

Dear Reader

Catechism Updated is a brief, simple explanation of the content of the Christian faith. It focuses on central biblical texts and other texts used in the church, for example the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed, printed with red letters, while contemporary comments on them are printed with black letters.

Catechism Updated is an updated version of Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The language is kept simple. A few things have been left out and some things have been added. The most important additions are:

- Before the Ten Commandment: an introduction about the background for the Ten Commandment.
- After the Ten Commandment: Jesus' summary of the Commandment.
- Before the Apostles' Creed the renunciation is added.
- The Lord's Prayer includes the ending, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."
- Before Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Confession, there is a section about God's word.

Catechism Updated is intended for everyday use: to be read while you are having breakfast, travelling on a train, listening to a sermon, reading your Bible, talking with others; you can use it in Bible study groups, read it before you lie down to sleep, etc. So it may be a good idea to have it in your handbag, on the table, in your pocket, at your bedside or in your Bible.

Enjoy reading, learning and living!

Carsten Hjorth Pedersen

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Background for the Ten Commandments

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

This means: It is the God who created and liberated us who gives us his commandments for our lives. He gets angry with those who break the commandments and blesses those who keep them.

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods before me.

This means: Above all we should fear and love God and trust him so that we do not place any of that which God has created, or which we can create ourselves, above God.

The Second Commandment

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not swear, engage in occultism, lie or deceive with his name. Instead, under all circumstances we should call upon God, pray to him, praise his name and thank him.

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not disregard his word. Instead we should keep God's word holy, willingly hear it and learn it. And we are allowed to rest from our daily work one day every week.

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not show disrespect to our parents or other people who have legal authority over us. Instead we should love, respect and obey them.

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not do anything to harm our fellow human beings. Instead we should help and care for them.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not live an immoral life. Instead our speech and acts should be decent, and we should faithfully love and honor each other in marriage.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we neither steal nor deceive. Instead we should help our fellow human beings to preserve what they have and to improve their living conditions.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not lie about our fellow human beings,

betray them or spread evil rumors about them. Instead we should excuse them, speak well of them and take everything in the best sense.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not envy our fellow human beings what is theirs or try to cheat them out of it. Instead we should respect what is theirs and help them to keep it.

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

This means: We should fear and love God so that we do not envy our fellow beings their spouses, children or employees. Instead we should respect our fellow human beings and try to strengthen their relationship to those who are close to them.

Jesus Summarizes the Ten Commandments in This Way:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: **'Love your neighbor as yourself'** (Mark 12:30-31).

THE RENUNCIATION

I renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways.

This means: Jesus Christ has defeated the devil. Therefore I say no to the devil and all which comes from him, no matter how it meets me.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

The First Article: About Creation

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

This means: I believe that God has created me and all other creatures. I believe that he has given me body and soul, eyes, ears and all other members, reason and senses, and that God today maintains everything. I believe that he gives me food and clothes, a home, a family and friends and all which I need. I believe that God helps me in all danger and keeps me against all evil. This he does out of his grace and goodness without me having deserved any of it. For all that I owe to him to thank him, serve him and live after his will.

The Second Article: About Salvation

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

This means: I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord. He is truly God, born of the Father in eternity, and truly man, born of the virgin Mary. He has liberated me, a lost and guilty person. He has forgiven me all my sins and freed me from the power of death and the devil with his holy blood and his innocent suffering and death. He is risen from the dead, he lives and reigns for ever. Jesus Christ has done this so that I may belong to him, live with him and always serve him.

The Third Article: About Restoration

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

This means: I believe that I cannot, through my own ability or power, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him; but the Holy Spirit call me by the Gospel. He has created the faith in me, made me holy and kept me in the true faith. He calls, gathers together, creates and makes holy the Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one, true faith. In the Christian church, he forgives day every me and all believers all our sin. On the day of judgment he will raise me and all all the dead, and in Christ he will give me and all who believe in Christ eternal life.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Introduction

Our Father in heaven

This means: God invites us to believe that he is our almighty Father and we are his children, so that we may pray with trust to him as when children ask their father or mother for something.

The First Request

Hallowed be your name

This means: God's name is holy in and of itself, but by this request we pray that it may also be holy among us.

This happens when God's Word is taught clearly and purely, and when we as children of God live by it. Help us, dear heavenly Father, to do this! But anyone who teaches or lives by something other than God's word dishonors God's name. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

The Second Request

Your kingdom come

This means: God's Kingdom comes by itself, without our prayer. But we pray in this request that it may come to us as well.

That happens when the heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that we believe his word, live by it and receive eternal life with him.

The Third Request

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

This means: God's good will is done without our prayer. But in this request we pray that it may be done among us as well.

That happens when God thwarts all evil plans from the devil, the fallen world and our own sinful will which still not wants God's holy name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come. That happens when God strengthens us and keeps us trusting to his word and believing in him so that we live by his will until we die.

The Fourth Request

Give us today our daily bread

This means: God gives daily bread even without our prayer, even to evil people. But we pray in this request that we may appreciate it and receive our daily bread with thanksgiving and share it with others.

By daily bread we understand all that we need to live and to thrive, such as food, drink, clothing, a home, money, possessions, a faithful spouse, children, good colleagues, fair government, good weather, peace, health, honor, good friends and neighbors.

The Fifth Request

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

This means: We pray in this request that God will not take note of our sin and for that reason refuse our request. For we are neither worthy nor deserve any of the things for which we pray. But we pray that he will forgive us all by his grace, for we sin daily grossly and deserve God's punishment. Therefore we will ourselves willingly forgive those who are evil to us.

The Sixth Request

And lead us not into temptation

This means: It is not God who tempts us. But we pray in this request that God will protect us so that the devil, the fallen world and our sinful will do not deceive us into disbelief, sin and despair. And we pray that God will keep us when we are tempted so that we may, in the end, win and keep the victory.

The Seventh Request

But deliver us from the evil one

This means: We pray in this request that God will deliver us from all that may harm us or others on body and soul, property and honor. And we pray that, when we die, he will then lead us from this fallen world home to himself in heaven.

Conclusion

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This means: We praise God that these requests will be fulfilled completely on the day when God's eternal kingdom comes. But the kingdom, the power and the glory belong to God even now. Therefore we trust that he hears and answers us in his grace.

Amen means: Yes, yes it will happen this way.

GOD'S WORD

What Is God's Word??

It is the word God has spoken to us through his son Jesus Christ and through his prophets and apostles in the Bible.

The author of Hebrews says, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

How Does God's Word Benefit?

God's word meets us as law and gospel, demand and gift. The law is God's word which teaches us how to live according to God's will and which unmasks our sin. The gospel is God's word which brings us forgiveness of our sins in Jesus Christ. God's gift in the gospel is received through faith.

Paul says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Where Do We Meet God's Word?

We meet God's word in baptism, the Lord's Supper, confession and through the various forms of preaching: sermon, teaching, reading, sharing, hymns, songs, etc.

Paul says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:16-17).

Who Should Hear God's Word?

The Christian church has an obligation to spread God's word to all people whether near or far away.

Jesus Christ says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations" (Luke 24:47).

BAPTISM

What Is Baptism?

Baptism is not just water. It is the water that is included in God's commission and connected with God's word.

Jesus Christ says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

What Does Baptism Benefit?

Baptism conveys the forgiveness of sins, liberates from death and the devil and gives eternal life to all who believe, according to God's word and promise.

Jesus Christ says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

How Can Water Achieve So Much?

It is not the water in itself which does it. It is God's word with the water, and faith in God's word, pronounced at baptism, that do it. For without God's word, the water is mere water and no baptism. But with God's word it is baptism. This means: the water of life, full of grace, the washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7).

What Does It Mean that Water Is Used at Baptism?

It means that the old self in us must drown and die with all sins and evil desires, since we daily regret and confess the evil in us. Instead, every day a new creation will appear and rise to live eternally for God in righteousness and purity.

Paul says, "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4).

THE LORD'S SUPPER

What Is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the shape of bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and drink.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul say, "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take and eat; this is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood; which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me'" (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:17-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

What Does the Lord's Supper Benefit?

Jesus says, "given for you" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins". Through these words we receive in the Lord's Supper the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.

How Can Eating and Drinking Achieve So Much?

It is certainly not eating and drinking that achieves it but the accompanying words, "given for you" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins". These words are – together with eating and drinking – the main thing in the Lord's Supper. Those who believe these words have what the words say, namely the forgiveness of sins.

Who Receive the Lord's Supper in a Worthy Manner?

Fasting can be beneficial, but worthy to receive the Lord's Supper are those who believe these words: "given for you" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins". Those who do not believe those words receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, for the words "for you" require believing hearts.

CONFESSION

What Is Confession?

Confession means to confess one's sins for God in the presence of another person who on God's behalf pronounces the forgiveness of sins for that person.

Jesus Christ says, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:23).

What Does Confession Benefit?

Confession is a help to believe in the forgiveness of sins and to live boldly as a child of God.

John says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Which Sins Should We Confess?

God shows us our sins, for example when we use the Ten Commandments as a mirror. To God we must admit all sins, also those we do not know ourselves. But in confession we are only to confess the sins which we are aware of, and especially those that torture our conscience.

James says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other" (James 5:16).

How Does One Confess?

Go to a priest, pastor of any Christian that you trust. In his or her presence you confess your sins to God. The person then lays his or her hand upon you and pronounce the forgiveness of sins for you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You can now leave the confession fully trusting that all your sins have been forgiven.

John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER

In the morning, when you wake up, you can make the sign of the cross and say, *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Then say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you wish, you can also say this prayer.

Thank you, dear Father in heaven through Jesus Christ that you have protected me against danger and evil this night. I pray that you will today keep me from sinning and from all evil, so that my life and all that I do may be to your glory. I place myself and those dear to me, and all my belongings, in your hands. May your holy angel be with me, so that the evil enemy will have no power over me. Amen.

Then set about your work confidently, maybe after having sung a hymn, reminded yourself about the Ten Commandments or the like.

In the evening, when you go to bed, you can make the sign of the cross and say, *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Then say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you wish, you can also say this prayer.

Thank you, dear Father in heaven through Jesus Christ that you have protected me today. I pray that you will forgive me all my sins. I pray that you will graciously keep me this night. I place myself and those dear to me, and all my belongings, in your hands. May your holy angel be with me, so that the evil enemy will have no power over me. Amen.

Then lie down to sleep confidently.