



LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

Week 5

Why is the Liturgy the best “Children’s Message” there is?

Ten Studies on the Child by Jacob Tanner and Prepared for the Board of Elementary Education:

The Characteristics and Development of Early Childhood, Mental Characteristics:

- a) **Curiosity** - The most outstanding mental characteristic of this period is curiosity. The child is a born investigator. Without this curiosity the child would not be in constant search for knowledge.

The value of this characteristic can be realized when we stop to think what it would mean to teach a child that did not want to know anything. Instead of the child actually seeking information and knowledge, it would go around listlessly and apathetically without any interest. Our task as teachers would be almost impossible. We would have to force the knowledge in, while now the little mind comes to us asking for information, eager to receive it and ready to absorb it. Thus it is imperative for the teacher at this stage to simply provide the information. Later in adolescence the child will move to seeking understanding in comprehension.

During these years children do however begin to ask questions. In the beginning it is part of what has been called the “why period”. However, this is only a simple form of inquiring for information, not an attempt at seeking understanding, as adults associate with the “why” question.

- b) **Imitation** - The child at this age is a great imitator. This is another way in which it acquires knowledge. By acting out what it hears and sees it learns better to understand what comes to its attention. Additionally it learns how to do the various things. This is because in imitation the child simply sees/hears and reflects. At this period the children imitate mostly acts. If the father is a carpenter, little Fred wants hammer and nails and uses his tools because those are the acts he sees his father demonstrating.

Children also tend to simply repeat the answers given to their questions. It is another way in which the imitation manifests itself. Thus, most parents quickly come to realize they must watch what they say around their children because children will invariably repeat what they have heard with little consideration for the impact the words will have on others. This is precisely because the child lacks comprehension and simply hears and reflects what they have heard. The teacher utilizes this to their advantage in the classroom by simply drilling repetitive exercises to implant information into the memory of the child that will be called upon later in their development and formation.

Implications for Christians:

Catechesis: “As the head of the household should teach in a simple way...”

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 Small Catechism is a “life book” to use the words of German Lutheran bishop Ludwig Ihmels. Martin Luther would also speak of the Liturgy of the Church as performing the same function. Luther 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)

Thus also our Lutheran Confessions, Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV: The Mass—

“Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. The Mass is held among us and celebrated with the highest reverence. 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. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ.”

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.]