



CREATED TO BE
Redeemed & Sanctified

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Created to be Redeemed & Sanctified:
The Apostles' Creed for Lent

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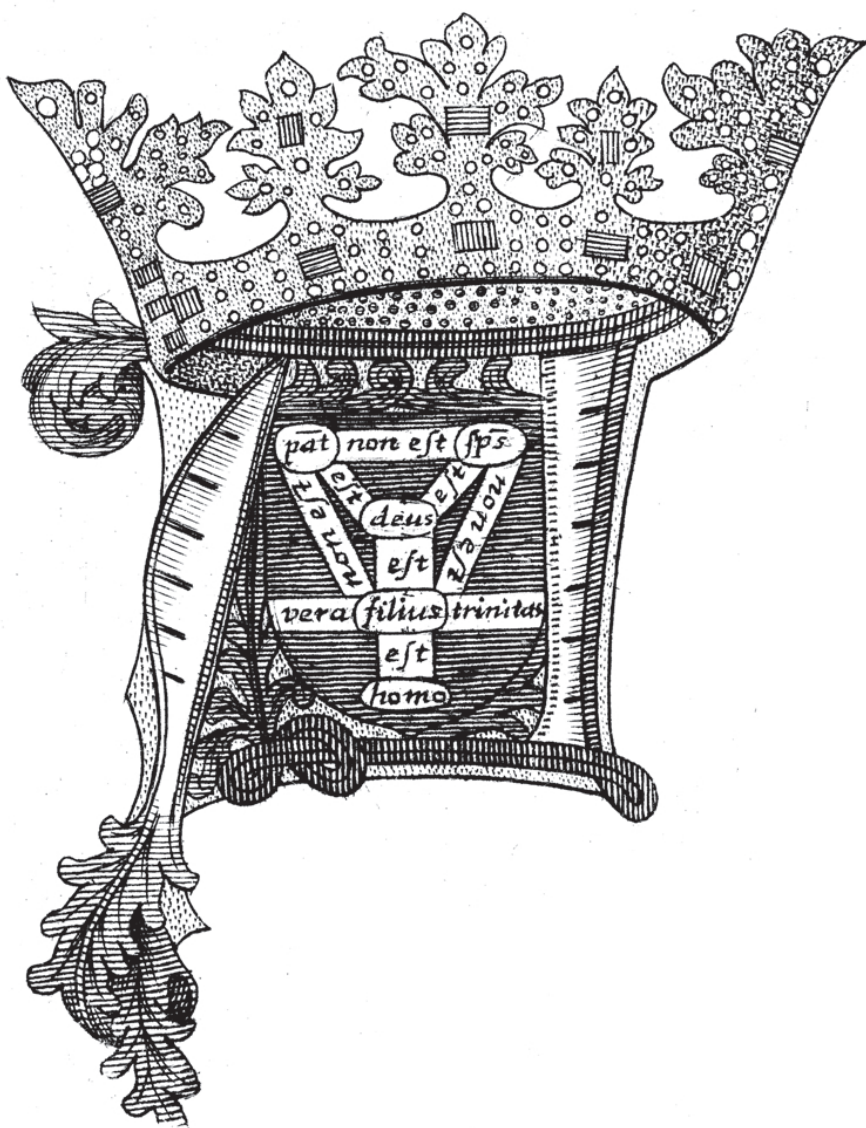
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For the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
wherever she may be found

And for the Glory of God



“Shield of the Trinity” by William of Newburgh, 1136-1201 — A version of the Shield of the Trinity or Latin Scutum Fidei (Shield of Faith) set on a shield or coat of arms and topped with a jeweled crown. This traditional Christian visual symbol is a compact diagram of the Athanasian Creed and Doctrine of the Trinity. The Latin reads: “The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Spirit is God; God is the Father, God is the Son, God is the Holy Spirit; The Father is not the Son, The Son is not the Father, The Father is not the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit is not the Father, The Son is not the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit is not the Son.” In this version, the Latin words vera (true), trinitas (Trinity), and homo (man) are added to the diagram to form the shape of the cross.

Beloved Baptized Saints of God,

This is the next devotion in our series to go through the Small Catechism during the Lenten Season. The Ten Commandments come first because by them God tells us what we must do and so forth. The Creed is the natural follow up to this as it teaches us about this God we are commanded to fear, love, and trust in above all things. The Holy Trinity is a mystery, and yet it has been revealed through Holy Scripture. You have been given to know this mystery by faith, even if your understanding or logic fail to grasp it. The Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, Athanasian) help summarize the teachings of the Scripture. They are of the same intent as the Catechism itself, taking the teaching of Scripture and putting it into a simple, clear, and concise confession of what Scripture teaches and what we ourselves believe. We are blessed to have both the Catechism and the Creeds.

The title for this devotion (*Created to be Redeemed and Sanctified*) comes from the Large Catechism, where Dr. Luther lays out for the Church what sort of God we have, what we know from Scripture, and what we confess before the world around us.

For here in all three articles God has revealed Himself and opened the deepest abyss of His fatherly heart and His pure, inexpressible love [Ephesians 3:18–19]. He has created us for this very reason, that He might redeem and sanctify us. (Large Catechism, Apostles Creed, par 64).

During this Lent, please use these devotions within your household to grow in faith and knowledge of our Triune God, the Father who created us to be redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit. The Lord bless your time in His Word.

Rev. Joshua Scheer
Editor-in-Chief
Steadfast Lutherans

The Apostles' Creed

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

And 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 thence He will come
to judge the living and the dead.

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.



On my heart imprint Your image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
never may Your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation

Ash Wednesday

““And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

—Matthew 6:16-18

Today's Gospel lesson reminds us of the practice of fasting. This is a good and salutary practice for Christians and Lent is often the time set aside for it. How does our God help us in this? Jesus, the Son, teaches about fasting here in words that the Holy Spirit inspired to be written. Besides this, the ancient practice of fasting, which is a denial of the desires of the body and disciplining of the body is a work that the Holy Spirit works through us to mortify the flesh and its desires. Your Father sees in secret. Not just “the” Father but “your” Father. How is God your Father? Since the Father has created all creatures there is a relation there, but the possessive pronoun “your” helps our faith see that God is our Father through the work of the Son. The forgiveness of sins earned by Christ and given out through His chosen means as the Spirit uses them makes God your Father.

The mortification of the flesh that occurs through faithful fasting is good for you. The early Christians also fasted because they knew that being a Christian may require physical training to go without food, as the persecutions of the early Church demonstrated. During your fasting this Lent use the time normally spent eating instead with God's Word, reading and praying – for man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Your Son that we may call you Father as Your dear children and giving us Your Spirit by whom we call upon you. Bless our devotions this Lent and help us to trust You, the only true God who has created us to be redeemed and sanctified. Amen.

Thursday *after* Ash Wednesday

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”... “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” — Genesis 1:1-3, 26-27

In the third word of the Old Testament in Hebrew our Triune God already begins revealing Himself. Not only do you have the creation of all things begun by the Word, but you also get a clue in the Hebrew word used for God, Elohim. This is a strangely constructed Hebrew word which hints at a single God and yet plural. Almost like we teach our children rather illogically, three in one. Here God’s Word starts the revelation of the God we have – three persons, the Father (God), the Son (word/said), and the Spirit.

Further in this first chapter God reveals an internal conversation between the persons of the Holy Trinity when considering the creation of man. “Us” and “our” are used. God’s not talking to angels here, but at the very start of the Scriptures God is revealing the mystery of Trinity. And the actions God does in creation teach us about Him as well as He creates, orders, and blesses. May this devotion continue to use the Holy Word to reveal more and more about this Triune God that has created heaven and earth and all that is in it.

O blessed Holy Trinity, grant to us Your creatures the revelation of rightly understanding Your Word. Amen.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.” —Psalm 33:6

This verse is a beautiful confession of the Holy Trinity. The Psalms are filled with confessions of doctrine, as the teachings of the Christian Church always find their way into songs. The Holy Spirit confirms that here. Now, how does this verse teach the Holy Trinity?

The three persons are there in the text. The Father is confessed by “LORD”. The Son is confessed by “word”. The Holy Spirit is confessed by the “breath of His mouth”. The picture of course paints creation of heaven and the heavenly host as a glorious working of our Triune God.

How is the Father confessed by “LORD”? The capital letters in our Bibles mean this is “Yahweh”. This word applies to all three, but when we consider “word of the LORD” we see that the LORD is in this case the Father of the only begotten Son.

How is the Son confessed by “word”? John 1 teaches about how Christ Jesus is the “Word”. In Genesis chapter 1 we see that God speaks and things are created out of nothing. This is a glorious comfort when we consider how we have our lives by God’s Word. When His Word speaks, we can trust not only what it says, but that it is doing what it says. Baptism is not just plain water. Absolution becomes just as valid in heaven as on earth. The Body and Blood of Jesus become present with the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper.

How is the Spirit confessed by “breath”? In both Hebrew and Greek, the languages of the Old and New Testaments, the word can mean either Spirit or breath. This linguistic trait is used in Scripture to remind us of the Holy Spirit being the Lord and Giver of Life. In the extended account of the creation of man on the sixth day in Genesis 2 we see this. Also, our Lord Jesus Christ breathes on His disciples in John 20 and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father bless us by the hearing of the Word of the Son by the power of Your Spirit. Amen.

Saturday *after* Ash Wednesday

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”” — Matthew 3:16-17

When we think of Trinity verses in Scripture it is natural to run to the institution of Holy Baptism in Matthew 28, but here in the account of the baptism of Jesus we see the Trinity already. In fact, a lot of places in Scripture where baptism is spoken of or taught there are descriptions of the Trinity. The Triune God is tied up with baptism, even here at the baptism of Jesus.

The beauty of this account is to see the plan of salvation working out. Christ Jesus, taking on the baptism of repentance is a confession of His vicarious satisfaction. He stands in that water in our place. John the Baptizer objected, but Christ had to fulfill all righteousness in our place for us. As this great work occurs, the Spirit is visibly given and the Father’s voice sounds from heaven.

Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father. More than that, as He begins His public ministry by taking on the baptism of repentance from John, He pleases the Father. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all in this picture of how God is at work for our salvation. The Son becomes our substitute. The Spirit comes to Him and the Father is pleased with Him. The Triune God not only was involved in Creation, but also in Redemption.

Remember this the next time you say the invocation whether in the morning when you rise, at night when you go to bed, when you pray the Lord’s Prayer, or attend services at your Church. The Triune God’s name was placed upon you at Baptism. As the Father was pleased with the Son’s work for you, as a baptized child of God, the Father is pleased with you because of the Son.

Heavenly Father, help us to live as Your baptized children, trusting solely in Your Son Jesus’ for our salvation. Amen.

[illegible]

God the Father



“Creation” — God and the hosts of heaven looking down into creation, through a vortex-like portal - God is pulling Eve out Adam’s side; very intricate piece.

Sunday of Lent 1

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. — Matthew 4:1

Sometime during creation week, God created the angels. They were created to be ministering spirits, to serve God and to serve the pinnacle of God's creation, man.

But one angel rebelled against his Creator and took a host of other angels with him. In his demonic rage, the devil does the exact opposite of what he was created to do: he hates God and desires to destroy man. Jesus called him a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

The devil is an effective liar, and his lies about God are especially insidious. You could call the devil the "father of false doctrine." False doctrine is lying about God, and all false doctrine comes from the devil, and its purpose is to destroy faith and hope in the true and living God.

But God promised to send the Seed of the Woman to crush Satan's head. In the wilderness, the devil twisted God's Word to tempt Jesus to sin. But Christ used the Word of God against the devil; He unmasked his deceit and defeated the father of lies. There in the wilderness, you could hear the skull of the devil begin to crack under the heel of the Savior.

False teachers twist God's Word today. They do so to entice Christians away from God the Father and God the Son. Just as Jesus used the Word of God in the wilderness to crush the devil's lies, so Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit and His Word that we may be equipped for the good work of revealing the lies of Satan. This guards our faith and the faith of those entrusted to our care.

Lord God, give us Your Holy Spirit, that we would fear, love, and trust in You alone; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Monday of Lent 1

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. — Psalm 139:13

Scripture reveals that mankind is God's special creation. God continues to knit each of us in the wombs of our mothers. Everything God created, He created for a purpose, and that includes mankind. In his explanation to the First Article of the Creed, Martin Luther highlights that purpose: For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

Evolution, on the other hand, declares that everything came into being by the mindless act of chance. You're here because of some cosmic roll of the dice. Since evolution is "creation" without purpose, it cannot answer the question, "Why am I here?" So, not only does the lie of evolution rob God of the glory of creation, it robs man of his purpose and value.

To a point. When I was at the University of Michigan studying evolutionary biology, there was a debate about the purpose of life. It was decided that the purpose of life was to put your genes into the next generation. That's it. You're here to reproduce. Apart from that, existence is absurd.

The Bible says: "*You knitted me together in my mother's womb.*" That says a lot. It says that God made you, and He loves what He created. Even after the Fall into sin, God loves what He created and in divine love, gave us His Son for our salvation.

Contrary to the lie of evolution, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by the hand of a wise and loving God. Out of divine love God made humanity; He made us to love Him, and to love Him by serving our neighbor. That's a wonderful purpose, and a purpose that gives our lives meaning and value.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving us the gift of earthly life from our mother's womb, and for the new life You've given us in baptism. Use us and the gifts you've given to serve our neighbor and reflect Your love in this world. And where we have done wrong, forgive us and help us to do better, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday of Lent 1

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. — Genesis 2:3

God the Father didn't need to rest from His labors in the way we think of rest. As almighty God, He never tires, and He never stops His work of preserving creation. When God rested, it was because He was finished with the work of creation. Creation was just as He wanted it to be. It was perfect in beauty and order, providing all that mankind needed to live in peace and joy before God. The first Sin changed all that. Sin corrupted the beauty and order of creation. Even the Sabbath, a day made for man to rest from his labors and to rest in God, sin turned into another day for humans to indulge in godless leisure or the pursuit of mammon.

Into this world, corrupted by sin and death, God sent His Son to begin the work of restoring creation to the perfection of that first Sabbath day. During His earthly ministry, Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, restored sight to the blind, calmed storms, and raised the dead. The Sabbath restoration that Jesus began during His earthly ministry He will complete when He returns to give His people a new heaven and a new earth, when sin and death will be no more. Until then, God sends His Church throughout this fallen world to proclaim the Gospel and bring souls into His Kingdom. In Holy Baptism, God the Father began this good work of Sabbath restoration in us, a work He will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Heavenly Father, we thank You for our baptismal regeneration in which You began a good work in us. As ones who has been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, give us Your Holy Spirit that we may honor the Lord's Day by gladly hearing and learning Your Word. In the Name of Jesus, who has given us the promise of Sabbath rest in You. Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 1

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? — Matthew 6:25

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus rebuked worry. Worry is a form of unbelief, a sign that we don't trust our heavenly Father to care for us and provide for our earthly needs. All sin is unbelief, but worry can become idolatry as we put our trust in earthly providers and provisions such as jobs and governments rather than in the Lord. In response to worry, Jesus pointed the disciples to nature as evidence of God's providential care. Our heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field--how much more does He care for those whom He has created in His own image?

We worry about bodily things, and yet the body is only part of our existence before God. Our souls need care too. God provides that care in His Word and Sacraments, and through His pastors and churches. While we clamor for better paying jobs and bigger houses and nicer clothes, we give little thought to the care of our souls. A Lutheran pastor once said that it is better to have a lower paying job in a community with a faithful Lutheran church than to have a higher paying job in a community with no faithful churches. No matter how hard we work to provide for our bodies, they will one day end up in the grave. Our souls live forever. May God help us see that our souls need Jesus because life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

Heavenly Father, the apostle Paul writes, "[God] who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" When we worry, lift our eyes from these earthly concerns and put them on the cross of Jesus Christ, for there we see that You love us and care for all our needs of body and soul. In His Name. Amen.



*I will praise Your great compassion,
Faithful Father, God of grace,
That with all our fallen race
In our depth of degradation
You had mercy so that we
Might be saved eternally.*

LSB 559:5

Thursday of Lent 1

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. — Exodus 20:11

In creation there are three naturally occurring periods of time that we humans can observe: there is the *day*, which is one complete rotation of the earth on its axis; there is the *month*, which is the time it takes for the moon to revolve around the earth; and there is the *year*, the time it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun.

But the seven-day week isn't a naturally occurring event in the cosmos. The week was established by the creative activity of God revealed in Genesis and given to mankind. The seven-day week is evidence of creation. Throughout history and from culture to culture people have observed a seven-day week. However, some societies tried to change the week, such as the Soviets who tried five- and six-day weeks in an effort to destroy Christianity by eliminating Sunday. But such attempts were a failure - for the Word of God endures.

Yet some Christians question what is meant by “day” in the Genesis account. They want it to mean something else like a massive period of time so they can have both God and evolution. But the Lord makes it quite clear in Exodus what is meant by “day” in Genesis: the period of time it takes for the earth to rotate once, an evening and a morning, a natural day. Otherwise the notion of the week being seven natural days becomes rather absurd. God created the universe in six natural days and rested on the seventh because His Word says so. Nature points to that truth every day of the week.

Heavenly Father, in this dying world help us always to confess and believe that by the power of Your Word You brought the cosmos into existence in six natural days, and by the power of Your Word You still preserve all that You created. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Friday of Lent 1

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. — Ephesians 3:14-15

The Explanation of *Luther's Small Catechism* wasn't written by Luther, but by later Lutheran theologians. In that section the question is asked, "Why is the First Person of the Trinity called 'the Father'?" The answer given is two-fold: A. God is the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ and also my Father through faith in Christ; and B. He is the Father of all people because He created them. (1991 Catechism with Explanation, question 96)

God is a spirit, He has no body, which means He is neither male or female. But God reveals Himself to us in Holy Scripture as *Father*. God is our Father because He has created us, He provides for us and protects us from evil, and because He sacrifices for us. The earthly vocation of fatherhood reflects God the Father in much the same way. Fathers are the God-ordained head of the household. They beget their children, protect and care for their families, and provide for their children's Christian education. Much of the tribulation in our world today finds its root in divorce and fatherless homes. This is what happens when fathers—and all people for that matter—seek to serve themselves, and not the people God has given them.

Loving fathers make sacrifices for the wellbeing of their families. Yet their sacrifices don't compare to the sacrifice God the Father gave for His creation. He gave His only begotten Son into death on the cross to save us from sin, death, and the power of the devil — that we may live with Him in heavenly peace and joy. The greatest gift that a father can give his children is the Word of God that they may believe in Jesus Christ and be part of God's eternal family forever.

Heavenly Father, raising Christian children is hard work in this age of sport and leisure. Help parents to resist the temptation to put the things of this world above Your things. Help parents to see the eternal good in Sunday worship with our families, and to set a good example of faithfulness to Your Word. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 1

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

— James 1:17

With these words, James reminds us that God the Father continues to care for His creation. He rains down goodness upon us from His heavenly throne on a daily basis. As Luther wisely teaches in his explanation to the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, God showers His blessings even upon evil people: *"God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."*

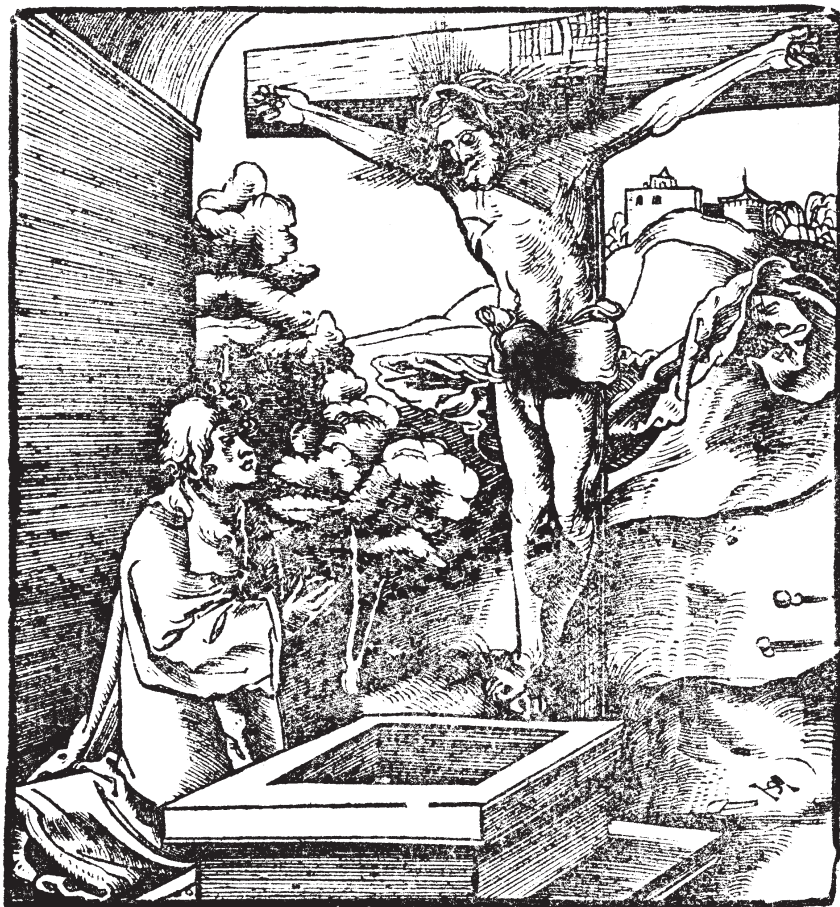
The heart of natural man denies the blessings of its Creator, looking instead to the creation for good things. In the Large Catechism Martin Luther says of the heart: *"It seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints or devils. It neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for anything better than to believe that he is willing to help. The heart does not believe that whatever good it experiences comes from God"*. By nature, our hearts are opposed to God, desire only to sin, and lead us to eternal death.

But one of the good things that comes from the Father of lights is a regenerated heart. St. Paul calls baptism, *"a washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3:5). By the power of His Word, God created the heavens and the earth. By that same Word, the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart in Holy Baptism, where we are made a new creation in Christ. Not only does this new heart look to God for all good things, it responds with thanksgiving — not just in what we say, but in what we do. We glorify God even without bodies.

Heavenly Father, the Old Adam in us looks for comfort and security in worldly things. Through repentance and faith, strengthen the New Man in us to always look to You, the Father of lights, the author of our salvation, who has given us the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ, our Lord. In His Name. Amen.

[illegible]

God the Son



"The Crucifixion of Jesus" — Taken from a sermon by Martin Luther on the suffering of Christ, this woodcut shows Jesus on the cross with his tomb before him and (perhaps) the Apostle John (or another disciple) kneeling in prayer or worship before him.

Sunday of Lent 2

“And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.”
— Matthew 15:21-28

Christ’s humiliation reveals to us the depth of His love for His Father and His love for fallen sinners. But today’s Gospel lesson seems to challenge Christ’s universal love. First, Christ is silent to this woman’s plea. Then, He speaks cold words: “*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” And again, “*It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.*” Why does Christ act in such a manner?

Our Lord in love teaches us to cling to His promises alone. Christ teaches us that outward circumstances do not reveal His favor. Our Lord wants to be caught in His promises. He wants us to wrestle with Him through His Words. He, in love, lowers Himself by allowing this woman to use His own words. And so, she prevails by faith.

This text ought to drive us on to greater and more fervent prayer. Jesus wants to be caught by you. He wants you to bind Him with His words. Always pray and don’t lose heart, for Jesus loves you dearly.

Lord Jesus, You commended the Canaanite woman for her great faith in Your words. Increase our faith by Your Word so that we may cling to Your promises alone. Amen.

Monday of Lent 2

“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”

— Luke 2:51-52

To educate is not only to inform, but also to shape or mold. Jesus did not need education. He did not need to be molded or formed. He did not have any vices or flaws which needed to be curbed, like we do. Why did Jesus need to learn?

This is part of Jesus’ humiliation. Jesus did actually learn, study, and increase in wisdom, as far as His human nature was concerned. His omniscience was quiescent, not used. We see this later in the gospels when Christ declares that no one, even Him, knew the day or the hour of the end. Christ’s redemptive office made this non-use necessary. Christ became like us in every way, save in sin. Seeing how the All-knowing One learned, we also ought not be too proud to repeat our catechisms every day and to listen to our pastor’s preaching and teaching.

Jesus also showed His humility by submitting to His mother and guardian. When Mary and Joseph disagreed with Him, Jesus was in the right (Luke 2:48-49) and yet we see that Jesus was submissive to them. Even though His mother and guardian were flawed and sinful, He submitted to their authority. Even though He was their Maker, He deferred to them so that He might actively and perfectly obey God’s law on our behalf.

Seeing how Christ submitted to His mother and guardian, we also ought to submit in love and fear to our parents and other authorities. Christ was obedient, even when the authorities over Him erred and sinned. Likewise, we ought to obey our parents, no matter how weak or strange they are, because it is pleasing to our Heavenly Father and to our Lord Christ.

Lord Jesus, You grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. Teach us by Your holy Word so that we too might become mature in the Christian Faith. Amen.

Tuesday of Lent 2

“Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” — Isaiah 53:

Christ's whole life was a passion story, a history of suffering. We see this very clearly in the gospel given to us through Isaiah (read especially 52:13-53:12). Jesus is God, perfect and beautiful beyond compare. And yet, Isaiah writes that He *“had no form or majesty . . . and no beauty.”* Jesus, at Whose right hand are pleasures forevermore, was *“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”* You never see Jesus laugh in the gospels; He cries and is angry, but He never laughs.

Jesus was despised, even though He was a King. His hometown hated Him. His family thought He was crazy. The crowds left Him after a hard sermon. His disciples abandoned Him. Soldiers mocked and beat Him. Even in His death He was despised.

This was the Lord's will. God did this. Jesus felt all of God's wrath. He was forsaken by God. All of our sin was placed on Him. Christ felt in His very soul all of our guilt and all of our sin. He suffered it as if it were His own. On the cross, Christ suffered the torments of hell.

This is what it means that Christ is the sin offering. By bearing our iniquity, Christ, God's servant, accounts many righteous. These were transgressors, but Christ has borne their sin and makes intercession continuously for them.

Christ's spiritual suffering upon the cross is the deepest humiliation. This is the anguish of His soul. The physical sufferings, while great, are nothing compared to the hell on earth which was the cross. There are no words to describe it. No one can understand it. We nevertheless trust in Christ's anguish of soul, for it is the core and foundation of our salvation.

Lord Jesus, out of the anguish of Your soul You saw and were satisfied. Comfort us with Your anguish, so that we might truly believe that our sins are forgiven. Amen.



*Jesus Christ, be Thou our stay;
O let us perish never!
Cleanse us from our sins, we pray,
And grant us life forever.*

Keep us from the evil one;
Uphold our faith most holy,
And let us trust Thee solely
With humble hearts and lowly,
Let us put God's armor on,
With all true Christians running
Our heav'nly race and shunning
The devil's wiles and cunning.
Amen, amen! This be done;
O Lord, have mercy on us.

LSB 505:2

Wednesday of Lent 2

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” — Philippians 2:5-7

Jesus is God. He is the Second Person of the Trinity. Paul writes (Philippians 2:1-11) that Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Jesus did not have to strive for godhood; He was already equal to God because He is God. Jesus is God, but He didn't flaunt His deity. He didn't make a show of it.

Jesus is God and yet He humbled Himself to save us. The text says He emptied Himself. There are two phrases which describe what this means. First, Jesus took on the form of a slave. Jesus is Lord but He became a slave by not using His divine power and glory. He became not just God's servant, but our servant, since He came to serve.

Secondly, Jesus was born in the likeness of men. This doesn't mean that Jesus wasn't a man. He was a man. This means that Jesus presented Himself, not as the God Man, but as an ordinary man. With the exception of the Transfiguration, Jesus looked like an ordinary man to everyone, even to those closest to Him. The public regarded Jesus as a great prophet, but still just a man.

The climax of Christ's emptying is on the cross, where He became obedient to a slave's death upon the cross. Even though He did not deserve shame but praise and honor, Christ still willingly suffered to save us.

St. Paul, in this text, points to Christ as an example. Even though He deserved every honor, He humbled Himself for the good of His neighbor. Christians should also emulate the mind of Christ. Christians look after the interests of others because Christ looked after their interests first. We act, not from ambition, but from a humility which springs from the humility of our Lord.

Lord, You emptied Yourself for our good. Empty us of all pride and vanity so that we might be more like You. Amen.



"Christ's Humility" — Jesus humbles himself by taking the likeness of men.

Thursday of Lent 2

“I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.”

— John 14:30-31

After instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus gave a part of His valedictory address at the table. He continued to teach His disciples before crossing the brook Kidron and before entering into the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives. We see that Jesus left the table when He said, *“Rise, let us go from here.”*

Jesus is going to His death. He will be betrayed, captured, beaten, wrongfully tried, and finally crucified. The driving power behind these actions is the evil one, the devil. He is the ruler of this world. He is coming to destroy Jesus. The Jews, the Sanhedrin, and the Romans were his instruments in this decide.

The devil had no power over Christ. That’s because Christ wasn’t a sinner. We see this in the garden, when Christ speaks, and the mob falls to the ground. Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue Him. Instead, Jesus allows Himself to be bound, beaten, and brutalized. He does this because He loves His Father in heaven. The Father desired that all men be saved. He loved the world. That’s why He sent His only begotten Son.

Jesus loves the Father and wanted to do what He commanded. The Father’s commands are light and life for the world. Because of Christ’s love, we now love the Father. And we too want to do what the Father commands. It may be difficult and dangerous. But let us take comfort that Christ cheerfully followed His Father’s will to the end and was glorified.

Lord Jesus, You did as Your Father commanded because You love Him. Give us new and loving hearts so that we might also love Your Father and gladly do what He commands. Amen.

Friday of Lent 2

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?””
— Matthew 27:46

From the cross, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1. But this was not merely a pious prayer. Jesus revealed in these words that He was being forsaken by God.

What does it mean to be forsaken by God? We can only begin to understand if we accept that Christ is our Substitute. He was no sinner. He loved His Father and His Father loved Him. Jesus is the Father’s Beloved Son. The Father is well pleased with Jesus. But God made Him, who was sinless, to be sin for us. And God is wrathful over sin. Therefore, Christ, forsaken by God, felt divine wrath on account of the sins attributed to Him.

Christ is truly forsaken. He truly feels God’s wrath. He feels all of it. And that feeling includes an eternity of hell. Christ felt all of it. He endured all of it. That’s why every sin is paid for. If Christ was not truly forsaken, then there is no salvation. Sin and lawlessness must be dealt with. The debt must be paid. That spiritual debt which we owed was nothing but punishment, here in time and there in eternity. That’s why Christ had to suffer, not only physically but also spiritually. He not only had to die, but He also had to be damned or forsaken for our sake.

Christ did not despair upon the cross. His cry is not the cry of the hopeless. That would be a sin. No, Christ, even as He is being forsaken, remains the true and obedient Son. He says, “*My God.*” His trust in His Father remained unshaken. Even as He suffered, Jesus remained steadfast and feared, loved, and trusted in His Father above all things.

This gives us comfort and strength in times when we must bear our cross. We learn that Christ has suffered divine forsakenness for our sake. Therefore, we can confidently trust that the trials we endure are for our eternal good.

Dear Jesus, You were forsaken for our sake. Remind us of Your merits so that we might patiently endure our crosses. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 2

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” — Psalm 16:10

Psalm 16:10 is about the end of Christ’s humiliation and the beginning of His exaltation. Christ truly died. His was not a normal termination of life. His was a violent death. His was also a voluntary death, since no one can take His life from Him but He must lay it down. There was a true separation of body and soul.

Christ’s body was laid in Joseph’s tomb. Christ’s Soul was in paradise with the repentant thief. Sheol here means death. The Apostles use the Greek version of Hades in Acts 2. Both Sheol and Hades mean death in this context. They cannot mean hell. Christ went to hell in triumph to proclaim His victory. That’s the beginning of His exaltation.

The point is this: God would not abandon Jesus to death. God would not let rot consume the sinless Son of God. To remain in the clutches of death and decay would mean that Christ was not sinless. It would mean that He was not the perfect Substitute for the sins of the world. It would mean that we are still in our sins and therefore damned. This is why St. Peter declares that *“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”*

Why didn’t Jesus raise Himself? Well, the Scriptures say that the Father raised Jesus and that Jesus raised Jesus. If the Father raised Jesus from the dead, then by this glorious resurrection, He declared that the sins of the whole world are fully atoned for. All mankind is now regarded as righteous before His tribunal.

Jesus was justified. His whole life, all His words, and all of His acts were declared right and perfect by the resurrection. Here, Jesus is declared righteous and innocent. By Jesus’ resurrection, we are declared righteous. All of our sins have been paid for. It is accomplished and finished for all time.

Dear Jesus, Your resurrection is our justification. Let us cling even more fervently to Your resurrection, that we may be comforted when we die. Amen.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

God the Son



"Exorcism of Mute Demon" — Jesus casts out a demon, enabling a mute man to speak.

Sunday of Lent 3

[Jesus said:] “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.” — Luke 11:17b-22.

Shortly after creation, Satan, our strong foe, established himself as prince over this fallen world and enslaved mankind in sin. Over the many years, Satan has kept a tight rein in his kingdom, even up to this day. Never divided against itself, his kingdom stands. As such, he believes his goods are safe. But he is greatly mistaken. For from before the foundation of the world, from the very beginning, Almighty God knew the outcome: Satan, that strong foe of old, would be overcome by One stronger than he — the Lord Jesus, the eternal, only begotten Son of the Father. Mankind has a champion, a Savior. Upon His death, Christ Jesus descended into hell, Satan’s palace, and proclaimed His victory over our old foe; By His resurrection, He wrests away the devil’s spoils. Satan may have an undivided kingdom, but that kingdom now stands in utter ruin. Satan lost; the Lord of Life lives and reigns at the right hand of His Father. Sinners, once captive to Satan, now have access to Almighty God through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, His Son. The victory is ours; Christ descended into hell to announce it to Satan and rose from the dead to proclaim it to us.

Almighty God, direct and fix our eyes ever toward our Lord Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Amen.

Monday of Lent 3

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” — Ephesians 5:1-8

In His death and resurrection, Christ Jesus has freed us from slavery to sin. But what does this freedom mean? Does it mean that we may now do whatever we want, or live any way we choose? Does it mean that we are now at liberty to indulge in any and all earthly and fleshly desires? In other words, does our freedom from sin mean that we are free to return to sin? No. Freedom from sin is not license to sin. Christ Jesus has freed us so that we may lead lives of righteousness and holiness. That is to say: we are to live lives in steadfast faith towards God and in selfless service to our neighbor. Such lives are pleasing to God. How is this done? The death and resurrection of our Lord, Christ Jesus, and the gifts which He won for us there, embolden, enliven, and enlighten us. We are made anew and sustained throughout by His righteousness and holiness, which He imparts and imputes to us. Sin and Satan are no longer our masters; the crucified and risen Jesus is our Lord.

Almighty God and Father, continue to teach us to turn from evil, to live lives that are pleasing to You, and to cling, evermore, to Christ Jesus, who won, for us, our freedom from sin. Amen.

Tuesday of Lent 3

“But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.” Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”— Hebrews 2:9-15

The only begotten Son of God took on flesh, and, for a time, laid aside His divine attributes. Fully God and fully man, He went the way of the Cross. There, He suffered the shame and the curse of sin and tasted death for everyone. Yet His suffering and death reframe our death. Death and the devil are now powerless over the brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus. Baptized into His holy Name, that is what He has made us: His brothers and sisters, by grace through faith. Because He has overthrown the dominion of death and the devil, we are no longer under their tyranny. We share in our Lord's victory -- the victory He announced to the devil in the depths of hell, the victory he proclaimed in rising from the tomb on Easter Sunday. Death has now become, for us, a portal leading to life everlasting; the devil's accusations against us are now empty. O thanks be to God!

Lord Jesus Christ, you have won for us the victory over death and the devil. Continue to assure us of this victory through Your Word and Spirit. Amen.



*O my God, my rock and tower,
Grant that in Your death I trust,
Knowing death has lost its power
Since You crushed it in the dust.*

*Savior, let Your agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die be my protection,
Light and life and resurrection.*

Wednesday of Lent 3

“Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” — Luke 24:44-53

When the Lord Jesus had accomplished everything necessary for the salvation of mankind, He ascended into heaven, where He now reigns and rules from the position of all power and authority: the right hand of God the Father Almighty. High and lifted up, the foremost in His rule is the sending out of His disciples with the message of reconciliation: God is at peace with man through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. He charges His disciples to set before the nations everything that they had witnessed: His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. In the message of the Cross, we learn of the enormous price Christ Jesus paid for our sins. In the message of the empty Tomb, we learn that the price He paid has been accepted. Trusting in the message of both Cross and Tomb, delivered to us by Christ Jesus’ appointed messengers, let us then turn from our sins and receive the boon of Cross and Tomb: the forgiveness of sins, life, and everlasting salvation.

Once crucified and now risen and ascended Lord, by Your Word, preached and heard, bring us to repentance and the knowledge of sins forgiven. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 3

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,”

— 1 Peter 3:18–19

“I believe... Jesus Christ... descended into hell.” — Apostles’ Creed

Holy Scripture has very little to say regarding this article of faith. As such, there have been many, throughout history, who have asked themselves when and how did Christ descend into hell. There have even been some, more recently, who have challenged if this did, indeed, happen at all. Naysayers will point to the relatively later inclusion of this particular article in the history of the Apostles’ Creed, among other things. Others will pick at and probe the pages of sacred Scripture, in an attempt to plumb from its depths answers that will satisfy reason. But to reject this article of faith only serves to diminish our Lord Christ’s victory over the devil in our stead. Without the salvation which Christ purchased and won for us, mankind would, forever, dwell in the domain of the devil, ultimately ending up in hell with him. Yet, Christ intercedes on our behalf. The devil was soundly and utterly defeated at the Cross. After His death, Christ Jesus descends into hell to announce to the devil the victory He has won for us; He announces that salvation has been purchased for mankind. Still, the questions as to precisely when and exactly how He did this remain unanswered. Scripture is relatively silent regarding them, and human reason cannot deduce them. But sacred Scripture is not some technical manual, detailing every proverbial nut and bolt of the various articles of faith; it is the living, active word of God. Through this Word, God’s Spirit works faith. While, on this side of the grave, we will never know the answer as to precisely when did Christ descend into hell, nor the answer as to exactly how He did so. The Spirit works faith in us to simply believe that our Lord, Jesus Christ descended into hell. In confessing this article of faith, we have the consolation that neither hell nor the devil can take us captive or injure us, for we believe that Christ has won the victory over them for us.



“Christ Breaks the Gates of Hell” — Christ uses the staff of the Christian banner to break the wooden gates of hell. This woodcut was created by Lukas Cranach the Elder.

Dearest Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit You have made known to us that You descended into hell; let us always believe this and bid our reasoning, as to the particulars, cease. Amen.

Friday of Lent 3

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,”

— 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“I believe... The third day, [Jesus Christ] rose again from the dead.”

— Apostles’ Creed

Unlike the previous article of faith, Holy Scripture has much to say regarding our Lord’s resurrection. Indeed, this event is recorded in all four of the Gospel accounts, not to mention the many times that St. Paul refers to it. This is because Christ’s resurrection proclaims to us the victory that He won for us upon the Cross. More than that, in Christ’s resurrection, we get a glimpse of what that victory means for us, namely our own resurrection from the dead. Death has lost its sting and hold over us. Baptized in the Triune name of God and trusting in Christ Jesus’ atoning death for all of our sins, heaven and life everlasting are ours. So also, Christ’s resurrection from the dead informs us that the payment Christ made for our sins upon the Cross, namely His very life, has been accepted by the Father. Christ has reconciled us to the Father; we know this because He rose from the dead. Just as the Father was well pleased with His Son, so too He is now well pleased with us. This is not because of anything we have — or could have — done; it is because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, which He imputes to our account. In addition to this, Christ’s resurrection is the public proclamation that the Spirit uses to enlighten us in the Gospel. Redeemed by Christ and reconciled to the Father, we are now a new creation — a creation free from the punishment for not keeping the Law; a creation free to live as Almighty God would have us live, holy and blameless. Redeemed, sanctified, and re-created: all of this is because our dear Lord Jesus, on the third day, rose from the dead.



“Resurrected Christ” — The resurrected Christ is shown victorious over death.

Almighty God, we thank and praise You for sending Your Son, Christ Jesus, to die for our sins and rise from the dead for our justification. Continue to send Your Spirit with this life-changing news. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 3

“So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.” — Mark 16:19

“I believe... [Jesus Christ] ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.” — Apostles’ Creed

This article of faith is threefold in substance, presenting us with the historical event, the present reality, and the future guarantee. First, the history: having accomplished the redemption of all mankind, the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven and took up His rightful place at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. In the fullness of time, the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of the Father took on flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. Both as God and man, Christ Jesus lived and died upon the earth for man. Then, He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, returning to His rightful place beside the Father, all the while wearing and bearing our flesh. Now, the present reality: Christ Jesus, as both God and man, rules and reigns at the right hand of God — the position of all power, authority, and activity of God — over all things. From thence: He sends the Spirit to work through the preached Word to engender and strengthen our faith; He authorizes His called and sent ones to baptize in His name, to announce the forgiveness He won upon the Cross, and to dispense—in the Sacrament of the Altar—the medicine of immortality. What’s more, He is ever before His Father interceding on our behalf. The scars and wounds He now, and forever, bears in His exalted and glorified body are an ever-present reminder to the Father that we have been redeemed by His Son. Finally, the future guarantee: He will come again, in glory, to judge the living and the dead. He shall return to publicly proclaim to all of creation that He is, indeed, King of kings and Lord of lords. And He shall justly judge the world. And lastly, He shall, forever, do away with all evil, while, at the same time, He shall establish His new creation — filled with us and all who believe in Him.



“The Ascension of Jesus” — Leaving his disciples below, Jesus is taken up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

Ascended Lord Jesus, continue to dispel our enemies, be present with us in Word and Sacrament, and bestow upon us Your grace and blessing until You come again in glory. Amen.

God the Holy Spirit



"Feeding the 5,000" — A boy provides Jesus and his disciples with five loaves of bread and two fish to feed the multitude of 5,000.

Sunday of Lent 4

Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” — John 6:11-14

Read John 6:1–15.

Each of the disciples had a basket to pick up the holy leftovers. Jesus’ concern was that nothing may be lost. Jesus’ concern is the same for His own disciples as well as the five thousand plus. The women and children in attendance were not counted. During the time of the Exodus, only men were counted. Why? Often, the men counted were those available for temple or military service, depending on their family line. The people gathered there (as well as the people hearing this account from St. John) knew how people were counted in the Old Testament. This text itself invites comparison to Israel’s unfaithfulness in the wilderness and the Lord’s faithful provision to them there. Jesus is similarly faithful and generous, giving daily bread and more — Himself.

Jesus is a king that allows His subjects to resist Him. He compels no one. As a servant king, a suffering Servant that is also our prophet, priest, and king, Jesus allows Himself to be rejected by His own subjects all the way to a cross. In that we have reason to rejoice, for the cross is where salvation is won. Thanks be to God that Jesus also feeds us this day with His Word, and according to His own words of promise, with His own Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Lord Jesus, thank you for taking care of us this day. Help us to never reject you but to firmly trust in you at all times. Amen.

Monday of Lent 4

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

— Titus 3:5

“We’ve got spirit, yes we do. We’ve got spirit, how ‘bout you?” Have you ever heard this cheer at a football or basketball game? My high school used it all the time. It became a shouting contest between our Longhorns and the Visitors to our gridiron or hardwood. I was honestly horrified—speechless—when a fellow seminarian told me his congregation once used it as a “call to worship.” Such is a counter-example, to be sure. Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Thank the Lord for the holy liturgy!

The Holy Spirit points to Christ Jesus (see John 16:14-15). He does not draw attention to Himself. Compare what we learn in *Small Catechism* about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The “*What does this mean*” sections of the Apostles’ Creed tell Who the Father is and what He does and Who the Son is and what He does compared to what the Third Article meaning confesses about the Holy Spirit. We learn exclusively about what He does rather than Who He is.

The Holy Spirit has names reserved only for God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16). He has qualities and attributes only God can have (Psalm 139:7-10; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Hebrews 9:14). He can do things only God can do (Genesis 1:2; Titus 3:5). Finally, He receives worship reserved only for God (1 Peter 4:14). The Spirit is the Comforter (John 14:26).

God the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not merely God’s energy, the Lord’s power, or an impersonal “force” found in science fiction.

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is divine, God Himself, the third person of what Christians call the Holy Trinity. (Sanctus Deus, Sanctus Fortis, Sanctus Immortalis, miserere nobis.) Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.



“Infant Baptism” — An infant is being baptized in fulfillment of the great commission. The Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a dove above the group.

The work of the Holy Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian church on earth, and keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith will be explained in more detail next week.

Heavenly Father, keep us from error in regard to the Holy Spirit. Help us to always check our experience against Your Word of Truth which was wrought by the same Spirit. Amen.



*Come, Holy Ghost,
Creator blest,
And make our hearts
Your place of rest;
Come with Your grace
and heav'nly aid,
And fill the hearts
which You have made.*

To You, the Counselor, we cry,
To You, the gift of God Most High;
The fount of life, the fire of love,
The soul's anointing from above.

In You, with graces sevenfold,
We God's almighty hand behold
While You with tongues
of fire proclaim
To all the world His holy name.

Your light to ev'ry thought impart,
And shed Your love in ev'ry heart;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

Tuesday of Lent 4

“But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” — 1 Corinthians 2:9–10

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

Isaiah 52:15 and Isaiah 64:4 are quoted in 1 Corinthians 2. And what has the Spirit revealed? God’s testimony about Himself. The important thing to the one who bore this testimony, St. Paul, was not how well he spoke or how wise he was, but the focus of his testimony. It wasn’t himself. In fact, he tells us what the testimony of God is: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Striking words, aren’t they? For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. The heart and soul of this testimony is Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus’ death was the greatest act of love this world had ever seen. Romans 5:8 says, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Christ died for us. And because He died for us, we can live eternally with our heavenly Father. Jesus’ death served as the payment for all our sins. No interest is accruing anymore! Jesus’ death completely satisfied God’s anger toward us.

God was indeed angry with us. He doesn’t take lightly our failures to meet His standards. Rather, He has declared that any and all failure merits our being cast into hell! That’s why the cross of Christ is not a morbid sight, but rather a wonderful sight. There Jesus rescued us from this horrible fate by suffering in our place. And He is the only one who has done that. We can’t make ourselves worthy of God’s favor. Neither can anybody else appease God’s wrath for us. Only Jesus did that. We are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus, in Holy Baptism, the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Eternal God, by Your Spirit lead us to know and trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Amen.

Drive far away our wily foe,
And Your abiding peace bestow;
With You as our protecting guide,
No evil can with us abide.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And You, from both, as Three in One
That we Your name may ever bless
And in our lives the truth confess.

Praise we the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, with them One,
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow!

Amen.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His
Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of
Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father, by whom
all things were made; who for us men and for
our salvation came down from heaven and was
incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man; and was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the
Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits
at the right hand of the Father. And He will come
again with glory to judge both the living and the
dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds
from the Father and the Son, who with the Father
and Son together is worshiped and glorified, who
spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic
Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the
remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection
of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 4

**“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”
— John 15:26**

Read John 14:15-21 and the Nicene Creed.

There are a couple of things missing from that Sunday School song about Zacchaeus, the wee little man who sought to see Jesus. It misses that Zacchaeus received the Lord joyfully at His invitation, that he believed in the Christ and it was counted to him as righteousness, and that, being thus justified by faith, Zacchaeus bore fruit, keeping the Seventh Commandment by helping and being of service to his neighbor in regard to wealth and possessions. The Lord came to seek and save the lost, and He did just that with Zacchaeus. He called sinners to repentance, and this small-of-stature tax-collector was called also to faith in Christ. He was a son of Abraham by faith and he was an heir of the promise of everlasting life.

We as well have been called by our Lord. He calls us to repentance for our many sins. We may not be tax-collectors, but we have all sinned. We are guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments as much as Zacchaeus, but just like Zacchaeus, we have a Savior in Christ Jesus, who makes us children of God through our baptism into Christ. As children of God, the riches of His grace are poured upon us, we receive not what we deserve for our sins but we receive His grace and favor. And so we too, like Zacchaeus live as the children of God by loving God and our neighbor, bearing the good fruit and doing those good works that God, in His Word, has prepared for us to do.

Heavenly Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit help us to bear good fruit flowing from our faith in Your Son Jesus. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 4

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. — 1 Corinthians 12:3

About once a year I get a frantic phone call from a member asking for a meeting. It’s a different person every time, but the language and later conversation is nearly identical every time: “Pastor, I have to come see you as soon as possible.” I agree, and patiently wait to offer comfort for a semi-common affliction.

“I’ve done it, pastor. I’ve committed the sin against the Holy Spirit,” the person says.

“You’re sure?” I respond.

“Yes,” they say with embarrassment.

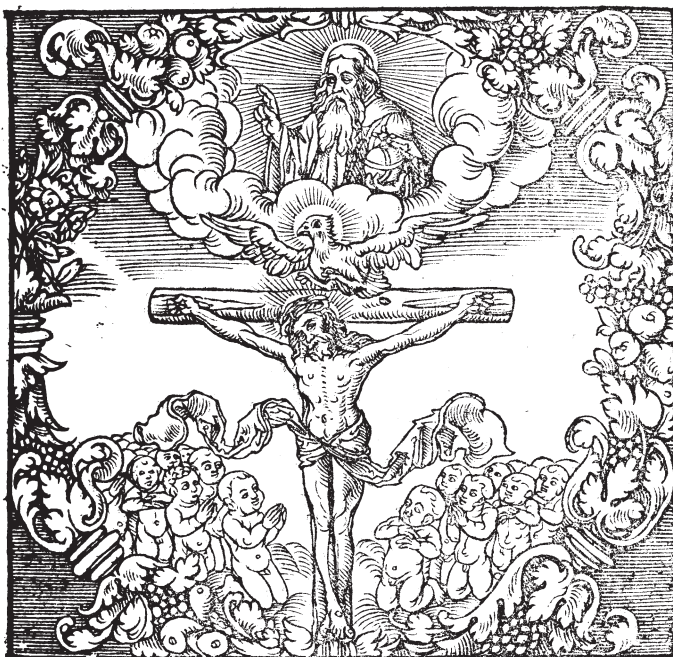
After I pause, I offer, “No, you haven’t. Would you like to hear why?”

“Yes, please!”

We then review Matthew 12, where Jesus says, “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

The Holy Spirit delivers the forgiveness of sins. If a person refuses to hear the Word, receive the Sacrament of the Altar, and overall refuses “delivery” of the Lord’s gifts, then that person won’t be forgiven.

Our conversation continues as I say, “If you had committed the sin against the Spirit, then talking to your pastor, walking into a church, and hearing the Word of God would be the last things you would want to do. Had you sinned against the Spirit, honestly, you wouldn’t care anymore!”



"Trinity" — the crucifixion of Jesus dominates this representation of the Christian Trinity.

Rejecting the Lord and His Word and His servants are sins on the road to the sin against the Holy Spirit. May the good Lord deliver us from all sin, from all error, from all evil, and from the crafts and assaults of the devil. It is God the Holy Spirit who grants us the gift of faith by which we confess with joy, "Jesus is Lord."

Almighty God, protect us from rejecting Your Word and work among us. Help us to cherish even the hard words. Amen.

The Athanasian Creed

¹ Whoever desires to be saved must,
above all, hold the catholic faith.

² Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled
will without doubt perish eternally.

³ And the catholic faith is this,

⁴ that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity
in unity, neither confusing the persons
nor dividing the substance.

⁵ For the Father is one person, the Son is another,
and the Holy Spirit is another.

⁶ But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal,
the majesty coeternal.

⁷ Such as the Father is, such is the Son,
and such is the Holy Spirit:

⁸ the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated,
the Holy Spirit uncreated;

⁹ the Father infinite, the Son infinite,
the Holy Spirit infinite;

¹⁰ the Father eternal, the Son eternal,
the Holy Spirit eternal.

¹¹ And yet there are not three Eternals,
but one Eternal,

¹² just as there are not three Uncreated or three Infinites, but one Uncreated and one Infinite.

¹³ In the same way, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty;

¹⁴ and yet there are not three Almightyies but one Almighty.

¹⁵ So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God;

¹⁶ and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

¹⁷ So the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord;

¹⁸ and yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord.

¹⁹ Just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so also are we prohibited by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords.

²⁰ The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone.

²¹ The Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone.

²² The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten but proceeding.

²³ Thus, there is one Father, not three Fathers;
one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit,
not three Holy Spirits.

²⁴ And in this Trinity none is before or after
another; none is greater or less than another;

²⁵ but the whole three persons are coeternal
with each other and coequal so that in all things,
as has been stated above, the Trinity in Unity
and Unity in Trinity is to be worshiped.

²⁶ Therefore, whoever desires to be saved
must think thus about the Trinity.

²⁷ But it is also necessary for everlasting
salvation that one faithfully believe
the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁸ Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe
and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, is at the same time both God
and man.

²⁹ He is God, begotten from the substance
of the Father before all ages; and He is man,
born from the substance of His mother in this age:

³⁰ perfect God and perfect man,
composed of a rational soul and human flesh;

³¹ equal to the Father with respect to His divinity,
less than the Father with respect to His humanity.

³² Although He is God and man, He is not two,
but one Christ:

³³ one, however, not by the conversion
of the divinity into flesh but by the assumption
of the humanity into God;

³⁴ one altogether, not by confusion of substance,
but by unity of person.

³⁵ For as the rational soul and flesh is one man,
so God and man is one Christ,

³⁶ who suffered for our salvation, descended into
hell, rose again on the third day from the dead,

³⁷ ascended into heaven, and is seated
at the right hand of the Father,
from whence He will come to judge
the living and the dead.

³⁸ At His coming all people will rise again
with their bodies and give an account concerning
their own deeds.

³⁹ And those who have done good
will enter into eternal life,
and those who have done evil into eternal fire.

⁴⁰ This is the catholic faith;
whoever does not believe it faithfully
and firmly cannot be saved.

Friday of Lent 4

“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,” — Matthew 28:19

Read the Athanasian Creed, LSB 319-20.

The catechetical devotions today and tomorrow identify Scripture behind the Athanasian Creed. As Lutherans, we are used to having an Explanation part to Luther’s Small Catechism. Line numbers are those as provided by Lutheran Service Book.

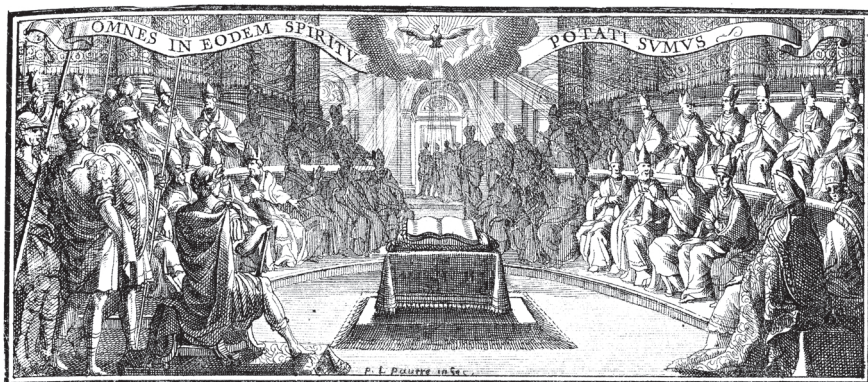
Where did the word “Trinity” come from? Christians invented the word, combining “tri,” meaning “three,” and “unity” as a shorthand to confess the one God in three Persons and three names in one Name of Matthew 28:19.

The Spirit is *one* with Father and the Son as God (Lines 4, 6). (Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:5; James 2:19)

The Spirit is a *person distinct* from the Father and the Son (Line 5). (Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:18; 6:44; 10:15; 14:16-17, 26-27; 15:26; 16:7, 13-15; Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2-4; Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 8:6 Ephesians 4:4–6)

The Spirit is *uncreated* (8). (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:28; John 1:1; Ephesians 3:10-11; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 1:8)

The Spirit is *infinite* (9). (Genesis 1:1; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 113:4-6; 145:3; 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Jeremiah 23:24; Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:8; Revelation 4:8), eternal (Isaiah 9:6; 48:12; Matthew 3:11; John 1:1, 3; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 17:5; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 9:14; Titus 3:5-6; Revelation 1:8; 22:13)



“Historiated Headpiece” — This historiated headpiece depicts the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending upon a gathering of priests and soldiers with the Latin phrase *OMNES IN EODEM SPIRITU POTATI SUMUS* from 1 Corinthians which means “we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

The Spirit is *almighty* (13).

(Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Psalm 62:11; Matthew 19:26; Mark 14:36; Luke 1:35; John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 12:4, 11; Ephesians 1:20–21; 3:20–21; Philippians 3:20–21; Colossians 2:9–10; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6)

The Holy Spirit is *God* (15).

(Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:18, 23; 28:19; John 1:1, 14; 6:27; 10:30; 20:28; Acts 5:3–4; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11; 3:16; 6:19; 8:4; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; 3:17; Colossians 1:15–17; 2:9; Titus 2:10)

Almighty God, Your Word reveals who you are. As we have looked into Your Word this day, bless us by it. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 4

“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,” — Matthew 28:19

Read the Athanasian Creed, LSB 319-20.

The catechetical devotions yesterday and today identify the Scripture behind the Athanasian Creed. Take the time to read as many Scripture passages as possible.

The Holy Spirit is *God* (15).

(Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:18, 23; 28:19; John 1:1, 14; 6:27; 10:30; 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 3:16; 6:19; 8:4; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 3:17; Colossians 1:15-17; 2:9; Titus 2:10)

The Spirit is *Lord* (17).

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 11:25; Luke 2:11; Acts 10:36; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Revelation 17:14).

Line 22 confesses, “The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.

(Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 33:27; Job 38:4; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 5:26; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 4:11)

The Spirit is coeternal and coequal with Father and Son (25).

(Genesis 1:2, 26; Exodus 3:14-15; Isaiah 44:6; John 8:58; 16:15; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 9:14; 10:29; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 5:13; 21:22-23) (John 1:1-2; 10:30; 16:14-15; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:4-6; Hebrews 9:14)

The Holy Spirit always points to Christ:

“For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ, who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.



"Trinity" — The woodcut depicts the Trinity, showing the crucified Jesus juxtaposed over against the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness to save all who gazed upon it from death by serpent bites (see Numbers. 21:4-9; John 3:14-16). The woman in the central position may be Mary Magdalene.

At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds. And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire. "This is the catholic faith; whoever does not believe it faithfully and firmly cannot be saved" (Lines 35-40).

Almighty God, help us by Your Word to know the Holy Spirit and to always trust in He whom the Spirit speaks of, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

God the Holy Spirit



“Jesus Threatened with Stoning” — Jesus is nearly stoned by the Pharisees in the temple for blasphemy.

Sunday of Lent 5

“So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” — John 8:59

Hostility mounts this Sunday against Jesus, preparing us for the upcoming Holy Week. Jesus’ conversation with the Jews shows how silly their hatred of Him is. Jesus is the Christ, the one promised to them by God, and He has come to save and forgive. Yet the Jews call Him names and accuse Him of blasphemy.

As we continue studying the Third Article of the Creed this week and take up the topic of the Holy Christian Church, we do well to remember that the life of the Church is the life of Christ. We shouldn’t expect the Christian life to be full of earthly wealth or honor. We should expect the world to call us names, accuse us of speaking wrongly, and desire our destruction. The life of the Church is cruciform, that is, it is cross-shaped. Our life takes its imprint from Christ’s crucifixion.

This is not something to lament. When we suffer as the Church, this should make us recall Christ’s sufferings, by which He has atoned for our sins, reconciled us to the Father, and gained for us eternal life. If the Church’s life were all roses and sunshine, she would quickly forget her Lord. And so our Lord makes us partakers of His sufferings, which does us the great service of making us remember His sufferings.

But there’s more to living in Christ than just suffering. The Church’s life is Christ’s life, and of Christ it says, *“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him”* (Romans 6:9). After suffering and dying, Christ rose from the dead, and therefore Paul writes, *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”* (Romans 8:18). We share in Christ’s sufferings now (to our great benefit), and soon we will share with Him in glory.

Dear Jesus, keep us faithful to You. As we suffer in this world, comfort us with Your sufferings, and bring us at last to see Your face in glory. Amen.

Monday of Lent 5

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” — Acts 2:4

Upon first hearing the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, it may sound like the Holy Spirit merely receives honorable mention before we move onto other things, or that the Third Article is a catch-all for doctrinal points that don’t belong anywhere else. Not so. The Third Article of the Creed in its entirety is about the Holy Spirit: His person, His work, and the means by which He works.

Martin Luther writes in the Large Catechism concerning the connection of the phrases in the Third Article: *“I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as His name implies. But whereby does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end? Answer: By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For, in the first place, He has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He reveals and preaches, [and through which] He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand, accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it”* (LC, III.40-42).

We see this work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: the Holy Spirit causes the apostles to preach the Word of Christ. The Holy Spirit works through that Word to enkindle faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit gathers believers around the Means of Grace (more on that tomorrow). Thus the Holy Spirit makes a Christian congregation in which He “daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.” The Holy Spirit and the Church go together, and thus we confess them together in the Third Article of the Creed.

Heavenly Father, grant to Your Church faithful pastors and congregations and preserve for us the pure Gospel and Sacraments. Amen.



*Jesus, I will ponder now
On Your holy passion;
With Your Spirit me endow
For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
May the image cherish
Of Your suffering, pain, and death
That I may not perish.*

Tuesday of Lent 5

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” — Acts 2:42

The word “church” translates the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “assembly.” An assembly always gathers around something and for a distinct purpose. In Greek literature, *ekklesia* often referred to the regular civil assemblies: the Athenians might assemble around the question, “Should we destroy this small island in the Aegean Sea, or not?” In the Creed, the church (*ekklesia*) has adjectives that set it apart from other assemblies: *the Holy Christian Church*. We assemble around something different than the Athenians did.

And what is that something? What do we gather around on Sunday morning, and for what purpose? In today’s reading, we hear a description of the assembly that the Holy Spirit called together on Pentecost.

First, the Holy Spirit’s Church is devoted to the apostles’ teaching. In other words, this Church cares about *doctrine*. Why? Because in sound doctrine there is great comfort and salvation and honor toward Christ, whereas in false doctrine there is despair and condemnation and disdain toward Christ. The Holy Spirit has called this assembly by the Gospel, and thus those who have been called want to hear that Gospel in its truth and purity from Christ’s apostles (at that time from their mouths, now through their writings).

Second, the Holy Spirit’s Church is devoted to the fellowship, which might also be translated “communion.” The words “the breaking of bread” further explain this. In short, the Holy Spirit gathers us around the Sacrament of the Altar.

Third, the Holy Spirit’s Church is devoted to the prayers, because the Holy Spirit makes the Church devoted to the commands and promises of her Lord: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).

The teaching of the apostles, communion, prayers: these are the things around which the Holy Spirit continues to gather the Church to this day, and it sets the Christian Church apart from every other assembly on earth.



"Pentecost" — the Holy Spirit descends upon the believers in the form of a dove and as flames of fire on Pentecost.

O Lord, give us delight in the assembly of Your Christian people, and make us see what great gifts You give us there.

Wednesday of Lent 5

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” — John 17:17

Jesus prays this prayer to His Father right as His passion begins. As Jesus approaches the cross, this is His concern for His people: that the Father would sanctify them. What does the word “sanctify” mean? It means “make holy.” The Father grants this prayer when He sends the Holy Spirit to work through His Word.

In the First Article of the Creed, we confess that the Father made us; that’s His verb. In the Second Article, we confess that the Son of God has done and suffered many actions for our redemption. In the Third Article, we don’t have an outright verb, but rather a series of nouns. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is at work and is doing something. He is doing what His title suggests. He is the Holy Spirit, and He makes us holy.

Consider these words from the Large Catechism: *“Therefore we must take our stand upon the word Holy Spirit, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot find another. For there are, besides, many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as, the spirit of man, heavenly spirits, and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called Holy Spirit, that is, He who has sanctified and still sanctifies us”* (LC, III.35-36).

The Holy Spirit makes us holy through holy things: the Holy Gospel, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, in the Holy Christian Church. Through these things, the Holy Spirit grants us faith in Christ our righteousness, removes the uncleanness of our sins, and makes it so that we can stand before God without threat of destruction.

We cannot make ourselves holy any more than we can redeem ourselves. But Jesus directs us toward the means by which we are made holy: *“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”* To receive the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work, we go to church and hear the Word of God. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit makes us holy as the Father continues to grant the prayer of His Son.

Father in heaven, continue to grant the prayer of Your Son and send Your Holy Spirit to sanctify us by Your Word. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 5

“He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

— John 16:14

Jesus has won the forgiveness of sins by His innocent suffering and death on the cross. Yet if we desire the forgiveness of sins, we do not go to the cross to get it. First, we cannot go to the crucifixion of Jesus; that was an event that happened two thousand years ago. Second, even if somehow we could return to Jesus’ crucifixion, what could we expect to receive there? The Roman soldiers had Jesus’ blood on them, but they were not thereby justified in the sight of God. Those who believed in Jesus were either present and mourning, or else running for their lives and going into hiding. If you want the forgiveness of sins, you don’t go to where it was won. You go to where it is delivered.

We cannot go back in time to get the fruits of Jesus’ cross. But the Holy Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and He preaches it in a place where we can go: church. When the Holy Spirit proclaims the things of Jesus, He delivers them to us in the present, and that means it is far better to be in the pew on Sunday than on Mount Golgotha two millennia ago. Luther writes brilliantly on this point in the Large Catechism: *“For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us”* (LC, III.38).

O Jesus, give us a hunger and thirst for Your Word and Sacraments. Amen.



*Graciously my faith renew;
Help me bear my crosses,
Learning humbleness from You,
Peace mid pain and losses.
May I give You love for love!
Hear me, O my Savior,
That I may in heav'n above
Sing Your praise forever.*

Friday of Lent 5

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” — Matthew 16:18

It is important to remember that the Church is an article of faith: “I believe in...the Holy Christian Church.” This doesn’t mean that the Church is altogether hidden. There are certain marks of the Church by which we can know we’ve found a Christian congregation, namely, the pure Gospel and Sacraments. The *Augsburg Confession* thus says, *“The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered”* (AC, VII).

Nevertheless, the eternal existence of the Church is not always apparent to the eyes. By all appearances, it looks like the world could obliterate the Church. Between litigation and all-out physical persecution, we might wonder what chance we stand of surviving.

In 1 Kings 19, the prophet Elijah ran for his life from Jezebel. Elijah had witnessed widespread persecution of the Lord’s prophets and mass apostasy of the Lord’s people. In the wilderness, Elijah lamented to the Lord, *“I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away”* (1 Kings 19:14). This was one of those moments when it became clear that the Holy Christian Church is an article of faith, not of sight. For the Lord responded to Elijah, *“I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him”* (1 Kings 19:18).

At the time of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession, it looked like the Gospel was about to be destroyed by the combined power of the emperor and the pope. Yet the Reformers boldly confessed that their congregations *“teach that one holy Church is to continue forever”* (AC, VII). The Church may seem small and weak. She is like her Lord in His passion where appearances were deceiving. But the simple fact is, rage as they might, the devil and the world cannot take away the Gospel and the Sacraments. The Church will remain forever, thanks be to God.

O Jesus, strengthen our faith to believe that Your Church will never perish. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 5

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

— Hebrews 10:24-25

We confess the Holy Spirit and the Holy Christian Church in the same breath. This week we have learned more about the connection between these two. To sum it up, the Holy Spirit makes us holy by His work through the Gospel and the Sacraments in the Church.

We belong to this Church by belonging to a faithful congregation and attending it. Christ has won our salvation on the cross; the Holy Spirit takes that salvation and delivers it to us through the means of grace. But if we don't show up to church to receive it, then we confess with our absence that Christ died in vain.

Let us not neglect to meet together in the assembly of the saints. To do so dishonors God and, moreover, does serious harm to ourselves. The Holy Spirit has His means through which He works to give us the fruits of Jesus' death and resurrection. If we neglect those means, it's not as if the Holy Spirit works through other means, like a cup of coffee, or the morning paper, or the snooze button on the alarm clock, or preparations for a party, or a sports team, or an RV, or a lake, or a golf course. If we won't be sanctified through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, then we won't be sanctified at all.

Today's Bible passage shows that absence from church was as much a problem in the first century as it is today. In the face of temptations away from church, we encourage one another. Just think of what the Holy Spirit offers in church! He brings you forgiveness of sins, a good conscience, and Christ with all his benefits. These are precious treasures, and the Holy Spirit has not put them out of reach but has brought them near for our salvation.

Dear Jesus, give us peaceful sleep, wake us in the morning, and make us eager to hear Your Word. Amen.

[illegible]

*All glory, laud, and honor
To You Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

*As You received their praises,
Accept the prayers we bring,
O Source of ev'ry blessing,
Our good and gracious King.*

Palm Sunday

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” — Matthew 21:1-5

Jesus Christ is the Word who from eternity is with God and is God, through whom all things were made. Even when He came in the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, He is and ever shall be the Lord of Creation, for whom and by whom all things exist. Therefore, if the Lord Jesus says that He needs something, even if it’s a donkey and a colt, then they ought to be sent at once.

But isn’t every beast of the forest His, the cattle on a thousand hills? What could the Lord of Creation possibly need? What could He possibly lack?

The necessity that compelled Jesus to act was not His lack, but ours. We were lost and condemned, separated from God and without hope in this world. But for our sake the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He came to His own so that he might save His own, the Creator rescuing His creation out of his boundless love and mercy. Thus, it was necessary for Christ to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, even to the point of death on a cross, for He willed to redeem us and make us His own eternally. How else can we, His creatures, respond but by crying out, “Hosanna in the highest!”

Blessed are You, O Lord, who had mercy on us poor sinners and came to us in order to redeem us. May we with all creation praise You now and forevermore. Amen.

Holy Monday

[Jesus said,] “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.” — John 12:27-33

Jesus Christ is true Man. This is evident in the trouble that filled His soul as He approached the hour of His death. Yet He is perfect Man; therefore, He is willingly obedient to His Father’s will and seeks the glory of His name.

And what is the glory of God the Father’s name? It is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. For the Son of Man must be lifted up on the tree of the cross. His is not the earthly exaltation of a human king, with all the pomp that accompanies the glories of man. There are no nobles accompanying Him, but two criminals hanging on His right and on His left. He has no gold or precious jewels, but thorns on His brow and nails in His hands and feet. He wears no silken garment, but He is stripped and bloody.

But this is indeed the glory of God’s name, that His only begotten Son should suffer and die. For He suffered and died for you and for your salvation. By Christ’s death, you have been reconciled to God, adopted as sons and heirs of heaven. Yours is now the hope of the glory of God.

Heavenly Father may your name be glorified in all the earth by the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Amen.

Grant us grace to see Thee, Lord,
Present in Thy holy Word ~
Grace to imitate Thee now
And be pure, as pure art Thou;
That we might become like Thee
At Thy great epiphany
And may praise Thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Fight the good fight
with all your might;
Christ is your strength,
and Christ is your right.
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Your joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race
through God's good grace;
Lift up your eyes,
and seek His face.
Life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the path,
and Christ the prize.

Holy Tuesday

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” — 1 Timothy 6:12-14

The Scriptures speak of the Christian life as warfare. However, unlike the pagan religions, the weapons of the Christian’s warfare are not of the world, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Instead, as the Christian fights the good fight against the devil, the world, and his sinful flesh, he takes up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and wields it by making the good confession. The good confession is that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, who suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation. It is the same good confession that Jesus Himself made before Pontius Pilate, when He declared Himself to be the King of the Jews, whose kingdom is not of this world. It is the same good confession made by the Church throughout the world and history in the Creed.

There are some who think that this confession has lost its value, that it is no longer good enough for our day and age and must be replaced by a modern, more relevant confession. Others say that a good confession is worthless, that we must occupy ourselves with “deeds, not creeds.” But this is not what the Scriptures teach. The Christian doctrine given to the Church by the Apostles in Holy Scripture is complete and perfect for all time. Therefore, the Church will gladly make the good confession, just as her Lord did, until He appears in glory.

Lord Jesus, give us Your Holy Spirit that we may boldly make the good confession until Your return. Amen.

Holy Wednesday

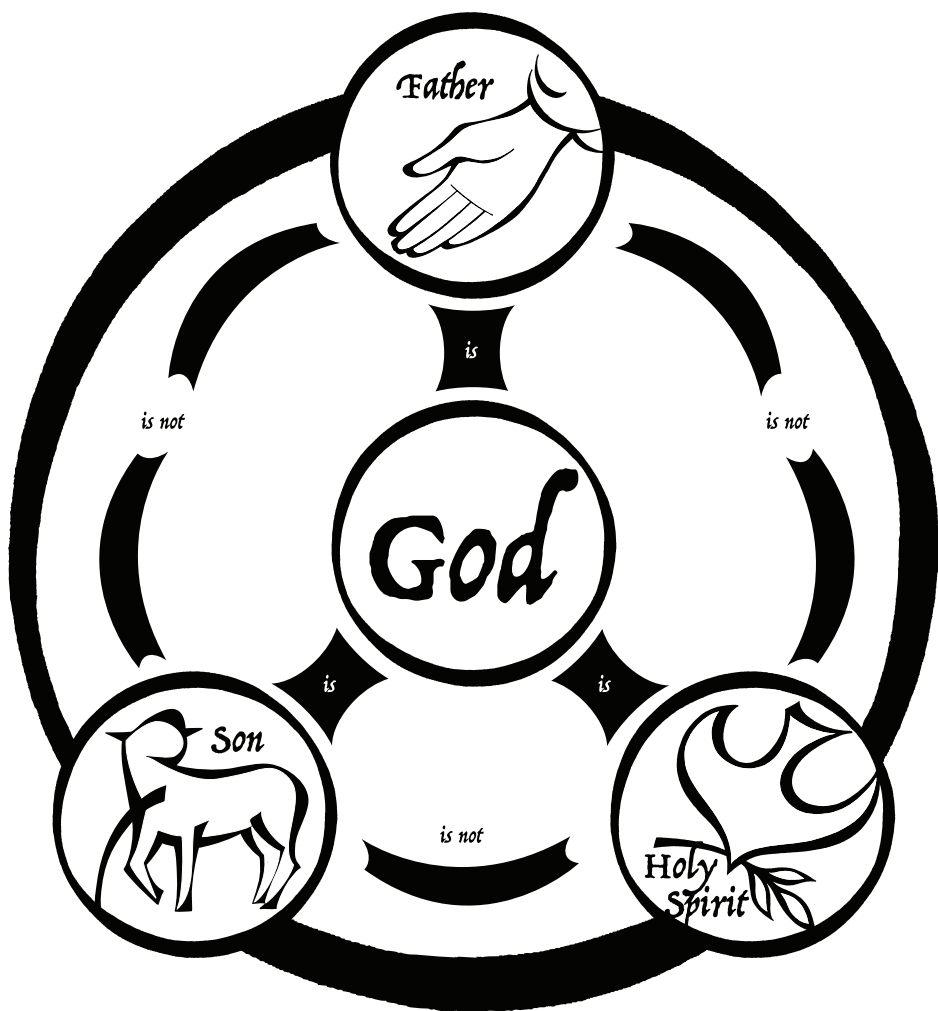
“And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” — Luke 22:39-44

The Athanasian Creed teaches, *“The catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance...[and] it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.”*

The Trinity and the Incarnation, which are essential to our Christian faith, do not arise from philosophical speculations or the development of human traditions. They are taught in the Word of God. For example, in the account of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, it is clear that Jesus and the Father are one God yet two distinct Persons, as the Son prays to the Father and speaks of Their wills. It is also clear that the Son of God Jesus is also true Man, as He kneels and prays, as He sweats, as His soul is in agony.

Whoever desires to be saved must think thus about the Trinity and the Incarnation, but not as an intellectual exercise. Rather it must be believed that the Father sent His Son to be born in human flesh and blood and to suffer and die for us men and for our salvation. The Son obeyed His Father’s will not by parading His deity in humanity before men, but by dying on the cross to defeat death and hell for you.

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, strengthen our faith in the true doctrine taught in Your holy Word. Amen.



Lord Jesus Christ, You have prepared
This feast for our salvation;
It is Your body and Your blood,
And at Your invitation
As weary souls, with sin oppressed,
We come to You for needed rest,
For comfort, and for pardon.

LSB 622:1

Maundy Thursday

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.” — 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

The reception of the Lord’s Supper at a particular altar is a confession of faith. This is one of the chief reasons why the Church practices closed communion. *“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”* (1 Corinthians 10:17) It is dishonest to commune at a church which does not share your public confession, and it is negligent for a pastor to commune an individual who does not share that congregation’s public confession.

What is the confession made by communicants when they receive the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ at the altar? It is not merely a confession of unity, as though the Sacrament was simply an expression of fellowship. It is instead a confession of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, that by the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood He has made atonement for our sins. This should make every communicant both humble and eager to receive this Sacrament often, even until He comes again in glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, create in us a hunger and thirst for Your Supper, trusting in Your Word. Amen.

Good Friday

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” — John 19:28-37

Throughout their writings the Apostles emphasize that they were eyewitnesses of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Indeed, it was for this purpose that Christ called the apostles, that they should see and hear all that He did and go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel.

Their testimony has gone forth into the world in the Word they wrote, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it has come to you. You believe because the Apostles wrote what they saw in order that you may believe. Though you may not be an eyewitness like John, you are likewise called to confess Christ crucified, a faith built on the testimony of the Apostles.

Lord Jesus, may the Gospel of Your crucifixion be preached throughout the world for the forgiveness of sins. Amen.

Jesus, in Your thirst and pain,
While Your wounds
Your lifeblood drain,
Thirsting more our love to gain:
Hear us, holy Jesus.

Thirst for us in mercy still;
All Your holy work fulfill;
Satisfy Your loving will:
Hear us, holy Jesus.

May we thirst Your love to know.
Lead us in our sin and woe
Where the healing waters flow:
Hear us, holy Jesus.

Holy Father, holy Son,
Holy Spirit, three we name Thee;
Though in essence only one,
Undivided God we claim Thee
And, adoring, bend the knee
While we own the mystery.

LSB 940:5

Holy Saturday

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” — 1 Peter 3:18-22

On Good Friday Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross. He did so “in the flesh,” that is, according to His human nature. Death cannot properly be a part of the divine nature. God is eternal. God is life.

Yet we rightly confess that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, died for us men and for our salvation. His divine and human natures are united inseparably in one person. Therefore, what Jesus Christ did for us in the flesh He did as the Son of God and Savior of all mankind. The Son of God truly was crucified for us—He, the Man who is God. He who alone is essentially righteous in His nature suffered for the sins of us who are unrighteous.

And Who is risen from the dead, gone into heaven, and seated at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him? It is the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, our brother according to the flesh. Therefore, we may with confidence draw near to His throne of grace, for He sympathizes with our weaknesses and will bestow mercy and grace to help in our time of need.

We praise You, O Christ, for You have redeemed us by Your holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. Amen.

Easter Sunday ~ The Resurrection of our Lord

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” — Mark 16:1-8

Christ is risen! This was the good news proclaimed by the angel to the women at the tomb that first Easter morning. Had the angel not been there to announce Christ’s resurrection, the women would have simply found an empty tomb and been left with nothing but doubt: Was Jesus’ body stolen? Did some gardener carry it away?

No! Christ is risen indeed! The angel spoke the Word of Christ’s victory over death and the grave, and the women believed, for faith comes from hearing. The women ran from the tomb to tell Jesus’s disciples what they had heard, and on the way Jesus met them and greeted them.

You too have heard this good news of Jesus’ resurrection, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, faith has been created and strengthened in your heart from that hearing. Therefore, do not doubt, nor be alarmed. Christ is risen, and someday you will see Him, just as He told you.

We praise You, O Christ, for you have conquered death for us by Your glorious resurrection. Amen.



"The Resurrection of Jesus" — The Easter lily on one side of his head and the sword on the other, Jesus stands above a scene of the resurrection of the dead.

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