



# LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

## Introduction:

Four hundred eighty-eight years ago, in 1529, Martin Luther prepared his Small Catechism as a “pattern of sound words” (see 2 Tim 1:13) to guide Christians in the life of faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Throughout the last five centuries Lutherans have turned to this little handbook to guide them into the riches of Holy Scripture and help them understand what it means to live as a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Catechism orients all of life by the First Commandment, and frames the story of our individual lives in the story of the Triune God, Who is our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter. It shapes our view of the world and our purpose within it as those who live toward the resurrection of the body in the promise of Baptism. It teaches us how to call upon our Father in faith and how to serve our neighbor in love. It tutors us in repentance and faith. It prepares us to eat and drink Jesus’ body and blood, trusting His testament for the forgiveness of sins.

The Small Catechism is a “life book” to use the words of German Lutheran bishop Ludwig Ihmels. It is a book about our life with God—a life created by the Father, redeemed by the Son and hallowed by the Spirit.

Martin Luther would also speak of the Liturgy (Gottesdienst—Divine Service) of the Church as performing the same function:

*“To be sure, it is true that the foremost and highest worship of God is preaching and hearing God’s Word, administering the Sacraments, etc. That is performing the works of the First Table of the Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, what must flow forth from such Divine Service are the works of the Second Table of the Ten Commandments, such as honoring father and mother, living a patient, chaste, and decent life, and thus also worshiping God. For he who leads such a life is serving and honoring the same God.”* (LW 8, 541)

Luther thus also viewed the Liturgy as the pattern of teaching/instruction that orients our Christian life around the Gospel received in Divine Service:

*“Rites and ceremonies (the liturgy) indeed form a training school of faith. While ceremonies cannot create the faith, they can point to it. They are the scaffolding needed for building the church, but must not be confused with the church itself. They can serve to bring the immature (the young and simple folk) in the orbit of the Word and Sacrament where faith is born.”* (Luther on Worship, 175)

***lex orandi. lex credendi. lex vivendi.*** (The Law of praying. The Law of Believing. The Law of Living.)

*[As we worship, so we believe, so we live.]*

- 1) *Worship Life Creates and Affects Beliefs:*
- 2) *Beliefs Create and Affect Worship Life:*
- 3) *Worship Life and Beliefs Affect Each Other:*

The way you worship is a reflection of what you believe:

Examples: Lollards, Reformed & Methodists

## Why Liturgical Catechesis?

God has *a lot* to say for how he is to be worshipped: (Exodus 20-40, Leviticus, much of Numbers & Deuteronomy)

John 4:23-24, James 4:8 (Divine Service)

Lesson of Malachi:

“In Malachi's day the people of God were in a mess specifically because of their worship. They were living unfaithfully because they had forsaken faithfulness in their worship. While they were not actually running away from God, and were not worshipping idols (as they had in the past) they seemed to lack the energy to serve God wholeheartedly. They had become apathetic in their worship. They tried to live in neutral territory, neither serving God too enthusiastically, nor turning away from God too enthusiastically. In this they were self-deceived. They thought they were in a grey no-man's land, where they neither needed to respond whole-heartedly to God, nor refuse him. In fact they were in a vicious circle, a terrifying whirlpool, sinking further and further to destruction. Malachi, was writing calling the people to repentance with respect to the priesthood, which had become corrupt and worship, which had become routine and intermingled with secular practices. Malachi's predominant concern was with the purity and correct execution of the temple worship.” *(What the Bible is All About: A Bible Handbook)*

Jeremiah 5:31, Ezekiel 22:26, Mark 7:7, Hosea 4:6, Matthew 15:8

Colossians 1:26-28

Colossians 3:12-17 (Ephesians 5:19)

James 5:13 (Acts 16:25)

Psalms 95:1-3

Practical Example (Youtube Video):

### **Four Reasons to Follow Tradition:**

- 1) Tradition Mediates the Word to Us
- 2) Tradition Shows our Respect for the Past
- 3) Tradition Represents the “Greater Church”
- 4) Tradition Provides Perspective in Our Changing World (Hebrews 13:8)

## **Six Levels of Tradition - A Worship Hierarchy**

- 1) Biblical Traditions
- 2) Catholic (universal) Traditions
- 3) Confessional or Lutheran Traditions
- 4) National, Synodical, or Denominational Traditions
- 5) Parochial, Local, Congregational or Pastoral Traditions
- 6) Personal Traditions

### **Why a worship Hierarchy?**

This worship hierarchy is important because we can seek to move toward higher levels of tradition rather than remain at a lower level. As we recognize and use higher levels of tradition, we discover that we can include more of them in our worship experiences with beneficial results. We also find ourselves living more as the “Church catholic.” That is we find unity with the broader Christian Church on Earth. (True Unity)

For many worshipers, personal or congregational traditions are hardest to change. We “like” them, though there are logical and theological reasons why a biblical or catholic tradition may strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, in our postmodern society in which personal considerations (self-centered experience) seem to dominate, the higher worship traditions are often ignored or rejected rather than cherished and celebrated. As Lutheran Christians we have opportunities to expand and enhance our worship life by recognizing the hierarchy of traditions.

### **Too Catholic?**

“Whenever the divine service once again follows the old Evangelical-Lutheran agendas (or church books), it seems that many raise a great cry that it is “Roman Catholic”; “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants “The Lord be with you” and the congregation responds by chanting “and with thy spirit”; “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants the collect and the blessing and the people respond with a chanted “Amen.” Even the simplest Christian can respond to this outcry: “Prove to me that this chanting is contrary to the Word of God, then I too will call it ‘Roman Catholic’ and have nothing more to do with it. However, you cannot prove this to me.” If you insist upon calling every element in the divine service “Romish” that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church, it must follow that the reading of the Epistle and Gospel is also “Romish.” Indeed, it is mischief to sing or preach in church, for the Roman Church has done this also. . . Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic Church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox church. The chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teachings of Rome crept in. This Christian Church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from chanting. . . For more than 1700 years orthodox Christians have participated joyfully in the divine service. Should we, today, carry on by saying that such joyful participation is “Roman Catholic”? God forbid! Therefore, as we continue to hold and to restore our wonderful divine services in places where they have been forgotten, let us boldly confess that our worship forms do not tie us with the modern sects or with the church of Rome; rather, they join us to the one, holy Christian Church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. “ — C. F. W. Walther, *Der Lutheraner*, vol. 9, No. 24 (July 19, 1853), p. 163

## Augsburg Confession—Article XXIV: The Mass

Note: This article clearly demonstrates Lutheranism's desire to continue—not to reject—the wholesome, beneficial, and historic worship practices of the Church. Lutheranism retained the traditional form of the Mass, that is, the service of Holy Communion. In many respects, the ceremonies and liturgy of the Lutheran Church were very similar to those of the Roman Church. *The difference lay in Lutheranism's rejection of false teaching concerning the Mass*: that somehow, and without faith, simply by attending and observing the spectacle of the Mass, people could merit the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>1</sup> Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. The Mass is held among us and celebrated with the highest reverence. <sup>2</sup> Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns. These have been added to teach the people. <sup>3</sup> For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught «what they need to know about Christ». <sup>4</sup> Not only has Paul commanded that a language understood by the people be used in church (1 Corinthians 14:2, 9), but human law has also commanded it. <sup>5</sup> All those able to do so partake of the Sacrament together. This also increases the reverence and devotion of public worship. <sup>6</sup> No one is admitted to the Sacrament without first being examined. <sup>7</sup> The people are also advised about the dignity and use of the Sacrament, about how it brings great consolation to anxious consciences, so that they too may learn to believe God and to expect and ask from Him all that is good. <sup>8</sup> This worship pleases God [Colossians 1:9–10]. Such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, it does not appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries than among us.

McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (pp. 47–48). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

### John 4:23-24 English Standard Version (ESV)

**23** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. **24** God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

### James 4:8

**8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

### Jeremiah 5:31

**31** the prophets prophesy falsely,  
and the priests rule at their direction;  
my people love to have it so,  
but what will you do when the end comes?

### Ezekiel 22:26

**26** Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

### Mark 7:7

**7** in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

### **Hosea 4:6**

**6** My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

### **Matthew 15:8**

**8** “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

### **Colossians 1:26-28**

**26** the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. **27** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. **28** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

### **Colossians 3:12-17**

**12** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. **17** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### **Ephesians 5:19**

**19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

### **James 5:13**

**13** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

### **Acts 16:25**

**25** About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

### **Psalms 95:1-3**

**1** Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
**2** Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
**3** For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.

### **Hebrews 13:8**

**8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.