

# Luther's Small Catechism

## The Ten Commandments

### The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

*What does this mean?*

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

### The Second Commandment

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

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.

### The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

### The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve and obey them, and give them love and respect. ↩

### The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

*What does this mean?*

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

### The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

### The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

### **The Eighth Commandment**

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

### **The Ninth Commandment**

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.

### **The Tenth Commandment**

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers, or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

### **The Conclusion**

*What does God say about all these commandments?*

He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

*What does this mean?*

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands.

But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **The Address**

Our Father in heaven.

*What does this mean?*

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

### **The First Petition**

Hallowed be your name.

*What does this mean?*

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

*How is God's name kept holy?*

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

### **The Second Petition**

Your kingdom come.

*What does this mean?*

God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

*How does God's kingdom come?*

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

### **The Third Petition**

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

*What does this mean?*

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

*How is God's will done?*

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

### **The Fourth Petition**

Give us today our daily bread.

*What does this mean?*

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

*What, then, is meant by daily bread?*

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

### **The Fifth Petition**

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

*What does this mean?*

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.

So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

### **The Sixth Petition**

Lead us not into temptation.

*What does this mean?*

God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

### **The Seventh Petition**

But deliver us from evil.

*What does this mean?*

In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

### **The Doxology**

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

*What does this mean?*

We can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say, "Amen. Yes, it shall be so."

## **The Creed**

### **The First Article**

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

*What does this mean?*

I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.

And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

### **The Second Article**

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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

*What does this mean?*

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. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, 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.

All this he did 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 has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

### **The Third Article**

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

*What does this mean?*

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing 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 kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers.

This is most certainly true.

## **The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

### **The Institution of Baptism**

#### **First: *What is Baptism?***

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

*Which is that word of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

### **The Blessings of Baptism**

#### **Second: *What does Baptism do for us?***

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

*What are these words and promises of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

### **The Power of Baptism**

#### **Third: *How can water do such great things?***

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water and faith which trusts this Word used with the water.

For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

*Where is this written?*

Saint Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "God 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. This is a trustworthy saying."

### **The Meaning of Baptism for Our Daily Life**

#### **Fourth: *What does baptizing with water mean?***

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

*Where is this written?*

Saint Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, “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, we too may live a new life.

## **The Use of the Keys and Confession**

### **The Keys**

**First:** *What is the use of the keys?*

The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

*Where is this written?*

The holy evangelist John writes in chapter 20, “Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

### **The Public Use of the Keys**

**Second:** *How does a Christian congregation use the keys?*

A Christian congregation with its called servant of Christ uses the keys in accordance with Christ’s command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

*Where is this written?*

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

### **Confession**

**First:** *What is confession?*

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

**Second:** *What sins should we confess?*

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer.

But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

**Third:** *How can we recognize these sins?*

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son daughter, employer, or employee? Have you been

disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

**Fourth:** *How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of forgiveness?*

He will say, "By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

## The Sacrament of Holy Communion

### The Institution of Holy Communion

**First:** *What is the Sacrament of Holy Communion?*

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

*Where is this written?*

The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

### The Blessings of Holy Communion

**Second:** *What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?*

That is shown us by these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

### The Power of Holy Communion

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

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

### **The Reception of Holy Communion**

**Fourth:** *Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?*

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.