



Martin 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 God above everything else.

The Second Commandment
You shall not take the name of the Lord.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we not curse, swear, practice superstition, lie or deceive in His name, but call upon Him in prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

The Third Commandment
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect His word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment
Honor your father and your mother.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and others in authority, but respect, obey, love, and serve them.

The Fifth Commandment
You shall not kill.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in anyway, but help him in all his physical needs.

The Sixth Commandment
You shall not commit adultery.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other.

The Seventh Commandment
You shall not steal.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get them in any dishonest way, but help our neighbor improve and protect his property and means of making a living.

The Eighth Commandment
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander or lie about or neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way.

The Ninth Commandment
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.

The Tenth Commandment
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and remain loyal to our neighbors.

The Apostle's Creed

The Apostles' Creed

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

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. Amen!

The First Article

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has created me and all that exists.

He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers.

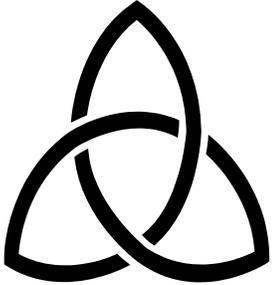
He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day.

God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil.

All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it.

Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, 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 power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.

He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ - true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary - is my Lord.

At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person.

He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,

just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

The Third Article

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. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church day after day He fully forgives my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the last day He will raise me and all the dead and give me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

This is most certainly true.

The Lord's Prayer

The Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean?

Here God encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father and we are His children. We therefore are to pray to him with complete confidence, just as children speak to their loving father.

The First Petition

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that we keep it holy.

When does this happen?

God's name is hallowed whenever his word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God live in harmony with it. Help us to do this, heavenly Father. But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to the word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father.

The Second Petition

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God's kingdom comes indeed without our praying for it, but we ask in this prayer that it may come also to us.

When does this happen?

God's kingdom comes when our Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that we may believe his holy Word and live a godly life on earth now and in heaven forever.

The Third Petition

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean?

The good and gracious will of God is surely done without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may be done also among us.

When does this happen?

God's will is done when He hinders and defeats every evil scheme and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful self, which would prevent us from keeping His name holy and would oppose the coming of His kingdom. And His will is done when He strengthens our faith and keeps us firm in His word as long as we live. This is His gracious and good will.

The Fourth Petition

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God gives daily bread even without our prayer, to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that He will help us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanks.

What is meant by daily bread?

"Daily bread" includes everything needed for our this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors.

The Fifth Petition

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We ask in this prayer that our Father in heaven would not hold our sins against us and because of them refuse to hear our prayer. And we pray that He would give us everything by grace, for we sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment. So we on our part will heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God tempts no one to sin, but we ask in this prayer that God would watch over us and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.

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(The Lord's Prayer Continued)

The Seventh Petition

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

We ask in this inclusive prayer that our heavenly Father would save us from every evil to body and soul,

and at our last hour would mercifully take us from the troubles of this world to himself in heaven.

The Doxology

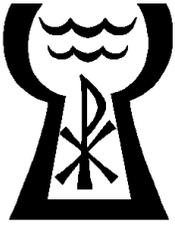
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen!

What does "Amen" mean?

Amen means Yes, it shall be so. We say Amen because we are certain that such petitions are pleasing 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.





The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

1. What is Baptism?

Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God's word and by His command.

What is this word?

In Matthew 28 our Lord Jesus Christ says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

2. What benefits does God give in Baptism?

In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what He has promised.

What is God's promise?

In Mark 16 our Lord Jesus Christ says:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

3. How can water do such great things?

It is not water that does these things, but God's word with the water and our trust in this Word. Water by itself is only water, but with the word of God it is life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul writes in Titus 3

"He saved us . . . in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure."

4. What does Baptism mean for daily living?

It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

St. Paul writes in Romans 6: "We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

The Sacrament of Holy Communion



1. What is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us to eat and drink.

Where do the Scriptures say this?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul say:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying: "Take! Eat! This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me!" After the same manner also He took the cup after supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you! This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me!"

2. What benefits do we receive from this sacrament?

The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, "given and shed for the forgiveness of sins".

These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

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

3. How can eating and drinking do all this?

It is not eating and drinking that does this, but the words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins".

These words, along with eating and drinking, are the main thing in the sacrament. And whoever believes these words has exactly what they say, forgiveness of sins.

4. When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations serve a good purpose. However, that person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins". But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is neither prepared nor worthy, for the words, "for you" require simply a believing heart.