

# The Recitation of Luther's *Small Catechism*

for occasions on which the pastor is unavailable

HYMN

TLH #288 - Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain

If only the second half of the Recitation of the Small Catechism is being used, then the service continues with **PART 2** (p. 6).

## + PART 1 +

*Clerk: Through the words of our Small Catechism, let us consider our God and how He has revealed Himself and His will toward us.*

**All: In the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, we confess and pray:**  
**"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: I believe that God has made me, along with all created things; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; He also richly and daily provides me with clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and yard, wife and children, land, animals, and all that I have—with all that I need to sustain this body and life; He shields me from all danger and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this He does out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all this it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.**

I BELIEVE  
IN ONE GOD...



*Clerk: Let us examine how God has commanded us "to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him."*

**All: He says in His First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods."**

I AM THE LORD  
YOUR GOD...

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.**



*Clerk: How is this done with regard to the use of His name?*

**All: In His Second Commandment, the Lord says, "You shall not misuse the name of your God."**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not curse, swear, practice witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name; but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.**

*Clerk: Therefore, what does He command?*

**All: His Third Commandment is, “You shall sanctify the Sabbath Day.” Since St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Colossians that the Sabbath Day was a shadow that pointed to the Christ and the rest He would provide for us, in the New Testament era we understand this Commandment to say, “You shall sanctify the Day of Rest.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: 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.**

*Clerk: The Lord next commands you to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things by a right relationship with your fellow man. What does He command you in the Fourth Commandment?*

**All: The Fourth Commandment tells us, “You shall honor your father and your mother.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not despise or anger our parents and those in authority over us; but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.**

*Clerk: What does He command you about your neighbor in the Fifth Commandment?*

**All: Our Lord says, “You shall not murder.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body; but help and support him in every bodily need.**

*Clerk: In what other ways are we to honor God in relation to our neighbor?*

**All: In the Sixth Commandment, we are told, “You shall not commit adultery.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we lead a pure and chaste life in word and deed, and each one love and honor his spouse.**

*Clerk: And so God protects our neighbor’s body in every way. What about his possessions?*

**All: In the Seventh Commandment, we are told, “You shall not steal.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not take our neighbor’s money or property, nor get them with deceitful products or dealings; but help him to improve and protect his property and livelihood.**

*Clerk: Does God protect only physical things?*

**All: In the Eighth Commandment, He says to His people, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not falsely deceive, betray, or slander our neighbor, or give him a bad reputation; but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.**

*Clerk: Are only actions sinful?*

**All: No, in the Ninth Commandment, the Lord tells us, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not scheme to get our neighbor’s inheritance or house, nor get it in a way that outwardly appears lawful, and so on; but aid and assist him to keep it.**

*Clerk: For what else must we not have a sinful desire?*

**All: In the Tenth Commandment, the Lord says, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, manservant, maidservant, animals, or anything that is his.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: We should fear and love God, that we do not unharness, coerce, or alienate from our neighbor his wife, servants or animals; but urge them to stay and do their duty.**

*Clerk: What does God say about all of these Commandments?*

**All: He says: “I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, who visits the sin of the fathers upon their children who hate Me, to the third and fourth generation; but to those who love Me and keep My commandments, I do good for a thousand generations.”**

*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All: God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments; therefore, we should fear His wrath and not**

disobey them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them; therefore, we should also love and trust in Him, and gladly obey His commandments.

*Clerk: How, then, shall we who cannot properly obey all these Commandments ever have God's mercy and salvation?*

**All:** In the Second Article of the Apostles Creed, we confess and pray: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I BELIEVE  
IN ONE GOD...**



*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All:** 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 should 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 death, lives and reigns forever and ever. This is most certainly true.

## HYMN

*Clerk: Since God has had such mercy on us, what does He invite us to do?*

**All:** Our Lord Jesus invites us to pray, "Our Father, who art in Heaven." With these words, God would invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we should ask Him, as dear children ask their dear father.

**OUR FATHER...**



*Clerk: With such an invitation, what do we pray for?*

**All:** First, we ask our Father, "Hallowed be Thy name." God's name is certainly holy in itself; but we ask in this prayer that it may be made holy among us also. God's name is made holy when God's Word is taught purely and correctly, and when we, as the children

of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches or lives differently than God's Word teaches, he profanes God's name among us. Guard us against this, O heavenly Father!

**All:** Second, we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." God's kingdom certainly comes by itself without our prayer; but we ask in this prayer that it may come to us also. This happens when the heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and lead godly lives, here in time and there in eternity.

**All:** Third, we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's good and gracious will is surely done without our prayer; but we ask in this prayer that it may be done among us also. This is done when God breaks and hinders every evil plan and will—like the will of the devil, the world and our flesh—that would keep us from hallowing God's name and prevent His kingdom from coming; and when He strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and faith until the end. This is His good and gracious will.

**All:** Fourth, we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." God surely also gives daily bread to all evil people without our petition; but we ask in this prayer that He would allow us to recognize this, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. Daily bread includes everything that pertains to the needs and necessities of this life, such as food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, yard, land, animals, money, property, a godly spouse, godly children, godly servants, godly and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, trustworthy neighbors, and the like.

**All:** Fifth, we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We ask in this prayer that the Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or deny these petitions because of them; for we are not worthy of anything for which we ask, nor have we earned it; but we ask that He would give it all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. We, in turn, will also truly forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

**All:** Sixth, we pray, "Lead us not into temptation." God surely tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world and our flesh may not deceive us, nor mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice; and although we are troubled by these things, that we would, nevertheless, overcome and stand victorious in the end.

**All:** Seventh, we pray, “Deliver us from evil.” We ask in this prayer, in summary, that the Father in heaven would deliver us from every sort of evil of body and soul, of property and honor; and finally, when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

*Clerk: Are we confident that our prayer will be heard?*

**All:** Our prayer ends, “Amen.” This means that I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to the Father in heaven and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, which means: Yes, yes, it shall be so.

## HYMN

*If only the first half of the Recitation of the Small Catechism is being used, then the service continues with the **CONCLUSION** (p. 11).*

## + PART 2 +

*Clerk: Where did we inherit the right to call upon God as “our Father” in this way?*

**All:** In the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, we confess and say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit; a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.”

**I BELIEVE  
IN ONE GOD...**



*Clerk: What does this mean?*

**All:** 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 preserved me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and 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.

*Clerk: What, specifically, has the Holy Spirit used to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify you?*

**All: God made us His own dear children in Holy Baptism, which is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and connected to God's word.**

*Clerk: Which is that word of God?*

**All: Our Lord Christ says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Go into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."**



*Clerk: What benefits does Baptism give?*

**All: It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the word and promise of God declare.**

*Clerk: Which are these words and promises of God?*

**All: Our Lord Christ says in the last chapter of Mark: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned."**

*Clerk: How can water do such great things?*

**All: Clearly it is not the water that does it, but the word of God that is in and with the water, and the faith that trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism.**

*Clerk: So, then, is Baptism simply another way of applying God's saving Word, the Gospel?*

**All: With the word of God it is a Baptism—a water of life, rich in grace, and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says to Titus in chapter three: "Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs of eternal life according to hope. This is most certainly true."**

*Clerk: What does such baptizing with water signify?*

**All: It signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die, with all sins and evil desires, and that a New Man, in turn, should daily emerge and arise, to live forever before God in righteousness and purity.**

*Clerk: Where is this written?*

**All: St. Paul says to the Romans in chapter six: "We were buried with Christ through Baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was**

**raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we, too, should walk in a new life."**

*Clerk: But what shall we do when we see that we do not live perfectly in this way?*

**All: The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to retain the sins of the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.**



*Clerk: Where is this written?*

**All: This is what the holy Evangelist John writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive the sins of any, to them they are forgiven, and if you retain the sins of any, to them they are retained."**

*Clerk: What do you believe according to these words?*

**All: I believe in what the called ministers of Christ do among us, by His divine command—especially when they exclude public, impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to mend their ways—that it is all as valid and certain in heaven also, as if our dear Lord Christ did it Himself.**

*Clerk: How does one receive such Absolution?*

**All: Confession consists of two parts. First, that a person confesses his sins. Second, that a person receives the absolution or forgiveness from the minister, as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that his sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.**

*Clerk: What sins should we confess?*

**All: Before God, we should plead guilty of all sins, including the ones we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the minister we should only confess the sins that we know and feel in our hearts.**

*Clerk: Which are these?*

**All: We should consider our station according to the Ten Commandments. Am I a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, or servant? Have I been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have I hurt anyone with words or deeds? Have I stolen, been negligent or careless, or caused any harm?**



## HYMN

*Clerk: Has Christ left us any other means of imparting forgiveness to us?*

**All: He gives us the Holy Supper of His own body and blood, which were sacrificed for our sins at Calvary, and He now distributes to us the forgiveness, life, and salvation which He earned there.**

*Clerk: What is the Sacrament of the Altar?*

**All: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself, for us Christians to eat and to drink.**



*Clerk: Where is this written?*

**All: The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul write: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper, gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "Take and drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."**

*Clerk: What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?*

**All: That is shown us by these words: "Given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins," namely, that in the Sacrament, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.**

*Clerk: How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?*

**All: Clearly it is not the eating and drinking that does it, but the words that are there: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words accompany the bodily eating and drinking as the chief part in the Sacrament, and whoever believes these words has what they say and as they declare, namely, forgiveness of sins.**

*Clerk: Who receives this sacrament worthily?*

**All: Fasting and bodily preparation is certainly a fine outward discipline, but he is truly worthy and well-prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is**

**unworthy and unprepared. For the words “for you” require nothing but believing hearts.**

*Clerk: To whom, therefore, must the Lord’s Supper be denied?*

**All: To those who are openly ungodly and impenitent; those who are unforgiving, refusing to be reconciled; those Christians who hold to a different confession of faith; and those who are unable to examine themselves.**

*Clerk: Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?*

**All: Yes, I believe it.**

*Clerk: What convinces you to believe this?*

**All: The word of Christ: “Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.”**

*Clerk: What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?*

**All: We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: “This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”**

*Clerk: Why should we remember and proclaim His death?*

**All: First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could have made satisfaction for our sins—only Christ, true God and Man, could do that. Second, so that we may learn to be terrified by our sins and learn to regard them as serious, Third, so that we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and thus be saved by this faith.**

*Clerk: What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?*

**All: His great love for His Father, for me and for other sinners, as it is written in John 15, Romans 6, Galatians 2.**

*Clerk: Why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?*

**All: That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sins; and then, that I may also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.**

*Clerk: What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?*

**All: For God’s sake, both the command and the promise of the Lord Christ should drive him to the Sacrament; then also his own need that hangs around his neck, because of which the command, invitation, and promise are given.**

*Clerk: What if we feel no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?*

**All: No better advice can be given than this: First, we should put our hand on our chest to see if we, too, have flesh and blood, and we should believe what the Scriptures say about it in Galatians 5 and Romans 6. Second, we should look around to see if we are also still in the world, and we should consider that there will be no shortage of sins and troubles, as the Scriptures say in John 15-16 and in 1 John 2 and 5. Third, we will, for this very reason, also have the devil near us, who, with his lies and murdering day and night, will grant us no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16, 1 Peter 5, Ephesians 6, and 2 Timothy 2.**

*Clerk: These questions and answers are no child's play, but are drawn up with great earnestness of purpose by the venerable and devout Dr. Luther for both young and old. Let each one pay attention and consider it a serious matter, for St. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter six: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked."*

## **HYMN**

### **+ CONCLUSION +**

*The Offering may be collected.*

*STAND*

*Clerk: Let us pray for all the ministers of the Word, for all vocations in the Church, and for all the people of God:*

**All: Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified, receive the supplications and prayers which we offer before You for all Your servants in Your holy Church that every member of the same may truly serve You according to their calling; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Clerk: Let us pray for all in authority:*

**All: O merciful Father in heaven, because You hold in Your hand all the might of man and because You have ordained, for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do well, all the powers that exist in all the nations of the world, we humbly ask You graciously to regard Your servants, especially our President; the Congress of the United States; our Governor; and all those who make, administer, and judge our laws, as well as those who serve to protect us; that all who receive the sword as Your**

**servants may bear it according to Your Word; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Clerk: Let us ask our Lord God Almighty to deliver the world from all error, take away disease, ward off famine, set free those in bondage, grant health to the sick, comfort to the grieving, and a safe journey to all who travel (we remember especially \_\_\_\_\_ , in his/her/their time of need):*

**All: Almighty and everlasting God, the consolation of the sorrowful and the strength of the weak, may the prayers of those who in any tribulation or distress cry to You graciously come before You, so that in all their necessities they may rejoice in Your manifold help and comfort; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Clerk: Let us pray for the fruits of the earth, that God would send down His blessing upon them and graciously dispose our hearts to enjoy them according to His own good will:*

**All: O Lord, Father Almighty, by Your Word You created and You continue to bless and uphold all things. We ask You so to reveal to us Your Word, our Lord Jesus Christ that, through His dwelling in our hearts, we may by Your grace be made ready to receive Your blessing on all the fruits of the earth and whatever pertains to our bodily need; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*Clerk: Finally, let us pray for all those things for which our Lord would have us ask, saying:*

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

*SIT*

**CLOSING HYMN**

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*Please return this service folder to the table in the entryway after the service.*