

Catechesis



at Peace Lutheran Church
and Academy

WHAT IS CATECHESIS?

Catechesis is the life-giving teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ which accompanies all who are baptized. Jesus said to the apostles, “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” The Church continues this saving work today as her ministers baptize and catechize young and old alike in the Christian faith. Those who “gladly receive” the saving Word and are baptized into Christ “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42 NKJV).

Baptism, confession and absolution, the Lord’s Supper, the Divine Service, ongoing instruction in the Word, daily prayer, and the fruit of loving service to family and neighbor are all part of the baptismal life. This life is lived by faith in Christ as we go about our daily tasks as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, neighbors, and workers of every kind. Living the Christian faith is not merely an “internal thing”; it has very real “external things” by which it is known and sustained. It is about a real faith which is fed and nurtured through preaching and sacraments in real places of worship. It is lived out in the real world where there is real sin and real sorrow, but real forgiveness and consolation through the Gospel of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. This is what catechesis is all about. All this and more is meant by the word of Jesus: “Make disciples of all nations; baptizing them ... teaching them ...; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- Faith in Christ is the goal of all catechesis.
- Catechesis is God’s way of teaching the Word of God by which faith is established.
- God’s way of teaching always involves the preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- Catechesis establishes preaching and teaching the Word of God as the center of congregational life.

A CULTURE OF CATECHESIS IN THE CONGREGATION

- The Christian life of faith is lived from the Word of God that is received and believed.
- The Christian life of faith has concrete expressions:
 - in the ongoing reception of God’s gifts in the Divine Service through the hearing of Scripture,
 - the hearing of preaching, and the eating and drinking of the Lord’s body and blood;
 - in the daily prayer of the Christian;
 - in the confession of one’s faith in the world;
 - in the confession of one’s sins to God or a brother;
 - in forgiving the sins of those who have sinned against him;
 - and in living “concretely” by faith in Christ in the vocation to which God has called him.
- God has His own language for learning how to receive God’s gifts in the Divine Service, how to pray, how to confess, and how to live where God has called us.
- The Small Catechism preserves for us the “pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) so that it functions as both a prayer book and a handbook for the Christian faith and life.
- The chief reason why the Catechism is memorized or “learned by heart” is so that it can shape the faith and understanding of the catechumen and be used by him throughout his life as he learns to interpret Scripture, listen to preaching, receive the absolution, pray, confess, and live in his vocation.
- Catechesis is, therefore, much more comprehensive than classroom instruction and involves the actual doing of things that Christians will continue to do for the rest of their lives: attend Divine Service, listen to preaching, receive the Lord’s Supper, confess their sins, receive absolution, pray, confess their faith, forgive one another, live as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, workers of every kind, etc.

THE CONGREGATION AT PRAYER

A Catechetical and Devotional Tool

The *Congregation at Prayer* is a weekly devotional and catechetical guide for use in the home, the congregation, and the Lutheran day school. The *Congregation at Prayer* unites the congregation around the same sections of the Word of God and Catechism and gives a common language for prayer and meditation upon the Scriptures. It is prepared by the pastor each week and distributed in the Sunday bulletin. It lives from the themes established on each Sunday of the church year and it looks forward to the coming Sunday. It helps families and individual Christians in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and learning the Catechism at home. It teaches the congregation to use the Bible, Catechism, and hymnal as daily devotional companions for the Christian faith and life. It is a useful tool in the pastor’s ongoing catechesis of the congregation and is the recommended devotional guide for every board or committee of the congregation.

LEARN BY HEART THE SMALL CATECHISM

THE PRIMARY TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM are those texts from the Bible that have been received by Christians in catechesis since the early church:

- **The Ten Commandments** (Exodus 20: 3, 7, 8, 12-17 and Deuteronomy 5:7, 9b-12, 16-21)
- **The Apostles' Creed** (Biblical summary of the Holy Trinity's acts of love for us in our creation, redemption, and sanctification)
- **The Lord's Prayer** (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4)
- **The Sacrament of Holy Baptism** (Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16)
- **The Office of the Keys and Confession** (John 20:22-23) *
- **The Sacrament of the Altar** (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

* The text of John 20:22-23 was added by the Reformers to the list of "Primary Texts" of Christian doctrine in the Catechism to emphasize the centrality of the preaching of the forgiveness of sins in the life of the Church and every Christian.

THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE CATECHISM are those rich Biblical explanations of "the primary texts of the Catechism." They assist the Christian in understanding the meaning of those primary texts and how those texts are to be understood and used throughout the Christian life.

HOW TO LEARN BY HEART THE CATECHISM

FOR CHILDREN:

- **Learn by Heart** the texts of the Small Catechism naturally **at one's own pace** throughout the daily prayer life of the Christian.
- **The Congregation at Prayer**—Confess, recite, pray, and meditate out loud (word for word) the small portions of the Catechism assigned in the *Congregation at Prayer* each week as a part of **family prayer and conversation in the home** with parents and siblings. (Over the course of an academic year the entire Small Catechism, including the Table of Duties, is recited in the *Congregation at Prayer*).
- **Sunday School**—Participate actively in Sunday School (preschool through grade 4) which focuses upon learning by heart the primary texts and explanations of
 - **The Ten Commandments**
 - **The Creed.**
- **Old Testament Catechesis**—Participate faithfully in Old Testament Catechesis which focuses upon learning by heart the primary texts and explanation of
 - **The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**
 - **The Sacrament of the Altar.**
- **New Testament Catechesis**—Participate faithfully in New Testament Catechesis which focuses upon learning by heart the primary texts and explanations of
 - **The Lord's Prayer**
 - **The Office of the Keys and Confession.**
- **Stars and Certificates** mark progress for children—**
- **Stars** are received when children can recite the primary text of an entire chief part, first to their parents and then to the pastor.
- **Certificates** are received when children can recite the primary text and explanation of an entire chief part, first to their parents and then to the pastor.

- A **Chart of Progress** lists the progress of each child in the congregation. Stars indicate primary texts, dates following the star indicate that the explanations have also been learned.

**NOTE: "Small Certificate Slips" may be picked up in the office for parents to sign when their children have successfully recited to them. Bring the slip to Pastor who will hear your child recite, so that he or she may receive either a star for the Primary Text or a parchment certificate for the entire chief part. Certificates are received by children with a prayer of thanksgiving in an appropriate catechetical setting.

***The Goal** of the children's Learn by Heart program is that the texts of the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism are learned by heart before children receive First Communion and before they are enrolled in the final year of catechesis that culminates in Confirmation. It is the prayer that the habit of "learning by heart" the Word of God in childhood will continue for the rest of their lives.*

FOR ADULTS:

- **Learn by Heart** the texts of the Small Catechism naturally **at one's own pace** throughout the daily prayer life of the Christian.
- **The Congregation at Prayer**—Confess, recite, pray, and meditate out loud (word for word) the small portions of the Catechism assigned in the Congregation at Prayer each week as a part of family prayer and conversation in the home with spouse and children.
- **Didache and Lutheran Catechesis**—In the 24-week Adult and Youth Didache course, we pray and recite the primary texts of the Catechism at each class session to assist adults in "learning by heart" those texts and how they are used in the life of a Christian in preparation for Confirmation and admission to the Lord's Table.

***The Goal** of the Learn by Heart program for adults is that adult members and converts to the Christian faith know from memory, at the very least, the primary texts of the Catechism and how those texts function in their lives as Christians before they are admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar. It is the prayer that "learning by heart" the Word of God as adult catechumens and members of the congregation would continue to be their habit for the rest of their lives.*

OLD TESTAMENT CATECHESIS

Old Testament Catechesis is a survey of the Old Testament Bible stories. It is intended to build a foundation of Bible knowledge and vocabulary from the Old Testament, and teach the words of the Small Catechism under the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, and from the Table of Duties, “To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers” and “What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors.” The catechist and catechumens will be working directly with the text of the Bible and the text of the Small Catechism. *Old Testament Catechesis* provides a schedule of thirty-two lessons and 184 Old Testament terms. Each lesson contains three parts: the Bible story to be read for that class session, the section of the Catechism to be “learned by heart” in advance of that class session for oral recitation in class, and Old Testament terms which apply to the Bible story.

NEW TESTAMENT CATECHESIS

New Testament Catechesis is a survey of New Testament Bible stories. It is intended to build a foundation of Bible knowledge and vocabulary from the New Testament, and teach the words of the Small Catechism under the Lord’s Prayer, Confession and the Office of the Keys, and from the Table of Duties, “Of Civil Government” and “Of Citizens.” The catechist and catechumens will be working directly with the text of the Bible and the text of the Small Catechism. *New Testament Catechesis* provides a schedule of thirty-two lessons and 212 New Testament terms. Each lesson contains three parts: the Bible story to be read for that class session, the section of the Catechism to be “learned by heart” in advance of that class session for oral recitation in class, and New Testament terms which apply to the Bible story.

(*New Testament Catechesis* also includes four additional lessons and notes on twenty-seven parables and twenty-three miracles of Jesus that are used during the seventh and eighth grade catechesis classes in the Academy).

LUTHERAN CATECHESIS

Lutheran Catechesis or “*Didache*” is the class for adults seeking communicant membership in the congregation, for youth who have completed *Old* and *New Testament Catechesis* and learned the Catechism by heart, for perspective members, for new Academy parents, for members and guests who would like to be refreshed in the Christian faith and life, and for those who simply want to learn more about what we believe and why we worship the way we do.

Didache is a 24-week intensive course in the Bible, Catechism, and Liturgy of the Church. “*Didache*” means “teaching” and signifies the foundational teaching that we as Lutheran Christians believe, teach, and confess. It is a course in which our members are also encouraged to invite their friends, relatives, and neighbors who need Christ and the comfort of His Gospel. Many members return often to *Didache* to be refreshed in the Word of God. The *Lutheran Catechesis* volume, used in the *Didache* class, focuses on the foundations of the Christian faith by studying the Catechism through significant narratives of Scripture.

OVERVIEW OF CATECHESIS FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS

The Culture of Catechesis and the Sequence of Classes

PEACE LUTHERAN ACADEMY

Divine Service (weekly)

Congregation at Prayer

- Prayer at home with the family using the *Congregation at Prayer*
- Daily Chapel
- Prayer in each classroom

Sunday School and Sunday Morning Catechesis

- Pastor introduces Bible passage, catechism, and hymn for the week from the *Congregation at Prayer*

Learn by Heart the Catechism (six chief parts)

- At home through the use of the *Congregation at Prayer*
- In Sunday School, daily chapel, and classroom prayer.
- Through *O.T.* and *N.T. Catechesis*

Old and New Testament Catechesis

- Fourth Grade and Fifth Grade

Lutheran Catechesis

Year I

- Sixth Grade
- Lessons 1–12
- Ten Commandments and the Creed
- Corresponding readings from the *Large Catechism*

Year II

- Seventh or Eighth Grade
- Lessons 13–24
- The Lord's Prayer, the Office of the Keys, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar
- Corresponding readings from the *Large Catechism*

Year III

- Seventh or Eighth Grade
- Parables and Miracles of Jesus (from *N.T. Catechesis*)
- Table of Duties and Christian Vocation
- Smalcald Articles
- The Augsburg Confession
- Luther Biography

HOME AND PUBLIC SCHOOL YOUTH

Divine Service (weekly)

Congregation at Prayer

- Prayer at home with the family using the *Congregation at Prayer*

Sunday School and Sunday Morning Catechesis

- Pastor introduces Bible passage, catechism, and hymn for the week from the *Congregation at Prayer*

Learn by Heart the Catechism (six chief parts)

- At home through the use of the *Congregation at Prayer*
- In Sunday School
- Through *O.T.* and *N.T. Catechesis*

Old and New Testament Catechesis

- Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or Seventh Grade once a week, alternating years

Lutheran Catechesis—"Didache"

- 24 weeks for 90 minutes /session
- Youth and adult catechumens are in the same class
- At least one parent attends with each youth catechumen
- Youth have learned by heart the six chief parts before attending *Lutheran Catechesis*
- Adult Catechumens learn by heart the primary texts of the Catechism over the course of the 24 weeks by praying the primary texts of the Catechism at the beginning of each class session
- Praying the primary texts at the beginning of each session helps to ground the catechumens in how these texts are used throughout the Christian life. (See page 32 and 33 of *Lutheran Catechesis*)
- The goal of this combined entry-level catechesis class is to focus upon establishing the central thought of each lesson around the Biblical narrative and text of the Catechism for the day
- Not all of the material in *Lutheran Catechesis* is used for this class. The book becomes an ongoing resource for the catechumen in using his Bible, Catechism, and hymnal

ADULT CATECHUMEN

Divine Service (weekly)

Congregation at Prayer

- Prayer at home with the family using the *Congregation at Prayer*

Sunday School and Sunday Morning Catechesis

- Pastor introduces Bible passage, catechism, and hymn for the week from the *Congregation at Prayer*

Learn by Heart the Catechism (six chief parts)

- Learn primary texts first in the context of Lutheran Catechesis class
- Continue to learn meanings over a lifetime of catechesis and daily prayer

Old and New Testament Stories

- Learn over the course of a lifetime in Sunday morning catechesis

Lutheran Catechesis—"Didache"

- 24 weeks for 90 minutes /session
- Youth and adult catechumens are in the same class.
- At least one parent and/or sponsor attend with each youth catechumen.
- Adult Catechumens learn by heart the Primary Texts of the Catechism over the course of the 24 weeks by praying the primary texts of the Catechism at the beginning of each class session.
- Praying the primary texts at the beginning of each session helps to ground the catechumens in how these texts are used throughout the Christian life. (See page 32 and 33 of *Lutheran Catechesis*)
- The Goal of this combined entry level catechesis class is to focus upon establishing the central thought of each lesson around the Biblical narrative and text of the Catechism for the day.
- Not all of the material in *Lutheran Catechesis* is used for this class. The book becomes an ongoing resource for the catechumen in using his Bible, Catechism, and hymnal

FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION POLICY

Established February 2007

FIRST COMMUNION

Baptized children and youth of the congregation will be admitted to the Lord's Supper through the *Rite of First Communion* after:

- They have learned by heart the six chief parts of the Catechism and their explanations,
- Have a desire to receive the Lord's Supper,
- Their parents believe they are ready to receive the Sacrament,
- Their pastor examines their confession of faith in the presence of their parents and/or sponsors,
- They receive absolution privately.

The *Rite of First Communion* is offered at various times in the year when a child is ready to receive the Sacrament for the first time.

CONFIRMATION OF YOUTH

Baptized children and youth of the congregation will be confirmed in the Lutheran faith through the *Rite of Confirmation* after they have met the requirements for first communion and have successfully completed the foundational courses in catechesis: *Old Testament Catechesis*, *New Testament Catechesis*, and *Lutheran Catechesis* (or *Didache*). They also receive absolution privately before their confirmation.

The *Rite of Confirmation* is conducted at the Easter Vigil Service or Pentecost.

BAPTISM OF ADULT CONVERTS

Adults are baptized after they have been called by the Gospel to repentance and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for their salvation.

- They have heard the Gospel.
- They confess their sin.
- They confess faith in Jesus Christ and their desire for Baptism.
- They are enrolled in catechesis (*Didache*).
- They are under the pastoral care of the pastor of the congregation.

Adult candidates for Holy Baptism are assigned sponsors from the congregation to pray for them, assist and/or accompany them in their catechesis and attendance at Divine Services, help them understand and use the liturgy of the Church, and assist them in understanding and practicing the Christian life.

CONFIRMATION OF ADULTS

Adult catechumens who desire to be confirmed as Lutherans and become members of the congregation:

- Attend and successfully complete *Didache* – 24 weeks (*Lutheran Catechesis*).
- Learn by heart the primary texts of the Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Sacraments.
- Confess agreement with us in doctrine and have a desire for the Lord's Supper.
- Their confession of faith is examined by the pastor. This is done, if possible, in the presence of their sponsor.
- They receive absolution privately.

The *Rite of Confirmation* is conducted at the Easter Vigil Service or Pentecost.