdays with the thought of tying the seasons to Advent and Lent midweek worship expecting this to enhance the process. However, we have found these seasons to be trying times for the pastor, due to the time demands of these times of year. We have also found that this schedule has “compressed” our meeting times, which has not contributed to a relaxed atmosphere. We would suggest, if at all possible, meet on Sunday mornings so that the lectionary reflections will tie more directly to the worship

experience. Again, be careful of compressing the time too tightly, so as not to inhibit the exchange between the participants.

Third, plan a comfortable space for the sessions. Make sure everything is set up in advance, and there are no conflicts. Test projectors, compact disc players, and other equipment ahead of time so that the sessions flow smoothly. Make sure that heating and air conditioning are adequate. Create a cozy environment.

Fourth, prepare all materials in advance. Produce more materials than you believe you will need. We have found that after the process has started, individuals seem to come out of the woodwork which necessitates printing more materials at the last second. We have found that it is better to have too much in the way of materials than not enough.

Implementation

When the congregation starts implementing the catechumenate, we would recommend that you do the following:

First, “pray without ceasing” for the process. Ask your prayer chains to pray for the catechumenate, for the catechumenate leadership team, for the pastor, for the inquirers, and for protection from the wiles of the devil. Include prayers in weekly worship for the catechumenate and for those coming to the waters of Holy Baptism. Pray for and with each other whenever you meet together in order to mature in the process.

Second, communicate with the parish regularly on the progress of the catechumenate. Hold the vision of a baptizing community under Christ before the membership. Use a “logo” which identifies all catechumenate articles to attract the eye and lead individuals to read your communications.

Third, be consistent. If you say that you are going to meet at a certain time and place, do it. Be careful to not change meeting times or places as this has a tendency to discourage those who are participating. Comfort is the goal. It is our desire to make people comfortable with the process and to make it a familiar part of their week.

Fourth, relax. Remember to take time to laugh and celebrate what God is doing in and through the process of the catechumenate. It is a process and thus takes time. God is in control and whether we can understand it or not, God knows exactly what He is doing!

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Major Applied Project has been to explore a centuries old process of communicating the faith, and to adapt and field test the process of the Ancient Catechumenate at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saint Louis, Missouri.

I have attempted to complete this project in a way that has been theologically consistent with the Lutheran Confessions and has employed excellent teaching methodology and practice. Through this project I have matured in my understanding of the process of catechetical formation in the early church as well as in my theological understanding of the basis for the catechumenate process.

The process of adapting material and developing new resources for use in the process has been extremely time consuming. However, this labor has been fruitful, for it has made me appreciate the effort that others have already put forth. The guidelines which I now have in written form will prove valuable in the future, as I revise and edit them even more. I envision that this will be an on-going task, as new dynamics of the catechumenate process are explored and placed into practice. The importance of a written manual for sponsors can not be stressed enough. As sponsors begin their task, they have on-going questions as to their specific responsibilities. The written manual gives them a resource to fall back on and reflect upon as they accompany their charges in the process of the catechumenate.

The weakness that I have discovered in the material from the RCIA, the Episcopalian Church, and the ELCA, is the lack of a stated place for core teaching of doctrine in the catechumenate process. It seems to be assumed that core teachings will take place in catechetical sessions and in lectionary studies. I have discovered that this can be a dangerous assumption. It is the responsibility of the called and ordained pastor to ensure that the doctrines of the faith are properly taught. To insure that this teaching has taken place, I have included in the catechetical process at Hope a series of lesson plans which teach the doctrinal basics using the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism (Appendix, pp.169-190).

The catechumenate in the Lutheran parish calls for the pastor to be fully committed to the Great Commission of making disciples. The pastor is the key to the catechumenate in the parish. As the shepherd, resident theologian, preacher, and cheerleader, the pastor is the one who is instrumental to the success of the entire process. This involves a tremendous time commitment and dedication to the process. If the pastor is unwilling to devote himself fully to the catechumenate process, it will surely struggle.

The obvious question needs to be asked: "Was it worth the time and effort?" My answer is an unqualified, "Yes!" Through the process of catechumenate, there has been an increased level of catechetical instruction at Hope Ev. Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri. Through the process of the catechumenate, various members of the congregation have grown spiritually, as they have practiced the disciplines of the Christian faith. Through increased commitment to worship, reflective Bible study, prayer, and service in the community, the catechists and sponsors have a deeper appreciation of who they are as God's people. The catechumens are being thoroughly

equipped for living out their Christian faith. They are becoming more familiar with the lectionary portion of the Scriptures and with the Lutheran Confessions. They are growing to appreciate the width and depth of their faith. They are becoming involved in serving the Lord through the various ministries of the congregation. And they are actively worshipping in the Lord's house.

It has been my purpose to examine "The Catechumenate: An Apprenticeship in Christian Living" as a contemporary model in which the faith can be experienced today, and to explore the roles of the catechist, as well as the role of the sponsor.

I have attempted to demonstrate that the church is a living organism with Jesus Christ as its head. The believers, as the various parts of the organism, each have a part to contribute in the development and growth of the faith of an inquirer to Christianity as well as to the newly baptized. As the Body of Christ, we are called to "Be what you see, and receive what you are" (*Estote quod videtis, et accipite quod estis*).²⁹ We are called to be His hands and feet, eyes and ears, mind and body in order that those who are lost may receive Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

VI. ENDNOTES

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- ¹ William Harmless Augustine and the Catechumenate (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 41.
- ² Ibid., pp. 45-46.
- ³ John Theodore Mueller Christian Dogmatics (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 491.
- ⁴ Robert Hofstad "How Does The Catechumenal Process Work?" in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), p. 15.
- ⁵ Ibid., p.17.
- ⁶ Frederick P. Ludolph Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1992), p. 6.
- ⁷ Hofstad p. 19.
- ⁸ Ludolph, pp. 6-7.
- ⁹ Ibid., p.7.
- ¹⁰ Francis Pieper Christian Dogmatics, Volume III (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 443.
- ¹¹ Walter Huffman "Who Is Involved In Catechumenal Ministry?" in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), p. 29.
- ¹² Tappert, p. 312.
- ¹³ Luther's Works Volume 46. Eds. Robert C. Schultz and Helmut T. Lehman. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967. (hereafter referred to as LW) pp. 219-220.
- ¹⁴ LW, 30, p. 134.
- ¹⁵ LW, 31, p. 231.

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- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 209.
- ¹⁷ Tappert, p. 36.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 31.
- ¹⁹ Martin Chemnitz Ministry, Word and Sacraments, trans. and ed. by Luther Poellot (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981) p. 29.
- ²⁰ C. F. W. Walther Walther on the Church, trans. John Drickamer (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), Thesis I, p. 73.
- ²¹ C. F. W. Walther Church and Ministry (Kirche und Amt) J. T. Mueller, trans. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987) p. 22.
- ²² Ibid., p. 22.
- ²³ James B. Dunning New Wine: New Wineskins (Chicago: William H. Sadlier, Inc, 1981) p. 91.
- ²⁴ Thomas Downs A Journey to Self Through Dialogue: An Excursion of Self-Discovery for Individuals and Groups (West Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1977) p. 66.
- ²⁵ Georganne Robertson “What are the Qualities of a Catechist?” Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Catechetical Guide (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997) p. 33.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 39.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 41.
- ²⁹ Harmless, p. 319.

VII. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annotations are compiled by the following individuals. Their notes are indicated by their initials following the note. James Brauer's notes and Maxwell Johnson's notes were supplied by James Brauer. Karen Ward's notes are from a draft of material given at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. Her reviews are now published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate.

Dennis F. Lucero—df

James L. Brauer—jlb

Karen Ward—kw

Maxwell E. Johnson—mej

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Harmless, William. Augustine and the Catechumenate. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995.

As a pastor in North Africa who had a flair for teaching and who meditated deeply on the complexities of the human heart, Augustine worked as a teacher of candidates for baptism. The author reconstructs the experience from Augustine's writings and his sermons.

Contents: 1-The RCIA: its catechetical gaps and silences--what the RCIA says, what the RCIA implies, what the RCIA does not say, the hypothesis, the investigation. 2-The fourth-century catechumenate--inherited patterns from the third century, shifts in the fourth century, catechumenate-trends in the Greek East, mystagogy-trends in the Greek East. 3-Augustine and the Catechumenate in Milan--Augustine and the catechumen, Augustine the petitioner, Augustine the neophyte. 4-Evangelization: unrolling the scroll, the candidate-milieu, motives and types, the catechesis-principles, the catechist-cultivating delight, the catechesis-examples, the catechumen-entrance rites, the message and the messenger. 5-Catechumenate: breaking open the bread of the word--feeding the hungry, the liturgy of the word, noisy improvisations-the sermon and its hearers, a seasoned rhetoric-the method, Scripture and its riddles-the core curriculum, *Conversi ad Dominum*-dismissal. 6-Catechumenate: the eagle and the staircase--Two sessions-December, melodic themes-the paradox of Christ, the church as the inn of the Samaritan, baptism and the debate with the Donatists, a spirituality for exiles, pedagogy in practice, turning to the catechumens, the theater of the word. 7-Lent: time in the womb--the cross-weave of faith and works, boot camp-the Lenten discipline, emancipation proclamation-the scrutiny, a pact among pearl-merchants: the creed, the two wings of prayer: the Our Father, Lent and the midwife's art. 8-Mystagogy: baking bread, fermenting wine--lamps and hearts ablaze, the Easter vigil, the great sap-Easter morning, be what you see, receive what you are: the Eucharist, hunting down death: Easter

week, chirping to fledglings leaving the nest-the octave, mystagogy tuned to the key of endtime. 9-Peroration--the spoken word: rhetoric, the visible word: liturgy, the written word: scripture, the word made flesh: Christ.

Has list of charts, list of abbreviations, select bibliography and an index. This work shows how rhetoric can serve the needs of catechumens and how Augustine applied the word to them. jlb

Hofstad, Robert D. "How Does The Catechumenal Process Work?" In Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.

Welcome to Christ is one of three new volumes from the ELCA concerning the catechumenate. This particular volume contains a series of articles which focus on the basics of the catechumenal process. This volume is helpful though there are concerns for the concept of ongoing conversion and sanctification. dfl

Huffman, Walter. "Who Is Involved In Catechumenal Ministry?" In Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.

Johnson, Donald W. Praying the Catechism. Winnipeg: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1995.

This resource has 90 devotional readings organized thematically around the outline of Luther's Small Catechism. The author reflects on Baptism, Eucharist, Confession, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed. It is an ideal resource to use during Lent, Holy Week, and the Easter Season. dfl

Johnson, Maxwell E. Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation. Collegeville: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1995.

An ecumenical collection of essays from liturgical scholars; many essays, which have been required reading, are now brought under one cover. It analyzes ancient sources and challenges traditional interpretations of these sources, investigates the development and meaning of "confirmation," describes and interprets contemporary initiation rites and discusses infant "initiation."

Contents. Introduction, Maxwell Johnson. 1. Christian initiation in post-conciliar Roman Catholicism: a brief report, Aidan Kavanagh. 2. Recent research on Christian initiation, Georg Kretschmar. 3. The origin of Christian Baptism, Adela Yarbro Collins. 4. The original meaning of the prebaptismal anointing and its implications, Gabriele Winkler. 5. Baptismal practice in the Alexandrian tradition: Eastern or Western?, Paul F. Bradshaw. 6. Models from Philo in Origen's teaching on original sin, Jean Laporte. 7. From three weeks to forty days: Baptismal preparation and the origins of Lent, Maxwell E. Johnson. 8. "Diem baptismo sollempniorem": initiation and Easter in Christian antiquity, Paul F. Bradshaw. 9. Confirmation: A suggestion from structure, Aidan Kavanagh. 10. The theology of the postbaptismal rites in the seventh and eighth century Gallican church, Joseph L. Levesque. 11. Confirmation or chrismation? A study in comparative liturgy, Gabriele Winkler. 12. Confirmation reconsidered: rite and meaning, Frank C. Quinn. 13. The origins of confirmation: an analysis of Aidan Kavanagh's hypothesis (with response by Aidan Kavanagh), Paul Turner. 14. Unfinished and unbegun revisited: the rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Aidan Kavanagh. 15. Three new initiation rites, Laurence H. Stookey. 16. New rites of initiation and their implications: in the Lutheran churches, Eugene L. Brand. 17. Vivid signs of the gifts of the Spirit? the Lima text on Baptism and some recent English language Baptismal liturgies, Bryan D. Spinks. 18. The postconciliar infant baptism debate in the American Catholic church, Paul F. X. Covino. 19. Baptism and communion of infants: a Lutheran view, Eugene L. Brand. 20. Infant Baptism reconsidered, Mark Searle.

Has references within footnotes, but no comprehensive bibliography. Has subject index. This is a major contribution to the broader and emerging issues around baptism and the catechumenate by scholars in the ecumenical circles of liturgy studies. jlb

Kavanagh, Aidan. The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation. New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978.

Excellent study of the history and development of the Rites of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist with attention to contemporary pastoral practice. mej

Lathrop, Gordon W. Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate. Congregational Prayers to Accompany the Catechumenal Process. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1992.

Rites for the adult catechumenate during Lent and/or Advent structured according to the lectionary of the Lutheran Book of Worship and the process suggested by the "Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism" in the Occasional Services, 1982. mej

Lewinski, Ron. Guide for Sponsors. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987.

A classic resource that provides guidelines, activities, and prayers for sponsors who accompany, listen to, challenge, and share their faith with catechumens. kw

Strong emphasis on Roman Catholic concept of ongoing conversion. Adapted for use in Lutheran congregation and used as basis for catechist's manual also. dfl

Ludolph, Frederick P. Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1992.

Provides an overview of the catechumenal process with special attention to the baptism of adults and those seeking to celebrate Affirmation of Baptism. mej

Luther's Small Catechism. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.

Luther's Works. Eds. Robert C. Schultz and Helmut T. Lehman. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967.

Lutheran Worship. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982.

MacMullen, Ramsay. Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

McDonnell, Killian, and George T. Montague Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Four Centuries. Collegeville, MN.: The Liturgical Press, 1991.

McElligot, Ann E. P. The Catechumenal Process. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990.

A manual for implementing the catechumenate in the Episcopal Church in the USA. mej

This resource is a guidebook outlining the implementation of the catechumenate. It discusses catechumenal leadership in a parish. This resource also includes helpful ideas for catechists who lead catechumenal gatherings. dfl

Merriman, Michael W. The Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate. New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990.

A collection of papers from a 1988 conference of the same name, the authors discuss the various times, ministries, and rites of the catechumenate. kw

Mick, Lawrence E. RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiating Assembly. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989.

For the RC church "the RCIA offers the best hope we have of becoming a renewed and vibrant Church." This work tries to deal with the implications for change and rethinking with the present adaptation of ancient practices..

Contents-Preface, 1-The origins of the RCIA, 2-Some recent shifts in understanding, 3-Patterns of initiation, 4-The meaning of conversion, 5-Understanding the RCIA, 6-Adapt, adapt, adapt, 7-Try to remember.

Each chapter has questions for reflection. Chapter 7 deals with key pieces of the concept of a process of formation in Christian faith and life. Has no bibliography. Relates the process to present realities of American life, inside and outside the church. A good starting place for grasping what this pattern of bringing people to the church intends. jlb

Mitchell, Leonel L. Worship: Initiation and the Churches. Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1991.

Retraces the history and how churches today are converging in their baptismal practice. Gives overview of changes in practice and between traditions.

Contents: Introduction, Tradition-1. The "shape" of baptismal liturgy, 2. Baptismal catechesis: from Hippolytus to Augustine, 3. Four Syrian fathers on Baptism, 4. Ambrosian Baptismal rites, 5. Mozarabic Baptismal rites, 6. Baptismal catechesis in the Reformation period, Revising the Rites-7. The Roman Catholic church, 8. The American Episcopal church, 9. Other churches, Particular Questions-10. The thanksgiving over the water in the Baptismal rites of the West, 11. Confirmation in the Western church, 12. Sunday as a Baptismal day.

Each chapter has endnotes. jlb

Morris, Thomas. The RCIA: Transforming the Church, A Resource for Pastoral Implementation. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.

Morris, Thomas H. Walking Together in Faith: A Workbook for Sponsors of Christian Initiation. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

This workbook outlines the sponsor's role and responsibility in the catechumenal process. Ideal for use in sponsor formation and training sessions. kw

Mueller, John Theodore. Christian Dogmatics. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955.

Murphy Center for Liturgical Research. Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976.

Occasional Services: A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1982.

Includes an "Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism" in the context of a catechumenal process but does not provide for the full process encountered in the RCIA or the Episcopal Book of Occasional Services.
mej

Pfatteicher, Philip H. The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995.

Pfatteicher provides a basic understanding of what the liturgy is and does and lays the groundwork for further study, concentrating on the "language" of it in an age that often seeks "dumbed-down" versions of everything to avoid any possible "learning curve" for use of something. It, thus, suggests how formation of a Christian for interaction with the "biblical stuff" of worship is crucial to maturity for engaging in it.

Contents: Preface, 1-The language of the liturgy (learning a new language, toward a vernacular, formation by fidelity), 2-The energy of language (creation by words, language and gesture, the role of silence), 3-Poetry: allusive language (lyric brevity, the role of the reader, multiplicity of meaning), 4-Transcendent language (songs of power, heightened speech, lessons of music), 5-The necessity of continuity (the long perspective, the moon and the mystery, the conservation of tradition), 6-Worship and Christian formation (liturgy as the church's school, subjective-objective character, submission to conventions), 7-Beyond the boundaries (deepened sensitivity, liturgical language, on the frontier), Notes, Index. jlb

Pieper, Francis. Christian Dogmatics. Volume III. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.

Plass, Ewald M. What Luther Says: An Anthology. Volume I. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959.

Powell, Karen Hinman. How to Form A Catechumenal Team. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1986.

This resource gives practical, step-by-step guidance on recruiting, training, and maintaining catechumenal leadership in a congregation. kw

Ramshaw, Gail. "Celebrating Baptism in Stages: A Proposal," In Alternative Futures for Worship, vol. 2: Baptism and Confirmation. Ed. Mark Searle. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, and
Collegetown: The Liturgical Press, 1988.

Current official Roman Catholic rite for the full initiation of unbaptized adults and older children and for the confirmation of baptized adults. More than a set of rites the RCIA is a full process of initiation leading from initial inquiry to the period after initiation itself. An indispensable resource for anyone considering the development and introduction of a catechumenate/catechumenal process. mej

Robertson, Georganne. "What Are The Qualities Of A Catechist?" Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Catechetical Guide. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.

Excellent article on the catechist. Written from the perspective of the ELCA. This article gives a clear presentation of the role, qualities, and commitment of the catechist on the catechumenal team. dfi

Senn, Frank C. The Witness of the Worshipping Community: Liturgy. New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

Too many churches in recent years have turned worship into entertainment and the gospel has been devalued. In contrast worship that invites people to enter into the gospel mysteries and gives witness to the living faith of the community is genuine worship that reveals God's presence in the community and speaks to the deepest needs of religious seekers. The best way to draw people into church is to give them an experience of true worship, in word and sacrament, where God becomes accessible and real. Churches that practice evangelism through the quality of their prayer and community life must be serious about how they welcome people and incorporate different cultures, reflecting on the way faith develops in people and the way new members are absorbed into the community. Ancient models of initiation can enlighten the present practice of evangelism.

Contents: preface, worship and witness: tensions and relationships, the character of worship: corruption of practice, the mission of the church: defective concepts of evangelism, the witness of baptism: passage and transformation, the witness of the eucharist: the world as sacrament, invitational evangelism: hospitality and inculturation, when the public comes to church: festivals and occasional services, liturgy and evangelism: calendar coordination, Christian initiation: a task for the territorial church.

Has notes. This work makes a case for the catechumenate and for accessible, "real" worship. jlb

Smith, Ken. Six Models of Confirmation Ministry. Chicago: Division for Congregational Ministries, ELCA, 1993.

Briefly describes the traditional and modern models of the catechumenate in relationship to the program of confirmation ministry. mej

The Book of Concord. Ed. Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.

Tucker, Karen Westerfield. Accompanying the Journey: A Handbook for Sponsors. Nashville: Discipleship Resources of the United Methodist Church, 1997.

A resource for sponsors that helps them understand their role in embodying the congregations welcome and disciple-making work. The handbook discusses the qualities of sponsors and outlines the nuances of their ministry of listening to those who are moving toward baptism. kw

Tudge, Paul. Initiating Adults: Lessons From The Roman Catholic Rite. Bramcote, England: Grove Books, 1988.

Walther, C. F. W. Church and Ministry (Kirche und Amt). Trans. J. T. Mueller. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981.

Walther, C. F. W., Walther on the Church, Trans. John Drickamer. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981,

Waszink, J.H. and J.C.M. Van Winden. Tertullianus De Idololatria. Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1987.

Webber, Robert E. Celebrating Our Faith: Evangelism Through Worship. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Introduces the catechumenal process (“liturgical evangelism”), especially the Roman Catholic RCIA, to contemporary Protestants. mej

Webber, Robert E. The Catechumenal Process: Adult Initiation and Formation for Christian Life and Ministry. New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation (Office of Evangelism Ministry of the Episcopal Church), 1990.

Wilde, James A. A Catechumenate Needs Everybody: Study Guides for Parish Ministers. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.

This resource describes and outlines the different tasks and ministries related to the catechumenate and Christian baptism. Ideal for helping parishes develop catechumenal teams. kw

Wilde, James A. Finding and Forming Sponsors and Godparents. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.

This resource is a basic training manual for congregations beginning the catechumenate process. Ideal for developing guidelines for sponsors. dfl

APPENDIX

THE CATECHUMENATE
An Apprenticeship in the Christian Faith

Preparation of Adults for Holy Baptism

TIME I: Inquiry: A Time of Exploration

Rite 1: Welcome to the Catechumenate

First Sunday in Advent

TIME II: Catechumenate: Deeper Exploration of Faith and Ministry

Rite 2: Enrollment for Baptism

Ash Wednesday

TIME III: Lent: Preparation for Baptism

Rite 3: Holy Baptism and Eucharist

Palm Sunday/Easter Vigil

TIME IV: Easter: Baptismal Living - The Call to Mission and the Meaning of the Sacraments

Rite 4: Affirmation of Vocation in the World

Day of Pentecost

THE CATECHUMENATE
An Apprenticeship in the Christian Faith

Preparation of Baptized Persons for Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant

TIME I: Inquiry: A Time of Exploration

Rite 1: Welcome of Baptized Christians into the Community

First Sunday in Advent

TIME II: Catechumenate: Deeper Exploration of Faith and Ministry

Rite 2: Enrollment of Candidates/Enrollment for Affirmation

Ash Wednesday

TIME III: Lent: Preparation for Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant

Rite 3: Blessing the Candidates

Second Sunday in Lent

Rite 4: Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant

Palm Sunday/Easter Vigil

TIME IV: Easter: Baptismal Living - The Call to Mission and the Meaning of the Sacraments

Rite 5: Affirmation of Vocation in the World

Day of Pentecost

AFRICAN BIBLE STUDY or COLLATIO

This method of Scripture study is known in different circles by two different names. The term *collatio* is derived from the Latin and refers to the process of “collecting” or gathering thoughts, reflections, prayers through the hearing of a passage of Scripture read multiple times. Another name for this is *African Bible Study*, a reference to this practice among base-Christian communities in South Africa. This method has been used with a great deal of satisfaction, especially when participants may have limited reading ability. No matter what it is called, this method turns Bible study away from the intellectual pursuit of knowledge about the text and toward an attitude of listening to what God is saying through the text.

The outline of the process is adaptable at the discretion of the catechist or the group, but it is important that the group share an understanding of the “ground rules.” In a society that takes little time to listen, it may take some practice for people to learn to listen carefully to the Scriptures. Sharing of insights is encouraged. Debate or arguing points of interpretation is discouraged. Respecting the offerings of each individual is important. The group should agree to maintain trust and confidentiality with one another.

This method of Bible study was included in a draft from the Catechumenate Training Days conducted in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. They have since been published by the ELCA in Welcome To Christ.

African Bible Study—Collatio

- The catechist begins with an opening word that reminds the participants that Christ is present where we are gathered in His name. The catechist then invites each person to listen carefully to the word as it speaks to them.
- The catechist speaks a short prayer of invocation.
- The selected passage is read slowly, distinctly, with pauses that allows hearers to dwell on the text.
- The group keeps silence for a few minutes of reflection.
- Participants are invited to share briefly a word, a phrase, or an image from the text that catches their attention and speaks to their life at this time.
- The passage is read a second time, slowly and deliberately.
- Silence is kept for a few minutes.
- Participants are invited to share about how the text speaks to a place in their lives that is deeper and wider. “Deeper” means reflecting more deliberately about some aspect of self that is challenged, questioned, or affirmed by the text. “Wider” means reflecting on how the text speaks about the person’s relationships with others including family, work, world.
- The passage is read a third time.
- Silence is kept for a few minutes.
- Participants are invited to speak a prayer that grows out of the text and their reflection on it. Sometimes the catechist might encourage individuals to pray for themselves, and other times they might pray for others in the group. The catechist closes the session with prayer or a hymn.

DEFINITION AND CLARIFICATION OF CATECHUMENATE TERMS

*Definitions from the Catechumenate Training Days held in Oveido, Florida.
These were principally provided by Rev. Karen Ward.*

- a. **LCMS.** Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
- b. **Confessions or Lutheran Confessions.** The creedal and confessional document of The Lutheran Church compiled in 1580 in the Book of Concord, the English translation is the Tappert Edition, Fortress Press, 1959. This contains the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian), the Augsburg Confession (1531), Smalcald Articles (1537), the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537), Luther's Small Catechism (1529), Luther's Large Catechism (1529), and the Formula of Concord (1577).
- c. **Synod.** With the capital "S" as another designation for the LCMS.
- d. **Affirmation of Baptism.** This rite may be used at the Vigil of Easter (and other appropriate Sundays) when Christians from other denominations become members of a Lutheran congregation or when baptized persons who desire to participate actively in the life of the church are restored to membership through this affirmation of the baptismal covenant.
- e. **Affirmation of the Vocation of the Baptized.** This rite, celebrated on Pentecost or any other appropriate Sunday, affirms the ministry in daily life of all the baptized. It is a fitting conclusion to the catechumenate and an appropriate form of God's blessing on those who have entered fully into the life and witness of the congregation.
- f. **Blessing.** During the time of *Lent: Baptismal Preparation*, the Gospel readings for the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays set forth strong baptismal images. On these Sundays, the candidates preparing for baptism or affirmation of baptism are invited to receive God's blessing and the prayers of the congregation.
- g. **Candidate.** In the catechumenal process, the term *candidate* refers to a catechumen who has been enrolled for baptism/affirmation. The candidate is a catechumen who has made a public declaration to join this congregation through baptism or the affirmation of baptism. Usually this public declaration is made during the Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism. If the candidate will not be received into the church at Easter, then the enrollment may take place a few weeks before the time of baptism or affirmation of baptism.
- h. **Catechumen.** An unbaptized adult or a baptized but uncatechized adult who has been publicly welcomed into a time of more depthful and deliberate formation in the faith through the rite of Welcome.

- i. **Catechesis.** From the Greek, meaning “to echo” or “to sound forth.” Formation in the Christian faith takes place through worship, reflection on scripture, prayer, and ministry in daily life. Catechesis also occurs, for instance, when catechumens and sponsors engage in mutual conversation and reflection on the practice of faith as well as through the study of scripture and catechism.
- j. **Catechism.** A handbook of faith in summary form. Luther’s *Small Catechism* sets forth the movement of the catechumenate itself: Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession and Absolution, Sacrament of the Altar, Morning and Evening Prayer, Grace at Table, Duties.
- k. **Catechist.** A teacher and model of the disciplines of the Christian faith. The term *catechist* is used of those who are recognized by a congregation as teachers or mentors of catechumens.
- l. **Catechumenate.** An apprenticeship in the Christian faith for older youths and adults that leads to baptism or affirmation of baptism. The catechumenate stresses the catechesis and formation of those preparing for baptism or affirmation of baptism in a Christian community that is actively involved in the process of welcoming newcomers and sharing the faith with them.
- m. **Easter: Baptismal Living.** At the Vigil of Easter, catechumens are baptized or affirm their baptism and receive communion with the congregation. As new members of the church, they enter into the Fifty Days of the Easter season as a time to reflect on the meaning of their baptism/communion and the implications of living their daily lives as members of the congregation. While the Vigil of Easter is a primary time to celebrate baptism, the church recognizes other significant days in the year when baptism or affirmation of baptism is appropriate: Pentecost, the Baptism of Our Lord, and All Saints. In some Christian communions, the Fifty Days of Easter are spoken of as a time of *mystagogy*, an early Christian Greek word that refers to the “opening of the mysteries” of baptism and communion.
- n. **Enrollment.** On or near the First Sunday in Lent, catechumens who will be baptized at the Vigil of Easter are “enrolled,” publicly recognized as preparing for the sacraments of Holy Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism and Holy Communion.
- o. **Formation.** Giving form and structure to the Christian life. Formation in faith involves the whole person—body, mind, heart, and soul. Acting through worship, scripture, the Christian community, prayer, and ministry in daily life, the Holy Spirit forms the attitudes and actions of the catechumen. There is an appropriate distinction between *initial* formation (for catechumens) and *ongoing* formation (for all the baptized). Baptism brings one into a community that itself is always being formed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

- p. **Inquirer.** A person asking initial questions about the faith which may or may not include any reference to Christ, the church, or baptism. This name applies to those unbaptized or baptized but uncatechized adults who are involved in Inquiry, the first phase or time of the catechumenate.
- q. **Lent: Baptismal Preparation.** During the season of Lent, those catechumens who will be baptized at Easter enter into a more intense and immediate period of preparation. They are welcomed by the congregation into this time through the rite of Enrollment of those preparing for baptism. This time includes a series of blessings for the catechumens. In some Christian communions, this time is referred to as a period of purification and enlightenment.
- r. **Newly baptized.** The early Christians referred to the newly baptized as *neophytes*, those who are newly enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the washing of baptism. During the Fifty Days of the Easter season, the newly baptized reflect on the meaning of their baptism/communion and their mission to be servants of Christ in daily life.
- s. **Seeker.** A person who is interested in aspects of Christian faith and life and is a casual participant in the congregation's worship.
- t. **Sponsor.** A baptized and active Christian who serves as a mentor and friend to the person involved in the catechumenal journey. A sponsor is frequently a friend or family member, but may be any baptized Christian who agrees to accept the role of guide and catechumenal participant throughout the journey to baptism and beyond.
- u. **Uncatechized adult.** A person who was baptized but received little or no formation in the Christian faith.
- v. **Vigil of Easter.** This service is the culmination of Holy Week, since it celebrates the death and resurrection of the Lord who now gives himself to the church through the means of grace, the word and sacraments. The proclamation of the history of salvation leads the community to the font where new brothers and sisters are born of water and the word, and the baptized affirm their baptismal promises. From the font, the entire community gathers at the table to celebrate the communion.
- w. **Welcome.** When, after an open-ended time of inquiry, an individual decides to enter the catechumenate in consultation with a pastor, sponsor, and/or catechumenal coordinator, he or she is welcomed by the congregation at its principal Sunday service. In this welcome, the individual declares his or her desire to enter this time of initial formation in the faith, and the congregation declares its intention to support this person through prayer and witness.

HOPE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

AND

SCHOOL

RELIGION MEMORY BOOK

SERIES "B"

(sample)

1997-1998

To the Teacher:

This memory book is to be used at Hope School in conjunction with your religion class. This booklet is designed and intended for growth in the Christian faith and the teachings of the Lutheran Church. All levels in the school will be studying and memorizing the same lessons each week of the school year.

The catechism lessons are progressive in nature and follow the sequence in Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Each lesson is written for the 8th grade and are to be adjusted for each of the lower grades by the classroom teacher. It is the determination of each individual teacher as to the amount of material that he or she will use in their particular classroom.

The Scripture lessons are all from the Gospel lessons of the three-year lectionary of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. This sequence of lessons can be found in the propers of Lutheran Worship.

The hymn stanza(s) will be the sermon hymn for the particular date on the church calendar. Generally, the hymn selections will be chosen for doctrinal content and relationship to the Gospel lesson and the Catechetical lesson for the week.

How to Use the Memory Book:

The week preceding the date of the church-year, each grade level is asked to memorize the given catechetical lesson, Scripture lesson, and hymn stanza(s). *The specific memory passages are in bold, italicized print.* These are to be studied and shared in the classroom each day with emphasis on memory recitation. On chapel days, at the beginning of the service, the entire school will recite from memory the catechism lesson of the week and the Scripture verse. The hymn stanza(s) will be sung as the sermon hymn.

Our Sunday worship will focus on the Gospel text and the sermon hymn will be the same as that used on chapel day. The children's talks will often incorporate the catechism lesson of the week.

It is our prayer that by providing the same memory for each grade level and using those lessons in chapel and on Sunday, that the families within the congregation will be built up in their faith and encouraged in their worship life. May you be a loving and caring role model to those precious souls which God has placed into your loving hands.

To the Parent

Please work with your child on a daily basis to learn the memory passages. Memorize along with them and make it a part of your daily life. Review the memory before attending worship in order to emphasize the importance of the lessons in the service.

Memory for Pentecost 16, Series "B" (Sept. 7, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: The First Commandment and Its Meaning

"You shall have no other gods."

What does this mean? "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."

Text: Mark 7:31-37

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought Him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Him to place His hand on the man.

After He took Him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put His fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (Which means, "Be opened!") At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue loosened and he began to speak plainly.

Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more He did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. ***"He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."***

Hymn: "God, Whose Almighty Word" LW #317 stanza 4

***Holy and blessed Three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might!
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the earth, far and wide,
Let there be light!***

Memory for Holy Cross Day, Series "B" (Sept. 14, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: The Second Commandment and Its Meaning

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

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Text: John 12: 20-33

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ***Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.***" He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Hymn: "Take Up Your Cross," The Savior Said. LW#382, stanza 1.

***"Take up your cross," the Savior said, "If you would my disciple be;
Forsake the past, and come this day, And humbly follow after me."***

Memory for Pentecost 18, Series "B" (Sept. 21, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: Third Commandment and Its Meaning

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Text: Mark 9:30-37

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise. But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "***Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.***"

Hymn: "Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us" LW#402, stanza 5

***Lord of glory, you have bought us
With your lifeblood as the price,
Never grudging for the lost ones
That tremendous sacrifice.
Give us faith to trust you boldly,
Hope, to stay our souls on you;
But, oh, best of all your graces,
With your love our love renew.***

Memory for Pentecost 19, Series "B" (Sept. 28, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: Fourth Commandment and Its Meaning

Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

Text: Mark 9:38-50

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. No one does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. ***And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’*** Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

Hymn: “All People That On Earth Do Dwell” LW#435, stanza 5

***To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God whom heav’n and earth adore,
From us and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.***

Memory for **Pentecost 20, Series “B”** (Oct. 5, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: Fifth Commandment and Its Meaning

You shall not murder.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

Text: Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came and tested Jesus by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” “What did Moses command you?” He replied. They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ***“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*** When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this He was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.

Hymn: “Holy, Holy, Holy” LW#168, stanza 1

***Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holly, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!***

HOPE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

AND

SCHOOL

RELIGION MEMORY BOOK

SERIES "C"

(sample)

1997-1998

To the Teacher:

This memory book is to be used at Hope School in conjunction with your religion class. This booklet is designed and intended for growth in the Christian faith and the teachings of the Lutheran Church. All levels in the school will be studying and memorizing the same lessons each week of the school year.

The catechism lessons are progressive in nature and follow the sequence in Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Each lesson is written for the 8th grade and are to be adjusted for each of the lower grades by the classroom teacher. It is the determination of each individual teacher as to the amount of material that he or she will use in their particular classroom.

The Scripture lessons are all from the Gospel lessons of the three-year lectionary of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. This sequence of lessons can be found in the propers of Lutheran Worship.

The hymn stanza(s) will be the sermon hymn for the particular date on the church calendar. Generally, the hymn selections will be chosen for doctrinal content and relationship to the Gospel lesson and the Catechetical lesson for the week.

How to Use the Memory Book:

The week preceding the date of the church-year, each grade level is asked to memorize the given catechetical lesson, Scripture lesson, and hymn stanza(s). *The specific memory passages are in bold, italicized print.* These are to be studied and shared in the classroom each day with emphasis on memory recitation. On chapel days, at the beginning of the service, the entire school will recite from memory the catechism lesson of the week and the Scripture verse. The hymn stanza(s) will be sung as the sermon hymn.

Our Sunday worship will focus on the Gospel text and the sermon hymn will be the same as that used on chapel day. The children's talks will often incorporate the catechism lesson of the week.

It is our prayer that by providing the same memory for each grade level and using those lessons in chapel and on Sunday, that the families within the congregation will be built up in their faith and encouraged in their worship life. May you be a loving and caring role model to those precious souls which God has placed into your loving hands.

To the Parent

Please work with your child on a daily basis to learn the memory passages. Memorize along with them and make it a part of your daily life. Review the memory before attending worship in order to emphasize the importance of the lessons in the service.

Memory for 1st Sunday in Advent, Series C (Nov. 30, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: No School

Text: Luke 21:25-36

(Jesus says), "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will ever pass away. Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the earth. ***Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.***"

Hymn: "Savior of the Nations, Come" LW#13, stanza 1 & 8

***Savior of the nations come, Show yourself the virgin's son
Marvel, heaven, wonder, earth, That our God chose such a birth.***

***Glory to the Father sing, Glory to the Son, our king,
Glory to the Spirit be Now and through eternity.***

Memory for 2nd Sunday in Advent, Series C (Dec. 7, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: The Second Article of the Apostle's Creed and Its Meaning

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 arose 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.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Text: Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: ***“A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, and the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.’”***

Hymn: “Comfort, Comfort These My People” LW#28, stanza 1.

***“Comfort, comfort these my people, speak of peace!” so says our God.
Comfort these who sit in darkness Groaning under sin’s dread rod.
To my people I proclaim Pardon now in Jesus’ name.
Tell them that their sins I cover, That their warfare now is over!”***

Catechism Lesson: The Third Article of the Apostle's Creed and Its Meaning

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.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Text: Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the foot of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect anymore than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." *The people were all waiting expectantly and were wondering in their hearts, if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.* He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.

Hymn: "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" LW#14, stanza 1.

*On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings!*

4th Sunday in Advent, Series C (Dec. 21, 1997)

Catechism Lesson: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism - First

What is Baptism? Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." [Matt. 28:19]

Text: Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

(vv. 46-55) And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is His name. His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as He said to our father."

Hymn: "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel" LW#31, stanza 1.

***Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!***

PASTOR'S MANUAL

THE CATECHUMENATE

AN APPRENTICESHIP IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

Dear Colleague in Christ,

This manual has been prepared to assist you in introducing the process of the Catechumenate in your congregation. *The Catechumenate: An Apprenticeship In Christian Living* is *not* another program which the parish pastor needs in today's busy and complex ministry. Rather, the Catechumenate is a *process* that is used to bring men, women, and children into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, builds men, women and children up in the Gospel and the practices of the Christian faith, and which sends men, women and children out as witnesses to the Gospel.

It is my prayer that as you seek to make disciples of all the nations, using the process of the Catechumenate will uplift, encourage, and invigorate you in the awesome task of the pastoral ministry. Yours is a noble calling. God bless you in your daily tasks as you share the exciting news of Jesus Christ with your piece of the world.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58)

Dennis F. Lucero
St. Louis, MO
Nativity of Our Lord, 1997

I. What Is The Catechumenate

It is an increasingly common occurrence: Visitors coming to worship ask, "How do I become a Christian?" And after only brief questioning, it becomes exceedingly clear that they have no history in the church whatsoever. No history. No experience. No knowledge. Not even the vocabulary to ask the questions they are yearning to ask. It is an experience which is not only increasingly common, but also increasingly frustrating as the church grasps for tools and resources which might be brought to bear at such a time.

To this scenario comes the Catechumenate - the historic process by which Christ's church engages unbaptized adults and prepares them for the event of Holy Baptism and for baptismal living. The Catechumenate is not a newly-devised program. In fact, it is not a program at all. It is a journey - a pilgrimage - as one who is not yet joined to Christ becomes so enjoined. Through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, the journey begins with the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

At the heart of the Catechumenate are the basic fundamental disciplines of the Christian faith - worship, prayer, reflective study, and community life. These are disciplines employed not to punish, but to strengthen - daily strengthen the believer in his or her confrontations with the powers of darkness and the temptations of the evil one. The Catechumenate is an *apprenticeship in the faith* in that these faith disciplines are consciously and intentionally modeled by those who know and use them regularly - spiritual mentors and catechists.

There are four distinct times in the catechumenal journey: (1) *Inquiry*, (2) *Catechumenate*, (3) *Lent: Baptismal Preparation*, and (4) *Easter: Baptismal Living*. These times are punctuated by liturgical rites celebrated publicly as part of Christian

worship. The rites include a *Welcome to the Catechumenate*, an *Enrollment for Baptism*, the *Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Eucharist*, and an *Affirmation of Vocation*. Time and flexibility are both variable elements. For some this journey through times and rites may be relatively brief. For others it may be lengthy. Flexibility is a standard for each individual and is determined by the one seeking baptism as well as the pastor and the faith community in which the baptism will occur.

Note: The following material on the concept of the catechumenate was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I cleaned up some of the terminology and the theology. I am indebted to Robert Hofstad for his thoughts and concepts. His article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate.

The Catechumenate, when utilized properly, is not a requirement but a gift: a gift from Christ and His Church to unbaptized adults, and a gift to the Church as well, as it discovers itself to be a baptizing community. Joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are crossing over daily from death to new life. This is the heart of the Catechumenate. This is the heart of the Christian faith.

We should be clear on one point: the catechumenate is not simply a program whereby a Christian congregation adds to its list of its members. Rather, it is a way of welcoming, nurturing, and supporting those who are new to the Christian faith. For those not yet joined to Christ, it is an encounter with Christ's dying and rising—the cosmic struggle between God and the powers of darkness—an encounter which takes on life and breath in the faithful participation and practice of the Christian life. The catechumenate is not a necessary prerequisite to the gracious gifts of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

Understood rightly, it is a welcoming—an opportunity to grow in the faith as one makes adult choices about the Christian faith and about being joined to Christ and to his body, the church.

Inquiry

Why do adults come to Christian worship for the first time? We know it is most often the result of a simple, yet genuine, invitation from a friend, colleague, or family member. Why is that invitation accepted in the first place? Experience answers: because there is some unfilled need, a question yearning for an answer, a perceived hole in the fabric of life. This may be the result of some personal tragedy—a death, the loss of a job, a broken relationship, an injury or illness. The timing may coincide with one of the great passages of life—marriage, the birth of a child, a new beginning. But whatever the reason, there are basic fundamental questions being asked, questions about life’s meaning and value: life and death questions.

People who are asking these questions may be called *inquirers*. When inquirers come to worship for the first time, it is vital that we listen to their questions—not our questions; not the questions we think they should have, but their questions. Inquirers need to be listened to in an atmosphere that is safe—where they will not be laughed at—where they can ask their questions without embarrassment. The catechumenal process provides a small group setting where basic fundamental questions can be asked confidently. In this small group, the inquirer is joined by a sponsor and welcomed by the pastor or a congregational member who is a part of the catechumenal team. The group meets on a regular basis.

The sponsor is one who makes the commitment to walk beside his or her charge throughout the entire journey. The sponsor is a companion, a fellow traveler in the path of faith. Any baptized Christian may act as a sponsor. The essential ingredient for sponsors, however, is a commitment to model the disciplines of the Christian life—worship, prayer, scripture reading, and ministry in daily life—in a one-to-one relationship.

When the small group meets, it is the *inquirer's* questions and experience, in dialogue with those who walk with them, that shape the discussion. In this place of open conversation, the Bible—especially the Sunday lectionary—holds a central place.

Gatherings of inquirers may take place on Sundays or during the week, at church or in homes, in the evening or during the day. The key is flexibility. The question needs to be asked, “When can inquirers make a commitment to meet regularly?” In these regular gatherings, inquirers are given the opportunity to ask basic questions, tell the story of their lives, and reflect on the Biblical readings that are proclaimed in public worship.

When appropriate, they are introduced to the practice of prayer and called to reflect on the meaning of the faith for daily life. They are also free to withdraw from the process at any time. There can be no coercion here. In time the inquirer, the pastor, and the coordinator of the congregation’s catechumenal team meet. “Does the inquirer want to continue to explore his or her exploration of the Christian faith?”

Catechumenate

When it is the appropriate time, the inquirer and the sponsor are prepared for the public rite of welcome into the catechumenate. Normally the catechumenate, a period of more focused formation in the faith, will lead to full incorporation into the church through the

Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Yet the shift from general inquiry to catechumenal formation should not be construed as an irrevocable decision to receive baptism. The flexibility and openness that characterize the time of inquiry continue during the time of catechumenal formation.

When the decision to continue has been made with family, sponsors, and pastor, inquirers are welcomed publicly by the congregation into the catechumenate by way of a liturgical rite celebrated in Sunday worship. The Welcome of Candidates can be celebrated at various times during the year, and may be timed differently for each inquirer. This Welcome makes public and formal that which may have been private and informal up to this point. The decision as to the timing involves the inquirer, his or her sponsor, the pastor and other members of the catechumenal team as the journey of faith now continues in a more intentional way.

Following the public welcome, the *catechumen* (as one is called following the welcome) joins other catechumens with their sponsors for regular gatherings. The catechumenate group, consisting of pairs of inquirers and sponsors, is led by a catechist. Like sponsors, catechists are chosen as models of the faith disciplines. In addition, they also serve as teachers, mentors, and group facilitators. Their purpose is to help the catechumens enter more fully into an exploration of faith. Here the emphasis shifts from inquiry to proclamation, from a generic sense of faith to faith in Jesus Christ, from general spiritual questions to Christian theology. While an inquirer, a seeker, might rightly ask the question, “What does it mean to be a religious or spiritual person?” the catechumen would need to hear the question asked, “What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to live a Christian life?” Here the Bible remains the basic resource,

and the Sunday lectionary provides the framework for study, discussion, and prayer. In Lutheran congregations, catechumens are introduced to Luther's Small and Large Catechisms.

During this time the catechumenate group gathers regularly to study, to reflect, and to pray. At the same time, its members are surrounded, embraced, and strengthened by the entire worshipping community—the church. Since catechumens have been publicly received by the congregation as those who are considering entrance into the church through Holy Baptism, catechumens are continually brought before the eyes and ears of the congregation, so kept present in its heart and mind. Catechumens and sponsors worship together regularly. They are prayed for in the prayers of the worshipping assembly.

Lent: Baptismal Preparation

The third time of the catechumenal process is the period of Lent, a time of baptismal preparation, since those preparing for reception into the church will be baptized and receive their first communion on either Palm Sunday or the Vigil of Easter, depending on the local traditions of the congregation. On or near the First Sunday in Lent, catechumens participate in the Rite of Enrollment of those preparing for affirmation of their baptism or for baptism itself on Palm Sunday or Easter Vigil. This third phase of the process is not different than the second; it is a matter of degree rather than kind. To use the analogy of birth, if inquiry is a conception of faith, and the catechumenate its gestation, then Lenten preparation for baptism is like the weeks before birth—more visible and involving more growth.

While Easter, with its proclamation of death and resurrection, is the most significant time of the church year for adult baptisms, it is not the only time. The festivals of Pentecost, the Baptism of Our Lord, and All Saints are also appropriate days because the church's baptismal theology embraces these celebrations. These baptismal celebrations would be preceded by a time of immediate preparation which is fitting—Advent or the Sundays after Pentecost, for example. Here, as with other elements of the catechumenate, the decision to be baptized is rightly made by the catechumen together with the pastor, sponsor, catechist, and other members of the worshipping community. We should be cautious, however, and not allow the inherent flexibility of the catechumenate to be an excuse for minimalism of the process or for sitting still and not growing. The fullness of proclamation and the liturgical celebration of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ should be allowed to unfold and blossom, no matter what the season.

Entry into the time of baptismal preparation during Lent assumes a commitment on the part of the catechumen to affirm their baptismal covenant or to be joined to Christ in baptism—the choice has been made. Therefore, the Enrollment of Candidates includes questions to the catechumen: “Do you acknowledge the covenant which God has made with you in Holy Baptism?” and/or “Do you desire to be baptized?” This third time of the process turns the attention of catechumens, sponsors, and congregation to the life-changing event that is Holy Baptism. The catechumens are rightly called *baptismal candidates*. This is a time to face, in a more profound way, the juxtaposition between good and evil in our world. It is an opportunity to confront the reality of evil and the Evil One with open eyes. The images of Lent, which encompass the great polarities of life—light and darkness, sin and obedience, temptation and faithfulness, alienation and

reconciliation, blindness and sight—give flesh and blood to this confrontation. These images of our human condition are encountered repeatedly in the Scripture readings, the prayers, and the liturgies of the Lenten season.

One of the possibilities during this time involves the use of blessings for the catechumens during the Sunday liturgies of Lent. These are occasions for confronting the darkness of life within a community of faith and hope. The gospel readings for the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent set forth the call to faith in Christ in a world that can be dangerous and frightening. At the same time, these Sundays can serve as the public occasions at which the oral and written traditions of the faith are passed on to those preparing for baptism. The Creed, the church's book of worship, and the Bible, if not already given, can be publicly presented to the candidates in worship—gifts from the family of faith to those about to join the body of Christ in Holy Baptism.

All of this is for the purpose of preparing both baptismal candidates and congregation for the celebration of baptism and communion at the Vigil of Easter. In this liturgy, the church celebrates the Lord's death and resurrection. The church also welcomes new brothers and sisters who die and rise with Christ in the waters of the baptismal font. Here the baptized renew their baptismal promises and so are united with the newly-baptized in a common profession of faith. In this liturgy, those who have been born of water and the Word of God come to the table where they receive for the first time the body and blood of the crucified and risen Lord. This is a joyful celebration for everyone who is joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Easter Vigil is a rich experience for the catechumens and the baptized alike. The visual experience of a passing over from darkness to light, the joyful Easter proclamation,

the narration of salvation history, the flowing water and gracious word of Holy Baptism, and the bread of life and cup of salvation flood the heart, mind, and soul of all who participate. For baptismal candidates—now the *newly baptized*—the celebration of baptism and communion can raise questions which may have gone unrecognized beforehand. There may come an overflowing thankfulness for the gifts of God graciously bestowed upon them, and at the very same time a consuming desire to know and experience more.

Easter: Baptismal Living

The time of baptismal living begins during the Fifty Days between Easter Sunday and the Day of Pentecost. This time provides the opportunity to explore the mysteries of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and to form all the baptized in baptismal faith and life. For the newly baptized the vantage point has now been changed. Before baptism, the catechist may have said, “You have heard . . .” in reference to the proclamation of Scripture in the liturgy. Now the catechist or pastor may say, “You have seen . . .” in reference to the celebration of the Sacraments. The event of Holy Baptism, as a life changing event, also changes one’s relationship with the Christian community. Joined to Jesus Christ and His church in Holy Baptism, the newly baptized now participate even more fully in the life of the community of faith. They participate in the entire service, receiving communion at the Lord’s Table, and being sent out into the world with the mission and ministry of all the baptized.

For this reason, the Fifty Days from Easter to Pentecost afford the opportunity for the newly baptized to discern the ministry/ministries of the congregation through which they will serve the Lord. In what specific ways does faith in Jesus Christ enlighten the

ministry of daily life? During this time opportunity can be offered for individual members of the congregation to share with the newly baptized their struggles of faith and life and their day-to-day decision making—all with an eye toward encouraging all the baptized in their own daily life. In other words, this initial time of baptismal living is intended to place baptism in its proper perspective: as a beginning to life in Christ, rather than as the end of inquiry. This is made clear in the Affirmation of the Vocation of Christians, which both affirms the ongoing nature of the catechumenal life and, at the same time, brings the catechumenate to an end for the newly baptized. This rite is celebrated at Pentecost.

II. The Catechumenate Team

The catechumenate is about the Church as a living organism, a community of believers sharing the Word of forgiveness with those around us and with one another. The catechumenate process begins with inquiry, in this case, the inquiry of Jesus. On their journey together, Jesus is forever asking the disciples questions. At one point He turns to Peter and asks, “Who do men say that I am?” “Who do all these other people say that I am?” That is what He does with inquirers and catechumens and with the rest of us in the process called the catechumenate. But then He turns to Peter and asks, “Who do *you* say that I am?” He looks us straight in the eye, throughout the journey, and says, “Don’t quote your parents, Martin Luther, or even Matthew or Luke! Who do you say that I am? What does My story have to do with your story?”

The catechumenate is about a community seeking to know and love God. It is about a community seeking identity and direction in their lives. “It is quite possible that the entire catechumenate is a process of moving from stories to Story, from fragments to wholeness, pericopes to Gospel” (Dunning, New Wineskins, p.91).

The entire process is one of putting together the fragments: the individual events in our own lives, the lives in our living tradition of Jesus and His people, the lives of the catechumenal community which is sharing faith—so that all of this is experienced as one Story of dying and rising in Christ. This seeking for wholeness, for completeness, for a sense of identity is what leads us to gather in communities. Thomas Downs writes:

Objectively speaking, story is simply a narrative that links various sequences. Subjectively and to the point, to have a story is to be a

person. Or to turn the phrase, to be a person is to have a story. . .

Without my story, I have no identity. I do not know who I am, or what I am about. “If you have no story, how do you know where you’re going; and if you’re going somewhere, how will you know when you get there?” (Downs, A Journey to Self Through Dialogue, p.66).

The catechumenate is about relationships. The individual’s relationship with God and our relationship with one another. In this journey of faith there are many in the community who have special roles. The pastor is the presiding minister at all liturgical rites, leads the worship and provides guidance; the catechumenal director guides the catechumenal team; the catechists function as facilitators for the small groups and provide structure to learning as well as to the faithful practice of the disciplines; the sponsors walk alongside of the seeker or catechumen as a mentor and an example of the faith; the inquirer is being supported in their faith journey. The congregation as a whole bears responsibility for providing the rich soil in which individuals can grow and be nourished in their new life.

THE PASTOR

“Integral to the effectiveness of the catechumenate is the role the pastor plays as preacher and the leader of congregational worship. Ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the pastor serves the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens the people of God. And it is through the means of grace, the ministry of Word and Sacrament, that adults become disciples of Jesus Christ.”

(Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate, p.29)

The Office of the Public Ministry has been instituted by God and is to be distinguished from the ministry that God has given to all Christians: the Office of the Keys—the privilege and duty to proclaim the Good News of salvation, the authority to forgive or not forgive sins, and the responsibility to administer those means of grace called the *sacraments*.

With that in mind, Luther commented that if a Christian “is in a place where there are no [other] Christians, he needs no other call than to be a Christian called and anointed by God from within . . . even though no man calls him to do so” (Luther’s Works 30:310).

Luther goes on to say, “We are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the Sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no one may arrogate to himself, unless he is called)” (Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 35:116.)

God, however, has not called each Christian to exercise the keys *publicly*. Scripture clearly refers to God’s establishment of a special office for that purpose: Acts 13:2-4; 20:28; Rom. 1:1; 10:15; 1 Cor. 3:5; 4:1; 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Peter 5:2.

The Lutheran Confessions state: “It is taught among us that no one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” (Augsburg Confession, XIV). Again the confessions state: “In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy

Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel” (Augsburg Confession, V.).

Martin Chemnitz writes: “The public ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12). For a special or particular call is required for this (Rom. 10:15)” (Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word and Sacraments*, trans. and ed. Luther Poellot: St. Louis, CPH, 1981, p.29).

C. F. W. Walther writes: “The holy ministry of the Word or pastoral office is . . . distinct from the priestly office which all believers have” (C. F. W. Walther, *Walther on the Church*, trans. John Drickamer, St. Louis, CPH, 1981, Thesis I, p.73)

From this we understand that the Office of the Holy Ministry is a divine institution established by God and placed in the congregation for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Office of the Holy Ministry has the charge to proclaim the Gospel purely and to administer the Sacraments in accordance with the Word of God. This differs from the responsibility of the individual to share the love of Christ in all that he or she does as a part of the priesthood of all believers. The pastoral office has special responsibility for the oversight of the ministry in the local faith community. This responsibility includes the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the care for the sick, the dying and the infirm, and the care of souls. While all who are believers will want to read and grow in the Word of God, it is the pastoral office which has been established by God in the midst of the community of faith.

In the structure of the catechumenate team, it is the pastor who has the ultimate oversight for the teaching of the divine Word and for leadership in the rites of the church. The pastoral office is the only office in the church and therefore has the responsibility for

the catechetical teaching in the local community of faith. It must be noted that this is not to be considered a role of “lordship” over the laity but is rather a servant-leader role in the midst of the community of believers. It is a balance in team ministry which must be recognized and administrated with love, gentleness, and compassion.

THE CATECHUMENAL DIRECTOR

Note: Some of the following material was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I am indebted to Walter Huffman for his thoughts and concepts. His article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate.

The catechumenal director works closely with the pastor in the catechumenate. It is the responsibility of the director to guide the process of the catechumenate within the congregation. The catechumenal director serves as a sign of the congregation's call to care for those who are preparing for baptism in this community of faith. The director is someone who enjoys the trust and respect of the congregation. Perhaps this person has served on the church council, as a Sunday school teacher, or leader of other activities. He or she is a credible witness to Jesus Christ, someone who has a mature understanding of the faith and leads a life consistent with that faith. The director works closely with the pastor as well as other members of the team. Resident in this person must be the ability to discern the gifts of the team members and coordinate their ministries.

The director is a person of prayer, someone who would not hesitate to pray for the Spirit's guidance, for the catechumenal team and its ministry of outreach, worship, catechesis and apostolic ministry. It is through this ministry that the Holy Spirit—the church's catechist—uses Christian disciples to help others follow in the way of Jesus Christ. Personal and communal prayer enables the director and the catechumenal team to entrust their concerns and their ministry to God. When it is possible, the catechumenal team finds time for day-long or weekend retreats where the order of the day is prayer for God's help and blessing.

The director has specific responsibility for the daily and weekly administration of the catechumenate in the local congregation. There are many details that need be attended to as the catechumenate process takes place. There are bulletin announcements and newsletter articles that need to be written, letters to be sent, telephone calls to be made, rooms to be organized, baby-sitters to be scheduled, and paperwork to be done. All of this falls into the hands of the director who ensures that all the details for the smooth functioning of the catechumenate are in order so that the process may be carried out in the midst of God's people.

The director will recruit, train, and guide the catechists and the sponsors in the catechumenate. The director will pray for the entire team and encourage all who are participants in the process. The director will be in communication with the outreach ministries of the faith community to identify and contact those who are inquirers to the Christian faith. As catechumenate sessions are established, the director will invite inquirers to attend and will make them feel welcome to the church.

The director, as an extension of the pastoral ministry, will be in constant communication with the pastor in order that the entire ministry will be conducted in decency and good order. It is the purpose of the director to support the pastoral ministry as the pastor shares the Word and Sacraments in the congregation. The director, as a servant-leader, will seek to grow personally in the Word of God and model the life of Christ in all of his or her life.

THE CATECHIST

Note: The following material on the role of the catechist was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I cleaned up some of the terminology and the theology. I am indebted to Georganne Robertson for her thoughts and concepts. Her article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Catechetical Guide.

A catechist is a child of God (1 John 3:10 NIV). As with any ministry in the church, catechumenal ministry arises out of one's baptismal consecration to Christ and His mission in the world. The catechist is a member of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, baptized, called to service, and growing in faith. A firm sense of this baptismal identity allows the individual to enter into this ministry with the assurance of God's presence. As a baptized child of God, the catechist carries the mark of the cross which promises the presence of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. The child of God walks on this, trusting that Christ will speak the truth that leads to new life.

The catechist is a Christian who practices the disciplines of faith (James 1:21-27 NIV). Gathering with others in worship, praying regularly, reading Scripture, and participating in the ministries of justice and service will be marks of a catechist. The catechist models the disciplines of faith in his or her own life, taking time for personal and communal prayer, reflections on God's Word, corporate worship, and finding ways to serve those in need. Practicing these disciplines enables the catechist to be attentive to the voice of God, the signs of the Creator's presence in his or her own life. What is said or sung in worship is confirmed through one's actions in daily life. The disciplines of Christian faith enable the catechist to walk in the truth.

It will be helpful for the catechist to remember the words of the prayer spoken during the baptismal liturgy. After the washing in water, the pastor asks God to pour the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptized: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord, and joy in God's presence. This prayer expresses for the newly baptized and the baptized faithful the promise of God to pour forth these gifts on all Christians so that they might be used in a variety of ways to serve the community of faith. And yet each congregation must discern what members are best suited for this particular ministry. The Scriptures remind us of the variety of gifts and blessings that are given in great diversity (1 Cor. 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4, Ephesians 4 NIV). This simply means that some congregational members are well-suited for this ministry. They need to be called forth, encouraged, and guided.

The catechumenate is an apprenticeship in faith that offers adults an introduction to prayer, Bible study, and worship in a setting where they are free to ask any questions and reflect with others on the struggles and joys of living the faith every day. Since the catechumenate emphasizes formation in Christ for daily living, any reflection on the daily life of a layperson will help catechumens see that this apprenticeship in faith offers a clear focus on how one lives in addition to what one knows. The wisdom gained from regular reflection on the Word of God and ongoing participation in the life of the Church is essential. The catechist's teaching is primarily by example. One does not need a theological degree nor the gift of ordination to be a catechist. One does need the Word of God, the practice of prayer and participation in communal worship, the desire to serve those in need, and a conscious awareness of God's promise to lead and to guide. By

inviting the baptized faithful—the laity—to serve as catechists, their ministry of service to Christ is affirmed and lifted up as a model for all Christians.

THE SPONSOR

Note: Some of the following material was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I am indebted to Walter Huffman for his thoughts and concepts. His article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate.

The sponsor is one who makes the commitment to walk beside his or her charge throughout the entire journey. The sponsor is a companion, a fellow traveler in the path of faith. Any baptized Christian may act as a sponsor. The essential ingredient for sponsors, however, is a commitment to model the disciplines of the Christian life—worship, prayer, scripture reading, and ministry in daily life—in a one-to-one relationship.

Through the sponsor the Church reaches out with love and support to prospective members. By surrounding catechumens with the strength of its convictions, the power of its prayer and the living witness of its beliefs, the Church accomplishes its task. It provides the seed bed for the transformed life to grow and blossom.

Although the responsibility of sponsors to respective members belongs to the whole Church, it is difficult for a large group to minister personally to each catechumen or candidate. That's where the sponsor fits in. A sponsor is the *personal representative of the Church* for the catechumen or candidate.

The sponsor helps the individual to feel at home among Lutherans by their support. This may mean the sponsor will introduce the catechumen or candidate to other parishioners, to the activities of the congregation and to the organization of the community. The catechumen or candidate will probably catch the spirit of the Church

from the sponsor. If the sponsor makes the experience a constructive and hospitable one, the positive impression will be lasting.

As a witness for the catechumen or candidate the sponsor will be asked at some point to share their assessment of his or her progress. In the course of the catechumenate, the sponsor can assist the pastoral team and the catechumenate team by noting any problems, misunderstandings, or hesitations the catechumen or candidate may have. But in every instance the sponsor must take great care not to disclose anything a catechumen or candidate may want kept in confidence.

The sponsor's dual role as representative of the Church and as witness for the catechumen is probably best found in the Rite of Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism. In this rite at the beginning of Lent, catechumens are solemnly asked to celebrate the rites of initiation at Easter. To be eligible for the rite of enrollment, catechumens are expected to reflect a transformation, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching and a sense of faith and charity. They must have a deliberate intention to receive the sacraments of the Church and be worthy of receiving them.

When the catechumens come before the pastor in the Rite of Enrollment, the sponsors are asked to witness to the catechumens worthiness. *"You have been companions to these women and men in their journey of faith. Have they been faithful in hearing the Word of God and in receiving it as the pattern for their lives?"*

For people who are already baptized and are candidates for confirmation and the Lord's Supper this is a time of calling them to ongoing growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The sponsors for these candidates exercise a role similar to that of sponsors of catechumens. Because candidates for reception into communicant

membership are already baptized and may have been active Christians for many years, the nature of their transformation and formation may be significantly different from that of catechumens. Nevertheless their sponsors are asked, *“Do you consider these candidates ready to receive the rite of confirmation and the sacrament of Holy Communion?”*

No one is served if we accept a person prematurely for reception into communicant membership. It is unfair to catechumens and candidates if we rush them into Christian life before they are ready to dedicate themselves to fulfilling the obligations which that life places on them. On the other hand it is equally unfair to make demands on them that even we, with our background and experience, could not fulfill.

The sponsor as a representative and witness to and for the community of faith plays a crucial role in the catechumenate. It will be important for sponsors to be women and men of God and themselves personally committed to the process of growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. To God belongs all the glory and praise.

THE INQUIRER

The inquirer is one who is not yet in the fold of the church. An inquirer may be one who is baptized but who is uncatechized (not instructed in the teachings of the Bible and of the church). The inquirer may be one who is not yet baptized and is also uncatechized, or may be unbaptized and catechized. An inquirer is basically one who is seeking a relationship with God and needs to be guided in his or her journey of faith.

THE CONGREGATION

The congregation is the body of Christ in a local community of faith. The congregation is often referred to as “the church” which we understand to mean those who are gathered together to give praise and honor and glory to God. The church, the body of Christ is a living organism which is constantly growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is made up of individuals who are themselves on a journey of faith, redeemed by the person and work of the only Son of God.

The congregation’s purpose is to glorify the Lord and to be a baptizing community seeking those who are lost and inviting them to the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism. If the community of faith sees itself thus, then all that they do and say will be for this purpose. The congregation is made up of men, women, and children who are in relationship with Christ and who are themselves on the journey. As they travel on this journey, they fulfill the Lord’s commission and commandment.

III. The Implementation Process

Note: The "Laying the Groundwork" material was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I am indebted to Dennis Bushkofsky for his practical insights.

Laying the Groundwork

1. If you do not celebrate the Easter Vigil, begin to do so.
2. Pray for congregational members on their baptismal anniversaries.
3. Start one or more lectionary study groups with the expectation that some members of the group will consider leading Bible reflection groups themselves after several months.
4. Explore opportunities for "hands on" social ministry in your community. What critical needs are not being met?
5. Use the *Small Catechism* in adult education and in preaching.
6. Consider a lectionary-based curriculum for Sunday School and Day School.
7. Teach the meaning of the Sacraments for congregational members of all ages.
8. Pray regularly (in corporate worship) that members will be guided to invite others in the community to enter the congregation through baptism.
9. Work on the congregation's ability to be hospitable and welcoming of visitors and newcomers.
10. Speak often about the "ministry" that all Christians perform in their daily lives.

Setting a Time-table

In planning the implementation of the catechumenate in the local congregation, consideration needs to be given to a time schedule that will be sensitive to the ebb and flow of the congregational activities. It is central to constantly remember that the catechumenate is a process rather than a program and is therefore inherently flexible. The

catechumenate stages can be implemented at any time. It is good though to have a plan that fits in well with the congregation and its understanding of the liturgical life of the worshipping community.

Times can be as short as a few months to as long as several years. The variables are dependent upon the previous knowledge and experience of the individual inquirer, the liturgical calendar, and the individual characteristic of the local community of faith. We would suggest that there are four major options which a congregation could adopt. 1) The Festival Season Cycle which would begin in August and end in June, 2) The Epiphany Cycle which would begin in March and end in February, 3) The All Saints Cycle which would begin in December and end in October, and 4) The Cycle for the Baptized which has a greatly variable time frame.

It is our recommendation that most congregations would want to follow the first option which would be the Festival Season Cycle. This would coincide with most public and parochial school schedules, fits in with many vacation schedules, and most importantly, enables the participants to experience the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is rehearsed and remembered in the worship life of the community of faith. After choosing which pattern to follow in the community of faith, the next step in the implementation is to educate the congregational leadership and membership concerning the catechumenate.

Specific Strategies for Implementation

There are a number of concerns that need to be contemplated when initiating the catechumenate in the local congregation. The health, energy, and gifts of the pastor need to be taken into consideration, the size of the congregation, other staff personnel

available, and an understanding of the doctrine of the church. All of these have a bearing on specific strategies. We would recommend that the following plan be adopted with the realization that the time frame is laid out over a period of two years.

First Year

1. Gather and read materials on the Catechumenate and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Look specifically to gather an understanding of the broad concept of the Catechumenate and what one would wish to see be accomplished in the local congregation.
2. Decide on which implementation timetable the local congregation will follow. Again, we recommend the Festival Season Cycle since it fits best with school schedules and the liturgical life of the church.
3. Meet with the various leaders of the church to educate them in the concept of the catechumenate. Share written documents with them and use them as a discussion point to come to a clear understanding of the doctrine of the church and the great commission to make disciples of all the nations.
4. Recruit a catechumenal director, several catechists, and then start identifying those who will serve as sponsors (spiritual mentors) for those who would be baptismal candidates or catechumens. Spend time with these individuals and share with them the vision of a baptizing community under Christ. Share together the African Bible Study and a lectionary-based devotional life.
5. Identify and seek out those who are prospects for membership, baptism, and affirmation of their baptismal covenant (confirmation). Share the time schedule and the process with them. Be honest with the time commitments and the dedication

that is needed. Remember always that this is “Disciple-making” and not a class or program for membership.

6. Prepare Catechist Manuals, Sponsor Manuals, Doctrinal Instruction Handouts, etc.
7. Arrange for building usage, overhead projectors, refreshments, baby-sitting, etc.
8. Prepare the rites, purchase Bibles and catechisms.
9. Meet with catechists and sponsors and review the process.
10. Pray, pray, pray!

Second Year

1. Begin the Inquiry Stage on August 1st. Meet weekly using the African Method of Bible Study. Seek to focus on the inquirer’s questions.
2. Conduct the Rite of Welcome on the First Sunday in Advent
3. Meet weekly in catechetical sessions using the teaching guides.
4. Conduct the Rite of Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism on Ash Wednesday.
5. Meet weekly during the Lenten Season using the African Method of Bible Study
6. Conduct the Rite of the Blessing of the Candidates on the Second Sunday in Lent.
7. Conduct the Rite of Affirmation of the Baptismal Covenant and Holy Baptism at the Easter Vigil.
8. Meet weekly during the Easter Season introducing the ministries of the congregation.
9. Conduct the Rite of Affirmation of Vocation in the World on Pentecost.

10. Review and evaluate during June and July.

11. Begin the Inquiry Stage on August 1st.

Guidelines for Catechists

*Hope Lutheran Church
St. Louis, MO*

(Adapted and modified from: Lewinski, Ron. Guide for Sponsors. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987)

Note: Some of the following material was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I am indebted to Georganne Robertson for her thoughts and concepts. Her article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Catechetical Guide. I have also gleaned some concepts from Ron Lewinski's book, Guide For Sponsors. I changed the terms from sponsor to catechist.

A catechist is a child of God (1 John 3:10 NIV). As with any ministry in the church, catechumenal ministry arises out of one's baptismal consecration to Christ and His mission in the world. The catechist is a member of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, baptized, called to service, and growing in faith. A firm sense of this baptismal identity allows the individual to enter into this ministry with the assurance of God's presence. As a baptized child of God, the catechist carries the mark of the cross which promises the presence of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. The child of God walks on this, trusting that Christ will speak the truth that leads to new life.

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It will be helpful for the catechist to remember the words of the prayer spoken during the baptismal liturgy. After the washing in water, the presiding minister asks God to pour the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptized: the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord, and joy in God's presence. This prayer expresses for the newly baptized and the baptized faithful the promise of God to pour forth these gifts on all Christians so that they might be used in a variety of ways to serve the community of faith. And yet each congregation must discern what members are best suited for this particular ministry. The Scriptures remind us of the variety of gifts and blessings that are given in great diversity (1 Cor. 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4, Ephesians 4 NIV). This simply means that some congregational members are well-suited for this ministry. They need to be called forth, encouraged, and guided.

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inviting the baptized faithful—the laity—to serve as catechists, their ministry of service to Christ is affirmed and lifted up as a model for all Christians.

In our ministry we are accountable to God and to the people of God (James 5:16 NIV). We enter into the work honestly and sincerely with this responsibility to one another. Recognizing that a catechist is communicating a way of life rather than information, we must be trustworthy. No one will follow another person without trust. Integrity and consistency are important to anyone who seeks to be trusted. We travel on this journey in the name of Christ. We seek healthy interdependent relationships.

A catechist is a servant who is willing to share in this ministry. Jesus said, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45 NKJV). As a servant a catechist welcomes a collaborative model of ministry. Catechist do not serve alone; they are team players. We have companions on this journey, persons who are working with us. Of course, the composition of a catechumenal team will vary from congregation to congregation. Three primary team members, however, are the pastor, catechist, and sponsor. It is important to give thoughtful attention to team relationships. Work collaboratively. Take time to discuss issues and concerns. Encourage and affirm one another. Pray regularly for one another.

A catechist does not hesitate to be welcoming. Indeed, hospitality is not only an ancient Biblical practice, but one of the primary ways in which the congregation

manifests its ministry of evangelization. Along with the rest of the catechumenal team, the catechist welcomes others with the Good News of God's grace. This welcome is expressed, however, in very practical ways; initial greetings, the small group setting (the room, its arrangement, the temperature), the invitation to conversation, and the farewell all contribute to the expression of sincere hospitality in the name of Christ. The catechist is a welcoming presence, a host to those pondering the stirrings of the Spirit within their lives.

A catechist is trusting and respectful (John 14:1; Romans 15:13 NIV). In baptism, the Holy Spirit sets us free to accept ourselves and others. The Holy Spirit is recklessly inclusive and binds us together with all believers in Christ. The catechist is called to respect the dignity of each participant, to respect each one as an adult "learner." As the catechist facilitates reflections, the group will be challenged to move beyond polite and safe conversation while maintaining a respectful and civil discussion. The catechist is called to honor each person with trust and respect, to face difficult issues with integrity, and to strive for honest and authentic communication.

The catechist is able to keep a confidence. In catechumenal gatherings, people will share the stories of their own journeys in faith. A commitment to confidentiality ensures an atmosphere that is both safe and open. Here the catechumen must be free to speak the darkest struggle and the greatest hope without fear of being scorned or ridiculed. The catechist will establish "ground rules" for catechumenal gatherings. Let the community develop a common understanding of what information may be shared outside the small group. The group norms will reflect the trust and respect modeled by the catechist.

An effective catechist confidently focuses on the needs of the catechumens. She or he is able to serve the common good of the group and carry the primary responsibility for its needs. Commitment and service are modeled by the catechist who is other-centered. The actions and attitude of a catechist reflects one's commitment to a life of service in the name of Christ.

Everyone has a voice in this process of listening for God's voice. Group facilitation skills will enable a catechist to ensure that all voices are heard. The catechist will invite the participants to share their life stories as everyone reflects on the story of God's people. This is probably not a task for those who shun complexity or who are uncomfortable with ambiguity. Many of us are comfortable with the familiar and fear the unknown. New life in Christ is something unknown for the unbaptized. The catechist will facilitate reflections which seek to make sense out of ambiguous or contradictory messages. Some participants will approach their reflection on faith from the left brain, thinking and expressing themselves in a linear and analytical manner. Other catechumens will manifest a preference for thinking from the right brain, expressing themselves in an intuitive and holistic fashion. The catechist will seek to facilitate a dialogue which balances and unites the group.

Catechumens are being welcomed into the community of God's people. As members of that community, catechists are called to welcome and nurture the presence of Christ in each individual and to be a presence that encourages others. The catechist also fosters community among the participants in this formation process. An open and trusting environment will facilitate communication, which is built on accepting relationships.

Nurturing these relationships will involve some personal vulnerability as the catechist shares with the participants his or her own beliefs and values.

Active listening and strong speaking skills are important for a catechist who is called to create a climate that enables open and honest communication. An effective communicator is able to read the gestures and expressions of others and sense their feelings. The catechist needs to be a good listener. The catechist listens with the heart and creates a safe environment for the responses by neither judging nor evaluating. Relationships which seek God in community require patient, prayerful listening. The catechist is not uncomfortable with silence. An able catechist knows when to stop talking and searches for the voices inadvertently left out or purposefully excluded. He or she clearly communicates that the catechumens are free to express openly their thoughts and feelings or to express divergent views.

Another communication consideration is our language. The “language of the church” that many long-time Christians may take for granted can be a foreign tongue to many newcomers. Within the community of faith, more than one dialect is spoken. The catechist learns to carefully choose his or her words and to assist in “translation.” It is easy to understand that some theological terms need explanation. Here are some words, among others, that need to be explored: “God,” “faith,” “church,” “Scripture,” “liturgy,” “hymn,” “bulletin,” “altar.” The catechist needs to open the words of faith and church practice in a manner that is simple and direct. While attending to new words, the catechist remembers that the meaning of the words is what gives life to their use.

Participants in the catechumenate bring questions. The catechist will have questions, too—questions from his or her journey in faith and questions for group discussion. Yet

the catechist will never allow these questions to dominate, to become the questions that others must answer. The questioning nature of a mature faith will be modeled by a catechist who is comfortable with probing questions which move beyond the surface of issues of life. The questions are as important as the answers.

The catechist is a lifelong learner, a curious person. Some people ask questions and have no interest in struggling for answers. The catechist has been on the road a while and brings to the journey of faith a commitment to growth as well as a sense of humility. Indeed, the church is continually learning how to be people of the Gospel, people of Good News (Matt. 6:33 NIV). Catechumens will probably ask questions the catechist can't always answer. The catechist is not offering a question and answer class, but rather an opportunity to gain an understanding of the meaning of life in Christ. Catechists are not people filled with information and quick responses. Yet some questions will have answers. Through reflection, the catechist will introduce the participants to an understanding of the liturgy of the church, Scripture, and the Catechism. Preparation for these reflective discussions may include personal study and conversation with the pastor.

Readiness or resistance on the part of a catechumen to respond to God's invitation is discerned in community. The catechist is called to be a person of discernment. The catechumenal process is a journey of exploration. Participants are discovering and discerning God's presence in their lives. The catechist alerts the participants to God's presence and call and shares the story of our faithful God who keeps calling in spite of our deafness. He or she helps participants recognize that God has been in our midst all along and assists them in the process of sifting through the messages to respond with faith in action.

Part of the gift of discernment is the ability to recognize that there are diverse approaches to faith and spirituality. Catechumens gather with a catechist to engage in a dialogue between their lives and the Word of God, and to discern in that dialogue the presence of the living God calling them to faith in Christ. They bring their questions, their insights, and their experiences to a gathering facilitated by the catechist, the teacher. One participant will seek clear direction, and another will prefer self-direction. Faith in action may be the primary focus of one person and spiritual meditation for the other. This is a sacred journey that welcomes a variety of faith expressions rooted in the unique gifts and practices of a Lutheran understanding of the Gospel.

What works one week in a catechumenal session, may not work the next. What worked with one group, may not work again. The catechumenate focuses on Scripture and an experience/reflection model for learning. A variety of techniques or tools may be used by a catechist to facilitate reflection. The catechist is a person who can adapt to new situations and remain flexible within the general pattern and order of catechumenal gatherings. Differences such as experience, personality, and culture will call for adaptation in the group process. The catechist who listens and is eager to learn will wisely discern the need to be flexible. The qualities of adaptability and flexibility will enable the catechist to care for the changing needs of the participants.

The catechist exhibits a spirit of courage that reflects a reliance on God's strength. The apostle Paul wrote, "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you,

for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor. 12:7-9 NKJV).

The courageous catechist remains faithful to his or her convictions and thus reveals the authentic self. The catechumenal process seeks to move from a world of facades where people wear masks to a place of courage where Christ shines through our transparent selves.

Being vulnerable is a sign of strength; it is not a liability nor a weakness. The vulnerable catechist is the one who takes the risk of speaking and acting in Christ’s name, even though one may be misunderstood. Being vulnerable is being open to others, revealing the love of God by becoming transparent. It is the surrender of personal ambition so that God might work through the baptized servant.

Each catechist brings natural and acquired abilities to this ministry and serves as a living example that people from all walks of life live in a relationship with God and with one another. A catechist is one who knows who he or she is and where he or she is going, yet doesn’t force personal values on others. A catechist is called to teach by speaking with candor, listening with compassion, and faithfully sharing God’s promises.

GUIDE FOR SPONSORS

Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

St. Louis, Missouri

1997

(Adapted and modified from: Lewinski, Ron. Guide for Sponsors. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987)

Note: The following material was rewritten from Ron Lewinski's book, Guide for Sponsors. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987. The material was used in its entirety except for theological and terminology changes to adapt it to a Lutheran understanding of justification and sanctification. The purpose of a complete usage was to prepare a guide for the sponsors as quickly as possible. I hope to be able to redraft this manual and republish it in "Lutheran Form" in the future with permission from the publisher.

GUIDE FOR SPONSORS

To be selected as a sponsor for a prospective member of the church is a great privilege. As a sponsor you will be asked to extend in a personal way the community's welcome and support. Through your companionship with the one you sponsor you will informally pass on the spirit of the community. You will experience first hand the challenge new members face. As you share with them some of your own life and faith as an active member of the Church, you will probably uncover for yourself new dimensions of being a Lutheran Christian. You may also gain a new friend for life's journey.

Your ministry as a sponsor will also be humbling, because you will sense how God works through you to form the minds and hearts of those who seek faith and membership in the Church. "*. . . we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us*" (2 Corinthians 4:7 NKJV). This is important to remember lest on the one hand you take too much credit for what God accomplishes through you and on the other hand you become too worried about being an unworthy sponsor.

Being a sponsor is like being a good friend. You can't force it. You offer what you can. Real friends don't impose opinions on each other. The result is a feeling of

gratitude—not a feeling of being smothered and helpless. Some friends need more help than others. All friends need personal space and respect for their uniqueness.

In your enthusiasm to be a sponsor, remember that the ministry must be tailored to the individual candidate. Avoid making comparisons. You have much to learn from the great variety of people that you serve.

You may have been asked to sponsor someone who is not yet baptized and is making an initial journey of faith toward baptism, confirmation and the celebration of the Holy Supper as a *catechumen*. You may discover that the individual has little or no formal religious background. Church terms and practices may be foreign to the catechumen. The individual's experience of prayer and Scripture may be limited. Be patient, sensitive and understanding with the catechumen's development.

If you have been asked to sponsor one who is already baptized and is a candidate for confirmation, be especially sensitive to that person's religious background. Some individuals report that they felt their whole religious past was disregarded when they started talking to Lutherans. Frequently individuals come to us with a history of lively involvement with the church. Don't discount that. Get acquainted with it, respect it, learn from it, and build on it.

There is no one right way to welcome a new Lutheran. As a sponsor, accept and value the gifts you have received from God. Ultimately your faith, your love and respect for others will serve you best with your catechumen or candidate. Rely upon the catechumenate team and pastoral staff to offer the training support you will need. Although you hold a privileged place in the initiation of new members, remember that you are not alone in the task.

Be grateful and proud to participate in such a significant way in the ministry of the Church. And don't be surprised if you feel like a new Christian yourself when the time for reception into membership finally arrives.

Some of the things you will see in the following pages are descriptions of a sponsor, an overview of the stages of the catechumenate, a checklist of activities which sponsors and catechumens or candidates find profitable and a glossary of terms of the catechumenate. The "Questions Sponsors Frequently Ask" come right from you, so you may relate to some of them. We pray that this manual will serve you well.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SPONSOR?

In reaching out to those who have expressed a desire to become a Lutheran Christian, the church wishes to share its tradition, its life, its values, its prayer, its apostolic work. Because so much is involved, it make take quite a while to pass on these traditions. As long-time Christians, many of us take all this for granted.

Receiving a tradition is not like taking a class and passing the test. The tradition of the Church is a *living* one, so it presumes that what we pass on is personally integrated within the life of the catechumen or candidate. Unlike the mere exchange of information, handing on a tradition transforms lives, directions and friends.

In order to accomplish this, what is really needed is *transformation*. This word has many meanings. Put most simply, it means a change: a move from this to that. But in the move we let go of something too. It's that letting go that makes change difficult and sometimes painful.

Sometimes we use the word *conversion* to denote a change. Conversion is to change from one thing to another. Used in religious terms it means to be changed from our old sinful nature to a new life in Christ. Genuine conversion is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. It is this understanding that we state in the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed: *"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."*

Luther explains the Third Article this way: *"What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified*

and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.”

When someone talks about “converting to Lutheranism,” they usually mean that an individual has decided to become a confessional member of the Lutheran Church. The kind of change we are talking about here is more in the sense of “transformation.” It goes much deeper than a mere change in denominational affiliation. What we are discussing is a change of attitude, values, priorities and behavior. And the standard for this transformation is nothing less than the teaching of Jesus. The transformation we are describing means firmly believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and accepting everything Jesus stands for as a model for one’s own way of life. No denominational musical chairs here.

As you realize, that kind of transformation does not happen easily. Nor does it come about in a quick flash. When we make a firm commitment to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, it may take a long time—even a lifetime—to reshape our lives accordingly.

Even as you read this you may wonder whether or not you are truly in God’s kingdom. It’s natural to feel that way. That’s why the Church’s preaching calls us to ongoing growth in our life with Jesus Christ. That’s why we Lutheran Christians observe the Church year the way we do. That’s why Lutheran Christians celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. That’s why we mark ourselves with ashes at the beginning of Lent and accept a discipline of fasting, prayer and good works. Our transformation goes on

daily. This is why Luther, in his teaching, calls us to daily remember our baptism. In our remembrance of our baptism, through contrition and repentance, the old way of life and the old nature is drowned and we walk in newness of life.

This kind of daily transformation and baptismal remembrance is no easy thing, especially when much of society is at odds with Gospel values. Frequently the world's values are so effectively marketed that we need all the help we can get to put on the mind of Christ. That is why the sponsoring ministry of the Church is crucial for its new members.

Through us the Church reaches out with love and support to prospective members. By surrounding catechumens with the strength of its convictions, the power of its prayer and the living witness of its beliefs, the Church accomplishes its task. It provides the seed bed for the transformed life to grow and blossom.

Sponsors represent the Church

Although the responsibility of sponsors to respective members belongs to the whole Church, it is difficult for a large group to minister personally to each catechumen or candidate. That's where you fit in. As a sponsor you are the *personal representative of the Church* for the catechumen or candidate.

You help the individual to feel at home among Lutherans by your support. This may mean you will introduce the catechumen or candidate to other parishioners, to the activities of the congregation and to the organization of the community. The catechumen or candidate will probably catch the spirit of the Church from you. If you make the experience a constructive and hospitable one, the positive impression will be lasting.

Sponsors are Witnesses

As a witness for the catechumen or candidate you will be asked at some point to share your assessment of his or her progress. In the course of the catechumenate, you can assist the pastoral team and the catechumenate team by noting any problems, misunderstandings, or hesitations the catechumen or candidate may have. But in every instance the sponsor must take great care not to disclose anything a catechumen or candidate may want kept in confidence.

The sponsor's dual role as representative of the Church and as witness for the catechumen is probably best found in the Rite of Enrollment of Candidates for Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism. In this rite at the beginning of Lent, catechumens are solemnly asked to celebrate the rites of initiation at Easter. To be eligible for the rite of enrollment, catechumens are expected to reflect a transformation, a sufficient knowledge of Christian teaching and a sense of faith and charity. They must have a deliberate intention to receive the sacraments of the Church and be worthy of receiving them.

When the catechumens come before the pastor in the Rite of Enrollment, the sponsors are asked to witness to the catechumens worthiness. *"You have been companions to these women and men in their journey of faith. Have they been faithful in hearing the Word of God and in receiving it as the pattern for their lives?"*

For people who are already baptized and are candidates for confirmation and the Lord's Supper this is a time of calling them to ongoing growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The sponsors for these candidates exercise a role similar to that of sponsors of catechumens. Because candidates for reception into communicant membership are already baptized and may have been active Christians for many years, the nature of their transformation and formation may be significantly different from that

of catechumens. Nevertheless their sponsors are asked, “*Do you consider these candidates ready to receive the rite of confirmation and the sacrament of Holy Communion?*”

No one is served if we accept a person prematurely for reception into communicant membership. It is unfair to catechumens and candidates if we rush them into Christian life before they are ready to dedicate themselves to fulfilling the obligations which that life places on them. On the other hand it is equally unfair to make demands on them that even we, with our background and experience, could not fulfill. Your catechumenate team will provide you with guidance in this delicate and serious part of your ministry.

Sponsors are Companions

Being a sponsor means that you serve as a companion or a guide. You will be asked to walk along with the catechumen or candidate throughout the formation period. From the very start, accept the fact that it will be just as much a journey for you as for the one you mentor. Your own openness to spiritual growth will in turn help the person you mentor be more open to spiritual growth.

A companion needs to be available. Assure the catechumen or candidate of your willingness to help whenever there is need. Most of the time that need is to offer support when there is hesitation, understanding when there is doubt, or comfort when there is inner conflict. Occasionally the catechumen or candidate may need a gentle challenge from you when effort or enthusiasm wanes. A companion’s job is to be a good friend whom a catechumen or candidate can trust, turn to and talk things over with.

As a guide you may at times have to help refocus the goal of the living witness process. You’ll need to keep a healthy and realistic perspective on life and the purpose of

spiritual growth. The way of the Lord—not your way or anyone else’s—is the destination of the journey. *“For it not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Corinthians 4:5).

A sponsor is not a catechist (religious teacher). Honesty is the best policy. You don’t need to feel threatened if you don’t have a ready answer for every question. Your willingness to help find an answer or resolve an issue may be even more helpful in the long run. It shows the catechumen or candidate how to go about finding answers or resolving dilemmas later on.

Sponsors Are Models

Describing a sponsor as a model is frightening. It’s true that catechumens and candidates pick up from the sponsor more than from anyone else what being a Lutheran Christian is all about. That’s a challenge for any sponsor: continuing to be open to growth in faith and putting into practice what that faith requires is an inspiration for catechumens and candidates.

Relax. Nobody’s perfect. And if you were perfect, you’d be an unrealistic example for others to follow. Good Lutheran Christians don’t have to be afraid of their imperfections. It’s much better to be humble and admit them and try to improve. Your catechumenate team obviously judged you to be qualified for this ministry. Evidently they are pleased with the way you live your faith and believe that you are capable of relating positively with others. Just trust their judgment and assume your ministry with confidence. Know your strengths and use them wisely.

At the same time, welcome this opportunity of being a sponsor as an occasion to renew your own continuing spiritual growth. If you take the journey of faith seriously, you can

expect to feel challenged. This may be a great opportunity to weigh your own beliefs and behavior. Our lives continually change, so our response to the Gospel changes too. The more you are in touch with your own journey of faith, the more you will appreciate the catechumens and candidates.

If you respond to God's call to spiritual growth actively rather than passively with the catechumen or candidate, you'll be a better *representative, witness, companion, and model*. And your ministry as a sponsor will reap a bountiful harvest.

THE GOOD TRAITS OF A SPONSOR

Each congregational community will have its own way of helping sponsors fulfill their responsibilities. But all sponsors, regardless of the makeup of the community, should strive to develop the following good traits.

A Sponsor Prays

A sponsor humbly recognizes that he or she is an instrument whom God uses to touch the heart of a catechumen or candidate. Prayer properly disposes a sponsor for this special ministry. In prayer the sponsor learns to be open to the Lord's will and to rely upon the Spirit for guidance. In prayer the sponsor comes to recognize his or her baptismal vocation and to deepen the appreciation of the faith he or she will hand on.

A rich source of prayer is found in the very experience of our lives. The people we meet, the places we visit, our successes and failures, all that fills our memories can be the subject of reflection and prayer. Sponsors can also draw on the experiences of the catechumenate in developing a prayer life. As they listen to the catechumens and candidates, there will be many occasions when the only real response will be one of awe and reverence, an indication that the Spirit is truly at work.

Sponsors should allow the catechumenate to touch their own lives, modeling for the catechumens and candidates how the process of spiritual growth is never really finished. Actually the catechumenate only functions properly when the sponsors and other members of the catechumenate team find in the catechumenate their own potential for growth. The catechumenate is to be a community where one member builds up another. It is not meant to be a teacher-student model of human relationships.

As a sponsor, you may be asked to introduce a catechumen or candidate to some of the many forms of prayer in the church. If you have a healthy prayer life, the catechumen or candidate will “catch it” from you. Anyone can teach different styles of prayer, but only a person who prays can convey the true spirit that puts life into the words and gestures.

Where do you begin? No doubt your being chosen as a sponsor is an indication that you are already a person of prayer. However, your ministry as a sponsor should be an incentive to deepen your prayer life. The first thing you must do is to make sure that you allow yourself enough time for prayer. The pace of life seems to be rapidly increasing and unfortunately the first thing we tend to do is drop our prayer time as if it were a luxury we could do without. Finding the right time and maybe even the right place for prayer is not easy for a busy person; it requires discipline, but we cannot afford to do without it.

Growth in prayer is often helped by looking into sources of prayer we may have neglected in the past. Thus, for example, the Scriptures are a rich springboard for prayer. Learning to take just a few lines from Scripture and spending time in silence reflecting upon the message and then allowing a prayer to flow freely from our heart may be just one way to broaden our prayer experience. The Sunday Scriptures provided the most suitable structure for this style of prayer. In congregations where the catechumenate meets after the liturgy of the Word, there is even more reason for sponsors to use the lectionary as their prayer book. They will be all the more in tune with the catechumens who use the lectionary as their catechism.

The psalms too are a rich source of prayer, forming the basis for the church’s official daily prayer called the liturgy of the hours. The catechumenate staff will be able to

introduce you to the liturgy of the hours if you are not already familiar with this form of prayer. There is a simple form of morning and evening prayer in the worship section of the Lutheran Worship hymnal.

Praying does not require a lot of words. In fact a good portion of our prayer time should be spent in silence. The Lord continually speaks to us but the Lord's voice is usually heard only when we attempt to be silent and still. If our minds are filled with distractions and if our bodies are nervously in motion, it may be difficult to hear the Lord or sense the Lord's presence. If we are so busy finding words for the Lord, we may miss the message the Lord has for us. Every Christian and certainly every sponsor ought to strive constantly for that state of peacefulness and solitude where the Lord can be heard and experienced as living, moving and truly present to us. This kind of prayer can have a positive affect on us which is then transparent when we relate to catechumens and candidates.

The catechumenate staff will undoubtedly provide some opportunities for the sponsors to pray together. The effort to pray together will deepen your faith and broaden your experience, but it will also allow you to sense firsthand how difficult it might be for catechumens and candidates to pray: As you become more comfortable and more skilled in group prayer, you will become a more helpful model for others.

Along with private and group prayer, the sacred liturgy should become your constant source of spiritual nourishment and direction. Even though you are familiar with the liturgy and sacraments, use some of the prayers from the church's rites for your deeper reflection. Take some of the signs and symbols of the liturgy and spend time focusing on them and reflecting on their meaning in your life. Through the course of the

catechumenate you will develop a deeper appreciation for the rhythm of the church's life as you observe the festivals and Sundays and seasons of the church year.

Frequently the liturgy of the church is what attracts people to Lutheranism. Watching us celebrate liturgy; catechumens and candidates become curious why we do what we do and say what we say: We have a rich tradition of worship to share with them. But if their interest is to exceed mere curiosity and become a genuine desire to pray with us, it will only be because they can see that we have made the prayer life of the church our own.

Finally, as you strive to deepen your prayer life as a sponsor, don't forget that you can learn a great deal from the catechumens and candidates. Many already have some experience in prayer. By careful listening, sponsors can discover new dimensions in prayer. Frequently catechumens and candidates who never had a church affiliation and were therefore free to voice their own expressions of praise and petition have much to teach us. Sometimes the very simplicity or sincerity of their prayer can awaken in us a deeper awareness of God's work among us.

As a sponsor you will not have the total responsibility for teaching catechumens and candidates to pray. But your own prayer life will be a strong influence. Developing a healthy prayer life takes discipline, but it is hard to imagine a more worthwhile goal.

A Sponsor Listens

As sponsors we are usually quite excited about sharing our thoughts and experiences about being a Lutheran. We want the catechumen or candidate to know more about ourselves and our congregation. In our enthusiasm over meeting new prospects, however, there is a temptation to do a lot of talking and not much listening. Mistake! It is a false and even arrogant assumption that, just because we are Lutherans and the ones

doing the guiding, the catechumens or candidates have little to say or we have little to learn.

Every person comes with a unique story. That life story is like the Gospel stories that reveal the living Christ. We have to learn how to listen well to the stories of others, or we will fail to recognize Christ working in them. Of course we can't expect candidates to tell their whole life story in one sitting. Trust must be built. For some people it takes a long time to feel comfortable enough to share private thoughts or personal stories.

Good listening can create the right climate for sharing. Of course listening is not just a matter of not talking. Good listeners put themselves completely in the presence of the speaker, giving the speaker undivided attention. They are not preoccupied with getting a response ready when they are supposed to be listening. They hear not only the speaker's words, but they try to understand what the speaker wants to communicate through those words.

Good listeners catch the feelings and emotions that often lie below the spoken words. They are not so quick to offer solutions or give answers. Instead, they offer a sense that the other is being heard and understood.

In our initial meetings with catechumens and candidates, they will begin to perceive whether or not they are going to be heard in their journey of faith. They will often judge how interested we are in them by the way we listen to what they have to say. There is no better way to express our welcome and concern for candidates than by being good listeners.

The Sponsor Respects the Catechumen or Candidate

Closely related to listening is respect. Sponsors should learn not only to listen well but to reverence what they hear. Because the background of a catechumen or candidate may differ greatly from the sponsor's, there may be a temptation to judge or immediately point out differences. Sometimes the religious ideas, values or priorities of a catechumen or candidate may strike a sponsor as immature or odd, and we may lose interest or even fail to see good in the person. At other times it may be cultural differences that the sponsor needs to respect and try to understand.

If a catechumen's or candidate's viewpoints disagree with Lutheran teaching, we may feel threatened, defensive or even argumentative. Our job is to try to understand and appreciate the person's background and belief. Most often, a discussion of differences can be managed more appropriately in catechetical sessions. This does not mean that a sponsor should never discuss religious differences or even challenge a catechumen's or candidate's point of view. But in establishing a good relationship, the most important thing for the sponsor is first to learn and value the candidate's religious background through genuine openness and interest.

Occasionally candidates who have a background in other Christian churches come with some fear and suspicion. They have heard all kinds of stories about Lutherans which they themselves question but which still keep them wondering. Our love and respect will allow a candidate to feel comfortable and trusting enough to talk about this without feeling embarrassed or anxious over how we may respond.

Sometimes, although the candidate comes with an openness to the Lutheran church, they retain fine memories of previous Christian denominational affiliation. They recall their family's participation in a church community, their introduction to the Bible, the fellowship of their former congregation, the kindness of a minister or possibly their own baptism.

While they may be sincerely interested in becoming Lutheran, they do not want to reject their past. By genuinely respecting the Christian roots of the candidates, sponsors can reassure candidates that they do not have to forget or regret their roots. They are not beginning all over again as Christians. The better a sponsor respects the Christian roots of a candidate, the better he or she will be able to build a bridge from past to future. Sponsors should acknowledge the good gifts and virtues of the candidates and be very optimistic about how the variety of gifts will enrich the church.

A sponsor's interest and respect for a candidate's religious background may at times demand study. If, for example, one is sponsoring someone who was Buddhist, he or she should seek out more information about the fundamental religious beliefs, worship and practices of Buddhism in order to appreciate more clearly the person's position.

At times, what we may initially perceive as a major religious difference is merely a language difference. Becoming familiar with the terminology of other faiths can be very helpful in understanding catechumens and candidates.

A sponsor's understanding and respect for a person's ethnic background, cultural heritage, values and beliefs is the foundation for communication and a productive relationship. The individuality and uniqueness of its members can be the church's richest resource.

A Sponsor Serves As a Bridge

It is hard to imagine how catechumens and candidates can ever feel welcome in the Lutheran church if they do not become acquainted with some of the people, places and traditions of Lutheranism.

Consider the many times you entered a new situation, whether it was a new neighborhood, a party, a school, a job or an organization. What made you feel at home? It was probably getting acquainted with some of the people, with the work or the rules or procedures of an organization. Usually someone introduces us to others, shows us the layout of the building, explains the operation of things. Once we are introduced, we are no longer strangers.

As a sponsor you are a bridge between the catechumens or candidates and the church. You have the responsibility of acquainting them with some of the people in your congregation or community. Make sure the catechumen or candidate knows the pastoral staff and the people to whom they can turn during formation. Introduce them gradually to the key people of the parish so they can see how the parish operates. As you walk with them through their formation you will gradually introduce them to Lutheranism. Catechumens will catch your Lutheran values and view points even though you may be unaware you are serving as a bridge.

There are many things that as Lutherans we take for granted: the language we speak, the feasts we celebrate, the rites we observe, the ways we pray, the calendar we follow. A sponsor should not presume catechumens or candidates are familiar with these traditions nor be surprised when they ask questions about them.

Adults who express interest in church membership may frequently feel like strangers in the community. Not only are the people new; so are the customs and practices. Some catechumens and candidates may even be reluctant to attend church services because they are not sure they will know what to do and do not want to be embarrassed. As a sponsor you can help by gradually acquainting catechumens and candidates with things that are uniquely Lutheran or—better yet—by accompanying them to religious services at times they can comfortably rely on your companionship and guidance.

Because we take so much for granted as long-time Lutherans and because we may be very enthused about sharing the essentials of our faith, the questions and concerns of catechumens and candidates may sometimes seem unimportant. We want to share our faith as we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, but they may be concerned about why people bow their heads as they are seated in the pew. We may be excited about creating a community of faith, but the catechumen may want to know the name of the architect for the church renovation. It's true such questions are not essential to the faith, but they can be important to the catechumen or candidate and need to be answered if he or she is going to feel at home with us.

Once they are better acquainted with Lutheranism from the outside, they will be better prepared to examine the inner life or deeper faith of the Lutheran community. A sponsor's patience and willingness to be a bridge, introducing catechumens and candidates in steps to the many facets of Lutheran life, plays a big part in the welcoming process.

A Sponsor Gives Freedom to Catechumens and Candidates

A sponsor can hold on too tightly. One of the most valuable traits in a sponsor is the ability to allow the catechumen or candidate to be free.

In our enthusiasm over greeting new members, we run the risk of leaving them unfree to probe and choose. This is especially true in the initial stages. We should not presume in our first meetings with inquirers that they are fully committed to becoming Lutherans. In welcoming them, we have to respect their right to decide for themselves whether they want to pursue church membership.

No doubt there is a subtle art in warmly reaching out to inquirers while leaving them free to depart without feeling they will offend us. Our respect for them must allow them the freedom to choose which way is truly for them.

It may well be that as a sponsor you will walk with a person who at some point may choose to take another course. You may wonder whether you did something wrong. But the fact that a candidate would feel free to go elsewhere is a sign that as a sponsor you did not impose artificial controls. At the same time someone who may express doubt about entering the church may simply need to be encouraged. The sponsor should not hesitate to offer encouragement but again without forcing the Lutheran way of life. Some catechumens and candidates need more time than others. Just because some people are accepted into the order of catechumens at the same time doesn't mean they will be ready for membership commitment at the same time. Catechumens and candidates should feel free to take as much time as they need. Sometimes they may discontinue the formation and then return again another year. When there is a serious concern about a person's

motivation or progress, consult with the coordinator of sponsors or the pastoral staff. They will be able to guide you to be of optimum help to the catechumen or candidate.

A gracious welcome—one that leaves the person free—is more possible when you have a sense of security of your own spirituality. You will not then be seeking to impose this on the catechumen or candidate. You may have a great devotion to some aspect of the church's life, but it would not be appropriate, especially in the early stages of the catechumenate, to expect the catechumen or candidate to adopt that same practice. Or you may feel very enthused about contemporary worship, marriage encounter, or Bible study. All this is good and part of the Lutheran picture. But it would be out of place to expect a catechumen or candidate to participate in one of those activities as if it were a requirement for church membership. Sponsors should feel free to share their experiences but should not make the candidates feel obligated to imitate them. Rather, you may want to draw strength from the Sunday liturgy and lectionary and come together to share that.

Stages of the Catechumenate

It is an increasingly common occurrence: Visitors coming to worship ask, “How do I become a Christian?” And after only brief questioning, it becomes exceedingly clear that they have no history in the church whatsoever. No history. No experience. No knowledge. Not even the vocabulary to ask the questions they are yearning to ask. It is an experience which is not only increasingly common, but also increasingly frustrating as the church grasps for tools and resources which might be brought to bear at such a time.

To this scenario comes the Catechumenate - the historic process by which Christ’s church engages unbaptized adults and prepares them for the event of Holy Baptism and for baptismal living. The Catechumenate is not a newly-devised program. In fact, it is not a program at all. It is a journey - a pilgrimage - as one who is not yet joined to Christ becomes so enjoined. Through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, the journey begins with the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

At the heart of the Catechumenate are the basic fundamental disciplines of the Christian faith - worship, prayer, reflective study, and community life. These are disciplines employed not to punish, but to strengthen - daily strengthen the believer in his or her confrontations with the powers of darkness and the temptations of the evil one. The Catechumenate is an *apprenticeship in the faith* in that these faith disciplines are consciously and intentionally modeled by those who know and use them regularly - spiritual mentors and catechists.

There are four distinct times in the catechumenal journey: (1) *Inquiry*, (2) *Catechumenate*, (3) *Lent: Baptismal Preparation*, and (4) *Easter: Baptismal Living*.

These times are punctuated by liturgical rites celebrated publicly as part of Christian worship. The rites include a *Welcome to the Catechumenate*, an *Enrollment for Baptism*, the *Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Eucharist*, and an *Affirmation of Vocation*. Time and flexibility are both variable elements. For some this journey through times and rites may be relatively brief. For others it may be lengthy. Flexibility is a standard for each individual and is determined by the one seeking baptism as well as the pastor and the faith community in which the baptism will occur.

The Catechumenate, when utilized properly, is not a requirement but a gift: a gift from Christ and His Church to unbaptized adults, and a gift to the Church as well, as it discovers itself to be a baptizing community. Joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are crossing over daily from death to new life. This is the heart of the Catechumenate. This is the heart of the Christian faith.

Note: The following material on the concept of the catechumenate was taken from draft material handed out at the Catechumenate Training Days in Oveido, Florida in April of 1997. I cleaned up some of the terminology and the theology. I am indebted to Robert Hofstad for his thoughts and concepts. His article has since been published in Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate.

We should be clear on one point: the catechumenate is not simply a program whereby a Christian congregation adds to its list of its members. Rather, it is a way of welcoming, nurturing, and supporting those who are new to the Christian faith. For those not yet joined to Christ, it is an encounter with Christ's dying and rising—the cosmic struggle between God and the powers of darkness—an encounter which takes on life and breath in the faithful participation and practice of the Christian life. The catechumenate is not a

necessary prerequisite to the gracious gifts of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

Understood rightly, it is a welcoming—an opportunity to grow in the faith as one makes adult choices about the Christian faith and about being joined to Christ and to his body, the church.

Inquiry

Why do adults come to Christian worship for the first time? We know it is most often the result of a simple, yet genuine, invitation from a friend, colleague, or family member. Why is that invitation accepted in the first place? Experience answers: because there is some unfilled need, a question yearning for an answer, a perceived hole in the fabric of life. This may be the result of some personal tragedy—a death, the loss of a job, a broken relationship, an injury or illness. The timing may coincide with one of the great passages of life—marriage, the birth of a child, a new beginning. But whatever the reason, there are basic fundamental questions being asked, questions about life’s meaning and value: life and death questions.

People who are asking these questions may be called *inquirers*. When inquirers come to worship for the first time, it is vital that we listen to their questions—not our questions; not the questions we think they should have, but their questions. Inquirers need to be listened to in an atmosphere that is safe—where they will not be laughed at—where they can ask their questions without embarrassment. The catechumenal process provides a small group setting where basic fundamental questions can be asked confidently. In this small group, the inquirer is joined by a sponsor and welcomed by the pastor or a congregational member who is a part of the catechumenal team. The group meets on a regular basis.

The sponsor is one who makes the commitment to walk beside his or her charge throughout the entire journey. The sponsor is a companion, a fellow traveler in the path of faith. Any baptized Christian may act as a sponsor. The essential ingredient for sponsors, however, is a commitment to model the disciplines of the Christian life—worship, prayer, scripture reading, and ministry in daily life—in a one-to-one relationship.

When the small group meets, it is the *inquirer's* questions and experience, in dialogue with those who walk with them, that shape the discussion. In this place of open conversation, the Bible—especially the Sunday lectionary—holds a central place. Gatherings of inquirers may take place on Sundays or during the week, at church or in homes, in the evening or during the day. The key is flexibility. The question needs to be asked, “When can inquirers make a commitment to meet regularly?” In these regular gatherings, inquirers are given the opportunity to ask basic questions, tell the story of their lives, and reflect on the Biblical readings that are proclaimed in public worship. When appropriate, they are introduced to the practice of prayer and called to reflect on the meaning of the faith for daily life. They are also free to withdraw from the process at any time. There can be no coercion here. In time the inquirer, the pastor, and the coordinator of the congregation’s catechumenal team meet. “Does the inquirer want to continue to explore his or her exploration of the Christian faith?”

Catechumenate

When it is the appropriate time, the inquirer and the sponsor are prepared for the public rite of welcome into the catechumenate. Normally the catechumenate, a period of more focused formation in the faith, will lead to full incorporation into the church through the

Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Yet the shift from general inquiry to catechumenal formation should not be construed as an irrevocable decision to receive baptism. The flexibility and openness that characterize the time of inquiry continue during the time of catechumenal formation.

When the decision to continue has been made with family, sponsors, and pastor, inquirers are welcomed publicly by the congregation into the catechumenate by way of a liturgical rite celebrated in Sunday worship. The Welcome of Candidates can be celebrated at various times during the year, and may be timed differently for each inquirer. This Welcome makes public and formal that which may have been private and informal up to this point. The decision as to the timing involves the inquirer, his or her sponsor, the pastor and other members of the catechumenal team as the journey of faith now continues in a more intentional way.

Following the public welcome, the *catechumen* (as one is called following the welcome) joins other catechumens with their sponsors for regular gatherings. The catechumenate group, consisting of pairs of inquirers and sponsors, is led by a catechist. Like sponsors, catechists are chosen as models of the faith disciplines. In addition, they also serve as teachers, mentors, and group facilitators. Their purpose is to help the catechumens enter more fully into an exploration of faith. Here the emphasis shifts from inquiry to proclamation, from a generic sense of faith to faith in Jesus Christ, from general spiritual questions to Christian theology. While an inquirer, a seeker, might rightly ask the question, "What does it mean to be a religious or spiritual person?" the catechumen would need to hear the question asked, "What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to live a Christian life?" Here the Bible remains the basic resource,

and the Sunday lectionary provides the framework for study, discussion, and prayer. In Lutheran congregations, catechumens are introduced to Luther's Small and Large Catechisms.

During this time the catechumenate group gathers regularly to study, to reflect, and to pray. At the same time, its members are surrounded, embraced, and strengthened by the entire worshipping community—the church. Since catechumens have been publicly received by the congregation as those who are considering entrance into the church through Holy Baptism, catechumens are continually brought before the eyes and ears of the congregation, so kept present in its heart and mind. Catechumens and sponsors worship together regularly. They are prayed for in the prayers of the worshipping assembly.

Lent: Baptismal Preparation

The third time of the catechumenal process is the period of Lent, a time of baptismal preparation, since those preparing for reception into the church will be baptized and receive their first communion on either Palm Sunday or the Vigil of Easter, depending on the local traditions of the congregation. On or near the First Sunday in Lent, catechumens participate in the Rite of Enrollment of those preparing for affirmation of their baptism or for baptism itself on Palm Sunday or Easter Vigil. This third phase of the process is not different than the second; it is a matter of degree rather than kind. To use the analogy of birth, if inquiry is a conception of faith, and the catechumenate its gestation, then Lenten preparation for baptism is like the weeks before birth—more visible and involving more growth.

While Easter, with its proclamation of death and resurrection, is the most significant time of the church year for adult baptisms, it is not the only time. The festivals of Pentecost, the Baptism of Our Lord, and All Saints are also appropriate days because the church's baptismal theology embraces these celebrations. These baptismal celebrations would be preceded by a time of immediate preparation which is fitting—Advent or the Sundays after Pentecost, for example. Here, as with other elements of the catechumenate, the decision to be baptized is rightly made by the catechumen together with the pastor, sponsor, catechist, and other members of the worshipping community. We should be cautious, however, and not allow the inherent flexibility of the catechumenate to be an excuse for minimalism of the process or for sitting still and not growing. The fullness of proclamation and the liturgical celebration of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ should be allowed to unfold and blossom, no matter what the season.

Entry into the time of baptismal preparation during Lent assumes a commitment on the part of the catechumen to affirm their baptismal covenant or to be joined to Christ in baptism—the choice has been made. Therefore, the Enrollment of Candidates includes questions to the catechumen: “Do you acknowledge the covenant which God has made with you in Holy Baptism?” and/or “Do you desire to be baptized?” This third time of the process turns the attention of catechumens, sponsors, and congregation to the life-changing event that is Holy Baptism. The catechumens are rightly called *baptismal candidates*. This is a time to face, in a more profound way, the juxtaposition between good and evil in our world. It is an opportunity to confront the reality of evil and the Evil One with open eyes. The images of Lent, which encompass the great polarities of life—light and darkness, sin and obedience, temptation and faithfulness, alienation and

reconciliation, blindness and sight—give flesh and blood to this confrontation. These images of our human condition are encountered repeatedly in the Scripture readings, the prayers, and the liturgies of the Lenten season.

One of the possibilities during this time involves the use of blessings for the catechumens during the Sunday liturgies of Lent. These are occasions for confronting the darkness of life within a community of faith and hope. The gospel readings for the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent set forth the call to faith in Christ in a world that can be dangerous and frightening. At the same time, these Sundays can serve as the public occasions at which the oral and written traditions of the faith are passed on to those preparing for baptism. The Creed, the church's book of worship, and the Bible, if not already given, can be publicly presented to the candidates in worship—gifts from the family of faith to those about to join the body of Christ in Holy Baptism.

All of this is for the purpose of preparing both baptismal candidates and congregation for the celebration of baptism and communion at the Vigil of Easter. In this liturgy, the church celebrates the Lord's death and resurrection. The church also welcomes new brothers and sisters who die and rise with Christ in the waters of the baptismal font. Here the baptized renew their baptismal promises and so are united with the newly-baptized in a common profession of faith. In this liturgy, those who have been born of water and the Word of God come to the table where they receive for the first time the body and blood of the crucified and risen Lord. This is a joyful celebration for everyone who is joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Easter Vigil is a rich experience for the catechumens and the baptized alike. The visual experience of a passing over from darkness to light, the joyful Easter proclamation,

the narration of salvation history, the flowing water and gracious word of Holy Baptism, and the bread of life and cup of salvation flood the heart, mind, and soul of all who participate. For baptismal candidates—now the *newly baptized*—the celebration of baptism and communion can raise questions which may have gone unrecognized beforehand. There may come an overflowing thankfulness for the gifts of God graciously bestowed upon them, and at the very same time a consuming desire to know and experience more.

Easter: Baptismal Living

The time of baptismal living begins during the Fifty Days between Easter Sunday and the Day of Pentecost. This time provides the opportunity to explore the mysteries of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and to form all the baptized in baptismal faith and life. For the newly baptized the vantage point has now been changed. Before baptism, the catechist may have said, “You have heard . . .” in reference to the proclamation of Scripture in the liturgy. Now the catechist or pastor may say, “You have seen . . .” in reference to the celebration of the Sacraments. The event of Holy Baptism, as a life changing event, also changes one’s relationship with the Christian community. Joined to Jesus Christ and His church in Holy Baptism, the newly baptized now participate even more fully in the life of the community of faith. They participate in the entire service, receiving communion at the Lord’s Table, and being sent out into the world with the mission and ministry of all the baptized.

For this reason, the Fifty Days from Easter to Pentecost afford the opportunity for the newly baptized to discern the ministry/ministries of the congregation through which they will serve the Lord. In what specific ways does faith in Jesus Christ enlighten the

ministry of daily life? During this time opportunity can be offered for individual members of the congregation to share with the newly baptized their struggles of faith and life and their day-to-day decision making—all with an eye toward encouraging all the baptized in their own daily life. In other words, this initial time of baptismal living is intended to place baptism in its proper perspective: as a beginning to life in Christ, rather than as the end of inquiry. This is made clear in the Affirmation of the Vocation of Christians, which both affirms the ongoing nature of the catechumenal life and, at the same time, brings the catechumenate to an end for the newly baptized. This rite is celebrated at Pentecost.

Questions Sponsors Frequently Ask

Note: The following material was rewritten from Ron Lewinski's book, Guide for Sponsors. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987. The material was used in its entirety except for theological and terminology changes to adapt it to a Lutheran understanding of justification and sanctification. The purpose of a complete usage was to prepare a guide for the sponsors as quickly as possible. I hope to be able to redraft this manual and republish it in "Lutheran Form" in the future with permission from the publisher.

Being a sponsor is an exciting and fulfilling ministry. It's not hard to get caught up in the contagious zeal and enthusiasm of catechumens and candidates. But there also may be some fears and struggles. These can leave a sponsor feeling inadequate or unsure about how best to serve.

The following are some of the questions sponsors have asked. We hope this section can help take the guesswork out those concerns. In all cases, the best resource in a predicament is your catechumenate team or pastoral staff. Here are some starting points.

1. I don't feel worthy or prepared well enough to be a sponsor.

It's not uncommon for a new sponsor to fantasize about all the things that could go wrong in a relationship with a catechumen or candidate and then feel overwhelmed or inadequate. If you're selected or approved to be a sponsor, the catechumenate team, pastoral staff or pastor must have seen in you the necessary qualifications. Sometimes sponsors have the impression that they're supposed to know everything about the church and have the correct answers for any questions that may arise.

Remember that sponsors are not catechists (religious educators), so they shouldn't assume responsibility for matters of catechesis. Undoubtedly the questions candidates ask often challenge us, because we have never heard them posed from that particular

point of view. Rather than letting yourself be intimidated by questions, take delight in the opportunity to explore matters more than you have before. It's not bad at all to show catechumens and candidates that a mature Lutheran Christian need not have all the answers. Catechumens and candidates may learn that growth doesn't end with church membership. We're all "on the way."

2. What do I do if the catechumen or candidate I sponsor is shy?

Don't panic! Some catechumens and candidates are indeed shy and may share very little in group discussions. If you're an extrovert, you may even feel they are reacting somewhat coldly toward you. Try not to interpret this behavior prematurely. Give shy people time to get comfortable with you and the group. As they come to trust you they will share more of themselves. Offer positive support when that is done. Look for occasions to call upon a shy person by name to seek an opinion. Some people are better listeners than talkers.

You may invite the catechumen or candidate out for coffee or something simple like that. Sometimes, away from the formal environment of church buildings, a person may feel more free to speak openly.

3. How much of what a catechumen or candidate tells me has to be kept confidential?

The catechumen or candidate should always feel free to speak with a sponsor in confidence. At no point may that confidence be betrayed.

If a personal matter with serious consequences—such as might require professional counseling or other service—arises in a discussion between you and your catechumen or candidate, you should encourage him or her to seek that help. If that is not helpful or

likely; you should ask the catechumen's or candidate's permission to consult a member of the pastoral staff about it.

Certainly the catechumen or candidate needs to understand that a sponsor is expected to give testimony concerning the individual's development. Nevertheless, the sponsor must not betray a personal confidence by sharing with the catechumenate team anything that is meant to be kept private.

4. My catechumen hasn't been coming regularly to the catechumenate sessions. What should I be doing?

When a catechumen or candidate misses a session without notice, the sponsor may call the next day to tell the person that he or she was missed and to see if anything is wrong. If one absence develops into a pattern, the sponsor may need to ask the catechumen or candidate directly why he or she is not coming to the sessions. Before this, though, consultation with the pastoral staff is recommended.

5. I enjoy being a sponsor, and I like the way Christians are received into the church today. But sometimes I feel the catechumens and candidates are not receiving enough of the content of the faith.

For many of us, growing up Lutheran meant learning the church's history and doctrine—its formal teaching—in a rather abstract way. For some Luther's Small Catechism represents the way we were formed in the church's tradition. On the other hand, the formation of children and adults in the faith was always more than an academic experience. Customs, prayers, devotions, charitable practices had their place too. But, truths of the faith whether we understood them or not and whether or not they gave meaning to our life.

Christian formation today places great importance on catechesis, that is, handing on the fundamental doctrines of our faith from one generation to another. Catechesis as such, however, is only one component among many in the complete formation process. Public worship, private prayer, the observance of fasts and feasts and Sundays and seasons, familiarity with the sacred scriptures, the social and ethical values, apostolic works and spiritual growth are all part of the bigger formation process within which catechesis takes its place.

From experience we have learned well that knowledge of right doctrine doesn't necessarily lead to faithful discipleship of the Lord. We have learned that if a catechumen or candidate is exposed positively to the whole array of components in the formation process mentioned above (including catechesis) over a reasonable length of time, the likelihood of faithfulness as a Lutheran Christian is greater.

To this end, storytelling is a key. In our scriptural/doctrinal/catechetical sessions in the formation process, when we invite catechumens or candidates to share their own experience from life, it's not just to get to know one another better. The purpose is to take the experience of our life and then listen how the scriptural/doctrinal tradition of the church enlightens those experiences. It draws our own life and the tradition of the church much closer together.

In many communities the lectionary (Sunday scriptural readings) is the primary catechetical book. Although it is not laid out like a catechism, the fundamentals of our Lutheran Christian faith emerge from the scriptures. Trained catechists are able to hand on the doctrinal traditions of the church as it unfolds week by week through the scriptures of our public worship.

All this does not mean to say that there aren't some catechumenates that are weak in handing on the doctrinal traditions of the church. But it does say we need to understand catechesis in a broader way. We need not worry when the catechetical format and methodology is not like the one that shaped us.

Sponsors who have serious questions or doubts about Lutheran teaching would be wise to seek clarification from the catechumenate team or pastoral staff outside the formal session. In this way the catechumens or candidates will not be confused by the discussion, and undue time won't be given to an issue that is not a common problem for others.

6. Do I have financial or legal obligations toward my catechumen or candidate?

It is not uncommon for sponsors to discover that their catechumen or candidate has some serious personal or business problems. These could be financial, legal, marital, medical or job related. A sponsor is not responsible for solving them or bearing their weight. There is no financial or legal obligation toward the catechumen or candidate.

At the same time, the sponsor may discover that the catechumen or candidate has been open about sharing some personal matters. Of course this obliges the sponsor to confidentiality, but it also invites the sponsor to continue to be a good listener and supportive friend. If the issues under discussion are beyond the competence of the sponsor, he or she should suggest counseling, or, with the permission of the catechumen or candidate, should bring the need to the pastoral staff for advisement.

7. Can I sponsor someone every year?

Being a sponsor is a serious trust that frequently demands a great deal of time and energy. For two reasons it is not wise to sponsor more than one person at a time or to

sponsor people in successive years. First, burnout does happen, and you would not want to deprive a catechumen or candidate of the constructive, dedicated sponsoring relationship he or she needs. Second, it would be advantageous for your congregation if more people could perform this ministry at some point in their lives. Of course there is nothing to prevent a person who was a sponsor one year from being a sponsor again a few years later.

10. Should I encourage the catechumen I am sponsoring to become a sponsor next year?

It would be fine to tell the person you are sponsoring how much you appreciate the opportunity of being a sponsor and recommend the ministry for him or her sometime in the future. But new members should not be asked to be sponsors too soon. Although they are enthusiastic and eager to help, it's best to give their experience room to settle and grow. They may prefer a much more strenuous kind of ministry like supervising a soup line, spending more time with the family; leading exercise for senior citizens or using their creative skills for the church more powerfully than anyone could imagine. Surprises happen.

11. How long does it take to become a Lutheran?

Becoming a Lutheran may take from a few months to a few years. The length of the process depends on the individual. Ordinarily, if someone does not have the benefit of formal education in matters of doctrine and the way of Christ, was not raised in a family accustomed to church observance or is unfamiliar with the worship, feasts, Sundays and seasons of the church year, at least a year will probably be needed. Some candidates may

have a rich and full church tradition and therefore will need only a few months of formation and spiritual direction.

Forming new Lutherans is not just a matter of learning doctrines and receiving traditions. The heart of the process for everyone is the ongoing call to spiritual growth. We are concerned about preparing disciples who integrated the Gospel into their lives, put on the mind of Christ and through prayer and good works are ready to live in a world as followers of Jesus. Such mature faith needs time and nurturing.

From this we can see that the call to be a living witness is addressed to the whole Christian community. As God expects a great deal from the catechumens and candidates, so does God expect more from us. God affirms our faith and challenges our lack of it.

Sponsor's Checklist

- Pray daily for all the catechumens, candidates, sponsors and pastoral team members.
- When appropriate or recommended, attend meetings with your catechumen or candidate.
- Greet your catechumen or candidate when he or she arrives for the meeting. Make sure he or she feels welcome and has a place to sit. Your hospitality, especially when things are new to him or her, is very important.
- Make an occasional phone call. When there is a meeting, call your catechumen or candidate to see if a ride is needed or if you might go together. If a meeting is missed, a phone call the next day will reassure your interest in him or her and provide another opportunity just to converse and get acquainted.
- Invite your catechumen or candidate to worship. Explain what its meaning is for you.
- Introduce your catechumen or candidate to others in the congregation.
- Take your catechumen or candidate on a tour of the church. Show and explain the worship area. Allow efficient time for him or her to see and touch the different objects and ask questions.
- Introduce your catechumen or candidate to a good Christian bookstore where Biblical reading material is available.
- Show a copy of the Lutheran Witness or other Lutheran publication to your catechumen or candidate, and explain subscription procedures.
- Take your catechumen or candidate on a tour of significant Lutheran sites in town and explain their significance.
- If you sense that your catechumen or candidate had a difficult time understanding what was said or experienced at a group session, do not hesitate to ask if you can help. Don't push, but do offer. You can also be sensitive to other personal concerns. If you journey a year with a catechumen or candidate, there will sometimes be a need to listen to whatever is troubling him or her. Take the initiative in responding to needs.

- Keep a journal of your own thoughts and questions throughout the formation of your catechumen or candidate. Use your journal in your prayer times to guide your prayers to be specific.
- Discuss the practice of contributing to the ministry of the church and Biblical practices of stewardship.
- Trust the Lord! Be yourself. Stay genuinely interested in your catechumen or candidate, and your support will come across naturally. Keep a good sense of humor. Though your ministry is serious, it is never joyless. Be ready to laugh and socialize with a catechumen or candidate as well as to pray and study.

“I Have Good News For You” Doctrinal Instruction Outlines

Note: The following material was originally given to me by Rev. Eldor Richter in 1985. Pastor Richter was the Senior Pastor at Hope when I was called as Assistant Pastor in 1985. They were used by him to teach adult instruction classes. The basic structure is still the same though the material has been refined and updated over the years to reflect the 1986 publication of Luther’s Small Catechism by Concordia Publishing House. I am also aware that there is a book published by Rev. Ginkel in Kansas entitled, “I Have Good News For You.” I do not know who originated the title or the material. There are some similarities in structure and content.

**I HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU
... ABOUT A GOD WHO IS REAL**

Lesson #1

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE REAL GOD?

I. IS IT NECESSARY TO PROVE THAT THERE REALLY IS A GOD?

- Psalm 19:1 Tells us that NATURE shows us there is a God.
"The heavens are telling the glory of God: that the firmament proclaims His handiwork."
- Romans 2:15 Tells that man's CONSCIENCE says there is a real God.
"They show that what the Law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or excuse them."
- Psalm 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, 'there is no God.' They are corrupt. They do abominable deeds."

II. DOES MAN NATURALLY KNOW WHO THIS "REAL" GOD IS?

- Acts 17:23 Paul reviewing the religions of the Greeks says, "I have found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.'"

Read: Romans 1:22-25, tells us that man substitutes "things" for the "REAL" God.

III. DOES MAN NATURALLY KNOW WHAT THIS REAL GOD HAS DONE FOR HIM?

- 1 Cor. 2:9-10 Tells us that man does not know what God has done. But, as it is written, "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.
- Hebrews 1:2 Tells us that God has spoken once for all in His Son. "In these last days God has spoken to us by a Son."
- Col. 1:15 Tells us God has made Himself known in Jesus. "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God."

Read: John 3: 16-19

IV. FOR WHAT CHIEF PURPOSE WERE THE SCRIPTURES WRITTEN?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:15-16

V. WHO WROTE THE SCRIPTURES?

- 2 Peter 1:21 "No prophecy every came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

VI. WHO WAS LUTHER?

See EXPLANATION OF LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM, pages 55-60.

1. What are some things nature tells us about God?
2. What does our conscience tell us about God?
3. What great things does the Bible alone tell us about the Real God?
4. Can you suggest any man-made idols and images that we tend to worship today and count on for help?
5. Can you suggest any examples of “meaninglessness” and “emptiness” in the life of people today?
6. What is the reason for this meaninglessness?
7. How can man “who is in the dark” about the “Real” God learn who He is and what He is like?
8. There is much in the world today that may cause one to ask, “Is God a God of love and does He really care?” What proof do we have that God does care?
9. For what chief purpose do we have the Bible?
10. We should use the Bible:
 - a. as a safe deposit for flowers and mementos.
 - b. as a table center piece.
 - c. for personal enrichment.
 - d. for personal comfort and joy.
 - e. to make us wise unto salvation.
11. What method have we found useful in searching the Scriptures?
12. The Bible tells me about God. Match the following:

<p>____ God is able to help me in trouble</p> <p>____ God is with me everywhere</p> <p>____ God keeps His Word</p> <p>____ God hates sin</p> <p>____ God is good</p> <p>____ God is more kind than I deserve</p> <p>____ God is my salvation</p> <p>____ God forgives me through Jesus</p>	<p>a. “The Lord is good to all...”</p> <p>b. “I am the Almighty God”</p> <p>c. “Whither shall I flee from thy presence...”</p> <p>d. “God was in Christ reconciling...”</p> <p>e. “I the Lord your God am holy.”</p> <p>f. “The Lord God, merciful and gracious.”</p> <p>g. “God will have all men to be saved.”</p> <p>h. “He abideth faithful...”</p>
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I HAVE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE REAL GOD
WHO CREATED YOU AND CARES ABOUT YOU

LESSON #2

I. What does the Bible say about Creation?

A. Creation of the Universe.

Read Genesis 1

Exodus 20:11 “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.

B. Creation of Humankind

Genesis 2:7 “Then the Lord formed man if the dust from the ground.”

Read Genesis 2:18-25 (the creation of woman)

C. Creation of Angels

Col. 1:16 “For in Him (Jesus) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.”

Psalms 91:11 “He will give His angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways.”

Evil Angels: 1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be watchful, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

See The Explanation To The First Article (Luther’s Small Catechism, pp. 107-109)

II. What does the Bible say about the Fall of Humankind into sin? (THE LAW)

A. Man was created in the Image of God: Read Genesis 1:27

B. Man is deceived by Satan. Read Genesis 3:1-19

C. The result is death. “The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23

Read Romans 5:12, 15, 18

III. What is God’s answer to the Fall of Humankind? (THE GOSPEL)

A. The Promise

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

B. The Fulfillment

Romans 3:22-25 “For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith.”

See Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism, pp. 90-115

SUMMARY

Agree or Disagree?

1. God was once the starter of creation. But now the universe pretty well runs itself.
2. You can worship God with material things, not only with your mind and heart.
3. Your body is as good as your soul.
4. Being a minister is doing more holy work than being a plumber.
5. Every good Christian should learn to study the Bible as a source of scientific information about God.
6. Because most scientists work with the evolutionary theory, the Bible is inaccurate.
7. The white race is basically superior to all others - this is the way God has created us.
8. The spirit world is not real because we cannot scientifically prove it.
9. The devil is all the evil you see in the world.
10. Children become angels when they die.
11. It makes no difference if you are a Christian or not in time of trouble.

MAN AND SIN

1. Only acts or deeds are sinful, not thoughts or desires since we have no control over them.
2. Not all people are born sinners; they become sinful only through the bad example of others.
3. God is too kind and loving to condemn people because of their sin.
4. We are saved from sin and damnation by trying to live a good life and being honest.
5. Everyone will be saved who tries their best to please God.
6. God saves men, women, and children from His judgment through His Son, Jesus Christ.

READ The Gospel of John, Chapters 1-2

Psalm 103

I. THE NATURE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

A. He was promised and foretold of old.

Read Genesis 3:15 The First Promise of a Savior

Read Isaiah 53 Note the sufferings foretold

He was also foretold in the many sacrifices and ceremonies (See Exodus 12)

B. Jesus Christ was true God

Read Luke 1:30-36 While born of man, He was the sinless Son of God.

Read John 1:1-14 He is true God from eternity.

Note: It was necessary for Jesus to be true God that He might destroy sin and the power of the devil, and offer a ransom sufficient for all.

C. Jesus Christ was also True Man.

John 11:35 “Jesus wept.” Mark 4:38 “He (Jesus) was in the stern asleep.”

Matthew 4:2 “Afterwards He (Jesus) was hungry.”

Note: It was necessary for Jesus to be true man that He might be under the curse of the Law and suffer all things, even death, in our stead.

II. THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST

A. He is our prophet.

As prophet He revealed Himself by word and deed and still reveals to us through His Word.

Deut. 18:15 “The Lord, your God, will raise up for you a prophet like me among you . . .”

B. He is our Great High Priest.

Read Hebrews 7:26-27

C. He is our King.

Read John 18:36-37

III. HE HUMBLER HIMSELF

A. Christ as man did not always use His full divine Glory.

Read Galatians 4:4-5

Read Philippians 2:5-8

The Creed - “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.”

B. Christ as man uses His full divine Honor and Glory again.

Read Philippians 2:9-11

The Creed - “He descended into hell” (see 1 Peter 3:18-19)

“He rose again from the dead” (see Romans 1:4)

“He ascended into heaven” (see Acts 1:11)

“From thence He will come again to judge the living and the dead”

Read Acts 1:8-11

Read: Explanation to Luther’s Small Catechism - pages 115-143

SUMMARY—Lesson #3

1. Name several details of Christ's life and death foretold in the Old Testament.
2. What does the name "Jesus" mean?
3. What does the title "Christ" mean?
4. True or False?
 - a. Jesus was called the Son of God because He was a great teacher.
 - b. Jesus is called the Son of God because He is God's Son from eternity.
 - c. Christ stopped being God and became man.
 - d. Christ came to bear our sin and punishment in our stead.
5. Name the steps of Christ's humiliation.
6. T/F Because Jesus was God, His divine powers insulated Him from experiencing the bitterness of life. Jesus only seemed to be human.
7. T/F The temptations of Jesus described in the New Testament were probably not strong temptations, since He was the Son of God. They were not too painful and difficult to resist.
8. T/F Jesus can lead groping humanity to God because He Himself was successful in discovering the Way. All we have to do is follow His example.
9. What does it mean that Christ was our substitute?
10. What did the prophets do? How is Jesus our Great Prophet?
11. What did the Old Testament priests do? How is Jesus our Great High Priest?
12. What did the kings do? How is Jesus our Great heavenly King?
13. Name the steps of Christ's exaltation.
14. T/F
 - a. Jesus descended into hell to suffer for us.
 - b. Jesus rose from the dead by His own power.
 - c. The resurrection proves that we are redeemed.
15. T/F Jesus did not exist before He was born in Bethlehem.
16. What does it mean that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father?
17. Match:

The Crucifixion Chapter	John 11
The Deity of Christ Chapter	Luke 23
The Resurrection Chapter	John 1

Read The Gospel of John, Chapters 3 and 4

Psalm 121

GOD GIVES MAN A MIRROR AND A GUIDE FOR LIVING
THE LAW OF GOD - COMMANDMENTS 1-3

- I. WHAT IS THE SUMMARY OF THE LAW?
Read Matthew 22:37-39 *The Love of God and Neighbor*
- II. WHAT ARE THE THREE USES OF THE LAW?
- A. As a curb or stop sign in the conscience of man.
Read Romans 2:14-15
- B. The Law shows us our sins. A Mirror.
Read Romans 3:20
- C. The Law acts as a Guide for the Christian.
Read Psalm 119:105

The First Commandment *"You shall have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:3*

- A. Confess the Triune God alone. Matthew 4:10 "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."
Read: Matthew 10:32-33
- B. Put God first in your lives
Read: Matthew 6:24
- C. Trust in God for every need.
Read: Matthew 6:25-34

The Second Commandment *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Exodus 20:7*

- A. Do not use God's name needlessly or thoughtlessly.
- B. Glorify His name in teaching. I Timothy 1:3 "Teach no other doctrine."
- C. Glorify His name in our lives.
Read: Matthew 7:21
- D. Glorify His name in praise and thanksgiving.
Read: Psalm 103:1

The Third Commandment *"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8*

- A. No special day binding in the New Testament
Read: Colossians 2:16-17 (compare Romans 14:5-6)
- B. Gladly hear God's Word in public worship
Read: Psalm 84
John 8:47 "He who is of God hears the words of God: the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."
- C. Search the Scriptures privately.
Read: Acts 17:11
- Read: Luther's Small Catechism, pgs. 53-72

GOD GIVES A MIRROR AND A GUIDE FOR LIVING
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (4-10)

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:12 "You shall honor your Father and your Mother."

Read Ephesians 6:4 Obligation of parents.

Read Romans 13:1-7 Authority of the Government

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not kill"

Read 1 John 3:15 Hatred is murder in the sight of God.

Read Ephesians 4:32 We are to forgive one another because God forgives us.

Romans 12:20 "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him drink."

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."

Read Matthew 19:6 Marriage is intended as a life-long union.

Matthew 19:6; 1 Cor. 7:15 Divorce permitted only for fornication and malicious desertion.

Read Ephesians 5:21-33 Formula for a successful marriage.

Purity enjoined - Ephesians 5:3

"Immorality and all impurity and covetousness must not ever be named among you as is fitting among saints."

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal"

Leviticus 19:35 "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity."

2 Thessalonians 3:10 "If any would not work, neither should he eat."

Proverbs 19:17 "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord."

Read Colossians 3:22, 4:1 Relationship between employer and employee.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

James 4:11 "Do not speak evil against one another, brethren."

Read James 3:4-10

Read Matthew 18:15

THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet."

Luke 12:29, 31 "And do not seek what you are to eat, or what you are to drink . . . instead seek his kingdom and these things shall be yours as well."

1 Timothy 6:6-10 "There is great gain in godliness with contentment . . . if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare . . . for the love of money is the root of all evils.

Compare Luther's Small Catechism - pages 72-98

SUMMARY

1. What responsibility have children to their parents?
2. What responsibility have parents to their children?
3. Agree/Disagree - God commands that we pay taxes for the upkeep of the government.
4. Agree/Disagree - Hatred before God is considered the same as murder.
5. Agree/Disagree . . . I sin against the Fifth Commandment by:
 - a. driving carelessly
 - b. working day and night
 - c. cursing and swearing
 - d. not giving a dime to the community charity fund and others
 - e. drinking excessively
 - f. smoking
6. God's will is that marriage duration should be _____.
7. God reserves sexual relations for marriage because:
8. Lust, prompted by an impure magazine, suggestive movies, dirty jokes, and impure minds, is condemned as adultery by God. Agree/Disagree?
9. Agree/Disagree . . . Sexual desire is a result of man's fall into sin.
10. Modesty is a virtue of a Christian . . . True/False
11. Why do our money and goods belong to God?
12. How is it possible to steal from God? (see Malachi 3:6-10)
13. Why does the Lord in the Seventh Commandment protect personal property?
14. You are tempted to tell an unkind rumor. How might you overcome this temptation?
15. Why should we forgive our fellowman?
16. If we have hostile feelings toward someone we should:
17. What happens when we are consumed by the desire for more and more things?
18. God requires that we _____ our fellowman as _____.
19. All of our thoughts and actions towards others are to be _____.
20. These commandments show us _____.

I HAVE GOOD NEWS
ABOUT SINNERS FORGIVEN

Lesson #6

I. WE NEED FORGIVENESS

John 3:6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Romans 5:18 "One man's trespass led to condemnation for all men."

Psalm 19:12 "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Isaiah 59:2 "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."

Matthew 15:19 "Out of the heart come evil thoughts."

II. WHAT DOES THE GOSPEL TELL US?

A. Christ has suffered and died in my stead (as my substitute).

Read: II Corinthians 5:19, 21

Isaiah 53:5 "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."

John 10:11 "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

B. Christ has redeemed me from the guilt and punishment of sin.

Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law having become a curse for us."

Read: Romans 8:11

C. Christ has redeemed me from the fear of death.

II Timothy 1:10 "Our Savior, Jesus Christ . . . abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

D. Christ has redeemed me from the power of the devil.

I John 3:8 "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

E. Christ has redeemed the whole world.

John 1:29 "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

III. HOW AM I SAVED?

A. Not by works, but by God's Grace.

Read: Romans 3:23-24

B. Not by works, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:28 "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

Read: Galatians 3:10-13

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Compare: Luther's Small Catechism, pgs. 115-143

SUMMARY Lesson #6

1. What does it mean to be justified before God?
2. We become right with God by doing good and being honest. T F
3. We become right with God by believing in Jesus Christ and keeping the Ten Commandments. T F
4. We become right with God by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. T F
5. Which is correct? Jesus won forgiveness only for those who are finally saved.
Jesus won forgiveness for all men, also those finally lost.
6. Where does God tell us that He has forgiven the world in Christ?
7. What do we mean when we say that He has forgiven the world in Christ?
8. What is saving faith?
9. A Christian friend dies and you go to the home to comfort the family. What might you say?
10. Match: The Great Atonement Chapter Ephesians 2
The Victory Over Death Chapter I Corinthians 15
The Grace Through Faith Chapter Isaiah 53

LAW AND GOSPEL

1. Matthew 5:28 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father . . . is perfect."
2. I Timothy 5:22 "Keep thyself pure."
3. Matthew 5:44 "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . ."
4. I John 1:7 "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanseth us from all sin."
5. I Timothy 6:8 "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."
6. Matthew 18:11 "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."
7. The law of God requires perfect love toward _____ and our _____.
8. The Law shows us our _____ and need for a _____.
9. The Christian no longer lives under the curse of the Law. T F
10. When we keep the Ten Commandments God loves us more. T F
11. When we try to keep the Ten Commandments we are more acceptable to God. T F
12. _____ moves the Christian to live in the spirit of the law. (cf. Exodus 20:2)

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CONVERSION

I. THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Read: John 14:15-27 "The Spirit is Promised"

Read: Acts 2:1-21 "The Day of Pentecost"

II. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

He is true God, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity

Matthew 18:19 "Baptizing them in the name of the Father . . . Son . . . and Holy Spirit."

Acts 5:3-4 "You have not lied to men, but to God."

III. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO FOR US?

A. Call us by the Gospel to faith.

II Thessalonians 2:14 "He called you through our Gospel . . ."

Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by . . . the preaching of Christ."

I Corinthians 12:3 "No man can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."

B. Creates spiritual life within us.

James 1:18 "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth."

John 3:5 "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

C. Enlightens and converts us.

II Corinthians 4:6 "God has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Jeremiah 31:18 "Bring me back that I may be restored."

D. Sanctified the life.

John 15:5 "He who abides in Me and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Read: Galatians 5:16-24

E. Keeps faith alive and growing.

Philippians 1:6 "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

F. Only a Christian can do good works before God.

Romans 14:23 "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

Romans 8:8 "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

G. All entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 2:14; Philippians 2:13; Zechariah 4:6

IV. DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DESIRE TO GIVE ALL THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST?

A. God desires all to be saved.

I Timothy 2:4 “God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

B. Why are not all people converted?

Acts 7:51 “You always resist the Holy Spirit . . . ?

C. He calls us through the Gospel today.

Romans 1:6 “The Gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation.”

Acts 16:31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

READ: Luther’s Small Catechism, pgs. 144-168

SUMMARY - Lesson #7

1. How do we know from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is truly God?
2. At birth I was spiritually—
 - a. not quite perfect.
 - b. too young to be sinful.
 - c. blind, dead, and an enemy of God.
3. True or False
 - a. A person is converted when he gives up bad habits.
 - b. A person is unable to convert himself or come to faith.
 - c. The Holy Spirit converts man with his cooperation.
 - d. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and brings us to trust in Christ's righteousness.
4. What does it mean to "believe in Jesus Christ?"
5. Give one way that the work of the Holy Spirit is pictured or described in the Scriptures.
6. Choose the correct statement.
 - a. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith without Word or Sacrament.
 - b. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith by means of the Commandments.
 - c. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith by means of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
7. What is meant by the "Means of Grace?"
8. What are the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian life? (See Galatians 5:16-24)
9. Agree or disagree
 - a. Only a Christian moved by the Spirit is able to do good works before God.
 - b. Giving to the poor, going to church on Sunday, all these are always obviously good works before God.
 - c. Living a life as a pastor in prayer is a better good work than cleaning house, working at the factory, cutting your neighbor's lawn while on vacation, visiting the aged.
10. All churches teach you are saved by faith alone in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
True or False?

I HAVE GOOD NEWS
ABOUT A WASHING THAT CLEANSSES FROM SIN

HOLY BAPTISM

I. HOW AND WHEN WAS HOLY BAPTISM INSTITUTED?

Matthew 28:19 “God therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

II. MUST WE IMMERSE PEOPLE FOR BAPTISM?

Luke 11:38 “The Pharisee was astonished to see that He did not first wash (Greek - Baptize) before dinner.”

III. WHO IS TO BE BAPTIZED?

A. All people

Matthew 28:19 “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . .”

B. Families

Acts 16 (the family of Lydia and the Jailer were baptized)

C. Children

1. They need baptism. Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .”
2. Christ says, “Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” Mark 10:14
3. They are included in the blessing. Acts 2:39 “The promise is to you and to your children.”
4. The Holy Spirit is able to work faith in them.

Matthew 18:6 “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

5. They are included in “all nations.” Matthew 28:19

IV. WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY BAPTISM?

A. It works faith. John 3:5 “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

B. Through it we share in the blessings of Christ’s Redemption.

Colossians 2:12 “And you were buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead.”

Read: Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:26-27; I Peter 3:18-21

V. HOW CAN BAPTISM DO SUCH GREAT THINGS?

A. By God's Word.

Ephesians 5:25-26 "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing with the Word."

B. By faith in the promises of God.

Galatians 3:26-27 "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

VI. WHAT SHOULD HOLY BAPTISM MEAN IN MY DAILY LIFE?

Read: Romans, chapters 6—12

Read: Luther's Small Catechism, pgs. 199-212

SUMMARY - HOLY BAPTISM

Lesson #8

1. What meaning does it have for you to be baptized “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?”
2. Is any Christian able to baptize? What is needed for a baptism to be valid before God?
3. What do we mean that Holy Baptism is a “Means of Grace?”
4. How is it possible for Holy Baptism to give us such blessings?
5. How are the blessings of God received in Holy Baptism?
6. Agree or Disagree:
It is not lack, but contempt for baptism that condemns.
7. Choose one:
 - a. Unbaptized infants are lost.
 - b. We commend unbaptized infants to a merciful God.
8. What are some “Bible Pictures” that convey the blessings of Holy Baptism?
9. How is our baptism a daily comfort to us?
10. How is our baptism a daily encouragement and incentive to us?
11. Why do Lutherans have sponsors?
12. Why do Lutherans observe confirmation?
13. Being baptized means sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection. How is this to be daily renewed in our lives?

I HAVE GOOD NEWS

ABOUT A SUPPER WHICH NOURISHES YOU

THE LORD'S SUPPER

I. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH OF THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST'S TRUE BODY AND BLOOD IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

- A. Christ says His true Body and Blood are given. Read: Mark 14:22-24
- B. St. Paul says unworthy communicants are guilty of the Body and Blood. Read: I Corinthians 11:27
- C. St. Paul says the Body and Blood are received with the Bread and Wine. Read: I Corinthians 10:16

II. ARE THE BREAD AND WINE CHANGED?

- A. No. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."
- B. Christ's promise to be present, however, remains.
"Take eat; this is My Body . . . Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin." Matthew 26:26-27

III. WHAT ARE THE BLESSINGS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER? (Visible Word of the Gospel)

- A. It offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins in the words—"This is My body . . . My blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
- B. It strengthens our faith.
- C. It increases our love for one another. Read: I Corinthians 10:17
- D. It strengthens us for a holier life. John 8:11—"May this strengthen and preserve you in the true faith. . . Go and do not sin again."

IV. WHAT SHOULD WE DO BEFORE PARTAKING OF THE SACRAMENT?

I Corinthians 11:28—"Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread. . ."

- A. We should examine ourselves as to our understanding of the Sacrament. Read I Corinthians 11:29
- B. We should examine ourselves as to our sorrow over sin. Read Psalm 51:17
- C. We should examine ourselves as to our willingness to change our lives. Read Romans 6:6
- D. We should examine ourselves as to our faith in Jesus Christ. Read II Corinthians 13:5

V. WHY SHOULD WE PARTAKE OF THE SACRAMENT FREQUENTLY?

- A. Because of the many blessings to be received (See III)
- B. To remember Christ. Luke 22:29 "This do in remembrance of Me."

- C. To confess His death before others. Read I Corinthians 11: 26-28
Read: Luther's Small Catechism, pgs. 227-242

SUMMARY—THE LORD’S SUPPER—Lesson #9

1. What are some other names for the Lord’s Supper?
2. What are the visible things received in the Lord’s Supper?
3. What does Christ give in a supernatural way with these visible elements?
4. Are the bread and the wine changed into Christ’s Body and Blood?
5. What church teaches that the bread and the wine are changed completely into Christ’s Body and Blood?
6. What churches teach that the bread and wine only represent Christ’s Body and Blood and that they are not given in the Sacrament?
7. What church teaches that the Body and Blood, the bread and wine are all present?
8. True or False:
 - a. The bread and wine are received in a natural manner.
 - b. The Body and Blood of Christ are already with the bread and there is no need to receive the wine.
 - c. The Body and Blood of Christ are received in a supernatural manner.
 - d. The bread and wine are to be adored.
9. What are the benefits we receive in the Lord’s Supper?
10. How do we lay hold of the benefits of the Lord’s Supper?
11. Where the Sacrament is rightly administered: True or False
 - a. All communicants receive Christ’s Body and Blood.
 - b. Only believing communicants receive forgiveness of sins.
12. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod practices “close communion” because: True or False
 - a. It wants to keep as many people from going to Communion as possible.
 - b. It thinks other people are not as good as they are.
 - c. It believes that the Scriptures hold the Christian congregation and its pastor responsible for the manner in which the people receive the Lord’s Supper.
 - d. It wants people to receive the Lord’s Supper worthily.
 - e. It wants people to understand the meaning and blessings of the Lord’s Supper before attending.
13. What four questions help us to “examine ourselves” before partaking of the Lord’s Supper?
14. Sometimes we may not feel that we need communion. What would you say to this?
15. Sometimes we may feel unworthy to take communion. What should you do?
16. The Rite of Confirmation makes a person worthy to go to the Lord’s Supper and was commanded by God before a person takes the Lord’s Supper. True or False?
17. What is the definition of a Sacrament? What are the criteria to make something a Sacrament?

I HAVE GOOD NEWS
ABOUT KEYS WHICH LOCK AND UNLOCK

I. THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS IS THE POWER OR AUTHORITY DELEGATED BY GOD:

- A. To preach the Gospel.
- B. To administer the Sacraments. Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples . . . baptizing . . .”
- C. To forgive or retain sins in His Name. Read Matthew 16:19; John 20:21-23

II. WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

Read: Matthew 18:15-20

Read: Luther’s Small Catechism, pgs. 181-192.

I HAVE GOOD NEWS ABOUT A LIFE THAT NEVER ENDS

I. WHAT HAPPENS AT DEATH?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “The dust returns to the earth as it was; and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

- A. The believer goes to be with his or her Lord.

John 11:26 “And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life . . .”

Luke 23:43 “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.”

Read: Philippians 1:21-23

- B. The unbeliever goes to eternal torment.

John 3:36b “He who does not obey the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God rests upon him.”

Luke 16:23 “And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes.”

II. WHAT HAPPENS ON THE LAST DAY?

- A. Christ returns. Read: I Thessalonians 4:16-18

- B. Christ will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Read: Matthew 25:31-46

- C. Our bodies shall be glorified.

Philippians 3:21 “(Christ) will change our lowly body, to be like His glorious body.”

I Corinthians 15:53 “For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable and this mortal nature must put on immortality.”

- D. We shall live with Christ, in bliss eternally. Read: Revelation 7:13-17

- E. The day of resurrection will also be the end of this world. Be prepared. Read: II Peter 3:3-12

F. Faith in Christ is sure preparation for the final day. Read: Luther's Small Catechism, questions 187-192

SUMMARY—OFFICE OF THE KEYS & ETERNAL LIFE—Lesson #10

1. What is the Office of the Keys?
2. Who has the power of the Office of the Keys?
3. Who is delegated the power to administer the Office of the Keys publicly?
4. Does the Bible urge Christians to confess their sins?
5. _____ locks the door of heaven against us.
6. _____ unlocks the door of heaven and lets us in.
7. What are the Biblical steps of discipline and Christian concern? (See Matthew 18)
8. Church discipline is: True or False
 - a. a man made device not mentioned in the Bible.
 - b. for the purpose of kicking people out of the church.
 - c. to lead to repentance.
 - d. is to be carried out in love.
 - e. a person excommunicated can never be forgiven.
9. True or False
 - a. Women aren't supposed to do anything in a church.
 - b. The New Testament bars women from the public ministry.
 - c. Paul and the Apostles were not modern and had a low opinion of women.
10. True or False
 - a. It is possible to set the time for Judgment Day.
 - b. Christians who die become angels.
 - c. God will resurrect our bodies.
 - d. Immortality is the good things people remember about you after you die.
11. How do we inherit life with God in the world to come?
12. People sometimes ask, "How can a loving God punish unbelievers eternally?" What would you say?
13. What would you say to those who say that there will be a glorious millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ) before Judgment Day?
14. God graciously rewards the believer with degrees of glory. True or False?
15. Why do we not need to fear death?

CATECHUMENATE EVALUATION
CATECHIST

The purpose of this form is for you to evaluate the catechumenate. Please answer all the questions briefly and completely. This evaluation will be used to make adjustments in the process of the catechumenate for future years. Thank you for your assistance.

1. What do you like best about the process of the catechumenate?

Please comment on the following: fellowship, leadership, structure, time commitments, materials, etc.

2. What areas of the catechumenate do you believe are helping you the most?

Comment on the social aspects, rites, Bible studies

3. What things do you think would enhance this process for the catechist?

CATECHUMENATE EVALUATION

SPONSOR

The purpose of this form is for you to evaluate the catechumenate. Please answer all the questions briefly and completely. This evaluation will be used to make adjustments in the process of the catechumenate for future years. Thank you for your assistance.

1. What do you like best about the process of the catechumenate?

Please comment on the following: fellowship, leadership, structure, time commitments, materials, etc.

2. What areas of the catechumenate do you believe are helping you the most?

Comment on the social aspects, rites, Bible studies

3. What things do you think would enhance this process for the sponsor?

CATECHUMENATE EVALUATION
INQUIRER

The purpose of this form is for you to evaluate the catechumenate. Please answer all the questions briefly and completely. This evaluation will be used to make adjustments in the process of the catechumenate for future years. Thank you for your assistance.

1. What do you like best about the process of the catechumenate?

Please comment on the following: fellowship, leadership, structure, time commitments, materials, etc.

2. What areas do you believe are helping you the most?

Comment on the social aspects, rites, Bible studies

3. What things do you think would enhance this process for the inquirer?

CATECHUMENATE EVALUATION
PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER

The purpose of this form is for you to evaluate the catechumenate. Please answer all the questions briefly and completely. This evaluation will be used to make adjustments in the process of the catechumenate for future years. Thank you for your assistance.

1. What do you like best about the process of the catechumenate?

Please comment on the following: fellowship, leadership, structure, time commitments, materials, etc.

2. What areas do you believe are the most helpful in the catechumenate?

Comment on the social aspects, rites, Bible studies

3. What things do you think would enhance this process for the ministry of the church?