



# LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

## **Introduction:**

The worship of Christ takes place both with the spirit and with the body. The grace of Christ is, after all, received through the body first. One receives the Word of Christ through the ear (Romans 6); the washing of Holy Baptism upon the flesh (Hebrews 11); and the feast of Holy Communion through the mouth (Matthew 26). Our souls receive the grace of Christ only after our bodies have received His Word and sacramental Touch.

Because Christ is really and physically present in the Divine Service and because He applies salvation to His Christians through real, physical and tangible means, the Church also responds physically to the Divine gifts we have received. Our Lord is the center of the liturgy of the Church, and everything that is said or done is meant to point us to Him. Not only does the liturgy draw our souls to the reception and adoration of Christ, but our bodies too. Thus the liturgy is sensual. It physically confronts us with the presence of Christ. Therefore it is also helpful to consider what we are doing and what we confess with our bodies when in the very presence of God in the liturgy.

## **Definitions:**

- ➔ *adiaphora* - Items of belief not essential to salvation. In Lutheran though the adiaphora is defined as practices of the church that were neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. (Formula of Concord: Article X) [Adiaphora is a Greek word. It does not mean that something makes no difference or doesn't matter. In certain situations, keeping practices, or omitting them, can be a grave obstacle and offense to the Gospel and may even lead to its contradiction and denial.]
- ➔ *aesthetics* - the nature of beauty; characterized by a love of physical beauty in images, icons, movement, etc. - In Lutheran theology beauty is usually defined as what reflects in some way God's own character and nature. (contrasted to Gnosticism)
- ➔ *Gnosticism* - comes from the Greek term "gnosis" meaning "knowledge." Emphasizes "spiritual enlightenment" and higher level of knowledge not accessible to the uninitiated. Gnostics overemphasize the spiritual realm over the material, often claiming that the material realm is evil and hence to be escaped.  
(Influenced by Platonism - the philosophical system of the Greek philosopher Plato, which holds that created things are "imperfect copies of transcendent, objective and eternal forms," the highest of which is the form of "the Good." ie. at death the body releases the imprisoned soul.)
- ➔ *legalism/legalist* - focuses on obedience to laws or moral codes based on the (misguided) assumption that such obedience is a means of gaining divine favor (pharisees & scribes in Mark 7).
- ➔ *pietism* - emphasizes personal appropriation of faith and a lifestyle of holiness as more important than doctrine and church order. A reaction to so-called "dead orthodoxy." Forms small groups of pious believers.

**The Biblical Case for the Physical Nature of Worship:**

What does Scripture tell us happens when the Church gathers together in the Divine Service?

*Matthew 18:20, Luke 22:19-21*

*John 1:14*

What does Scripture tell us for how we are to approach the presence of God?

*Exodus 3:1-6, Psalm 95:1-7*

What does Scripture call us to have towards God?

*Hebrews 12:28*

What do the following passages inform us about the nature of the worship of God?

*1 Kings 8:54, 2 Chronicles 6:13, Matthew 2:11, 8:2, 9:18, 15:25, 20:20, Mark 1:40, 3:11, 5:6 & 33, Revelation 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:4 & 10, Acts 7:60, 10:25-26*

What attitude towards God does this position show?

What implications does this have for our in our Lutheran Worship?

**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.] - The way you worship is a reflection of what you believe:

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

**PSALMODY**

*Common (or Seasonal) Antiphon*

**VENITE ~ O Come, Let Us Sing**

*Psalm 95:1-7*

## **Some Worship Principles:**

- A. *Worship is adoration of God because he is God. He is worthy of praise for his own sake.*
- B. *Worship is adoration of God because of what he has done for us in Jesus Christ and thus what He delivers to us in the Divine Service.*
- C. *Worship is adoration of God because he continues to deal with us in grace for the sake of Jesus Christ. Here in particular all the great songs of the Book of Revelation, with their constant refrain that God's people will triumph in spite of the onslaughts of the Evil One, find application to the life of worship in the Christian community.*
- D. *Thus worship is seen in Scripture as primarily an attitude of God's people in relationship to God himself, an attitude of adoration which finds expression in prostration, bowing, kneeling, and the various ways in which we may reflect this humility and reverence before God, while also showing thanksgiving and praise.*

## **Ritual Action Implications for Us:**

1. *The ritual actions of people must be carefully understood.*  
- If not understood they can easily become "empty ceremony" to one extreme or "legalistic" to the other extreme. Thus there is often a tension in the Liturgy of the Church that it is frequently regarded to two extremes: "unnaturally formal" or "unnaturally folksy." Both must be carefully guarded against. To borrow from Pr. William Cwirla the Lutheran liturgy needs to have a "relaxed dignity" (by pastor and people). *"The leaders must learn the nature of ritual and their function within it with the grace of a natural and dignified style, model this for the people, and then communicate and teach this understanding to the people."* -*The Conduct of the Service*

*What does it say when the Pastor is doing ritual actions that for logistical reasons the congregation is unable to perform?*

2. *There are patterns of behavior that we come to know and expect and share in.*  
Ritual action is inevitable in worship, as it is whenever people assemble for whatever reason. Certain expected things are done and shared, whether it be a football game, visiting someone else's home, going to a birthday party, sitting in a classroom, attending council meetings, etc.  
*"Even casual actions confess something."* -Pr. Peterson

*What does how we dress/act/speak confess about what we believe is going on in Worship?*

3. *Though we are aware that people in various places in the world still worship by prostrating themselves, the posture is almost unheard-of in North America. Still, we do have some basic postures which are common to our worship: standing, sitting and kneeling.*  
In everyday life, standing has a certain meaning. We stand when the American flag passes us in a parade, when an important person enters a room. We talk about a "standing ovation."

Lutheran worship suggests a number of times when the congregation should rise (before the Invocation, at Doxological hymn verses, at the conclusion of Communion, etc.)

*Why do you think this posture is suggested at these times in the service?*

4. *Some actions, no matter how much Biblical precedent they may have, belong to the category of adiaphora. What does Colossians 2:16 & Romans 14:3-5 inform us is a helpful principle to apply in the worship life of the church in these matters?*
5. *Suppose a congregation wanted to change various parts of the service & actions. What should guide the decision making process?*

## Scriptures Cited:

### Matthew 18:20

**20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

### Luke 22:19-21

**19** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. **21** But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.

### John 1:14

**14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### Exodus 3:1-6

**3** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2** And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. **3** And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” **4** When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5** Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6** And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

### Hebrews 12:28

**28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

### 1 Kings 8:54

**54** Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven.

### 2 Chronicles 6:13

**13** Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven,

### Matthew 2:11

**11** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**Matthew 8:2**

**2** And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

**Matthew 9:18**

**18** While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

**Matthew 15:25**

**25** But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

**Matthew 20:20**

**20** Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.

**Mark 1:40**

**40** And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."

**Mark 3:11**

**11** And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."

**Mark 5:6**

**6** And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.

**Mark 5:33**

**33** But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth.

**Revelation 4:10**

**10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

**Revelation 5:14**

**14** And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

**Revelation 7:11**

**11** And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

**Revelation 11:16**

**16** And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,

**Revelation 19:4**

**4** And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

**Revelation 19:10**

**10** Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

**Acts 7:60**

**60** And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Acts 10:25-26**

**25** When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

**26** But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."

**Colossians 2:16**

**16** Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

**Romans 14:3-5**

**3** Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. **4** Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

**5** One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.