

LUTHER'S  
SMALL  
CATECHISM  
*with Explanation*



ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

LUTHER'S  
SMALL  
CATECHISM  
*with Explanation*





Luther's Small Catechism copyright © 1986 Concordia Publishing House

This edition first published in 2008.

3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968

1-800-325-3040 • www.cph.org

"An Explanation of the Small Catechism" copyright © 1991 Concordia Publishing House.

Illustrations copyright © 2005 Concordia Publishing House.

Based on *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* copyright © 1943, slightly revised 1965 by Concordia Publishing House.

All rights reserved. Used with permission. Other than downloading and reproduction for congregational use, no part of this material may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House. For ordering information, please contact Concordia at 800-325-3040 or visit Concordia at [www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org). Order *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation 1991 Edition*—ESV Version (22-3110WEB).

Illustrations by Sara Tyson.

The quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition; edited by Paul McCain, et al., copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

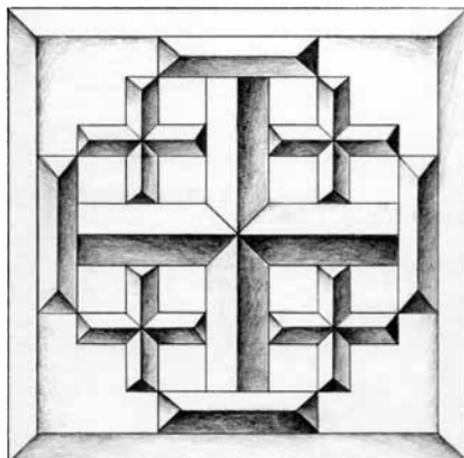
Scripture quotations in the Small Catechism are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

With the exception of the Small Catechism, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version®. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This publication may be available in braille, in large print, or on cassette tape for the visually impaired. Please allow 8 to 12 weeks for delivery. Write to Lutheran Blind Mission, 7550 Watson Rd., St. Louis, MO 63119-4409; call toll-free 1-888-215-2455; or visit the Web site: [www.blindmission.org](http://www.blindmission.org).

Manufactured in the United States of America

CIP data can be found on page 296.



## CONTENTS

### **Luther's Small Catechism**

#### Section 1

The Ten Commandments	11
The Creed	15
The Lord's Prayer	18
The Sacrament of Holy Baptism	23
Confession	26
The Sacrament of the Altar	30

#### Section 2

Daily Prayers	32
---------------	----

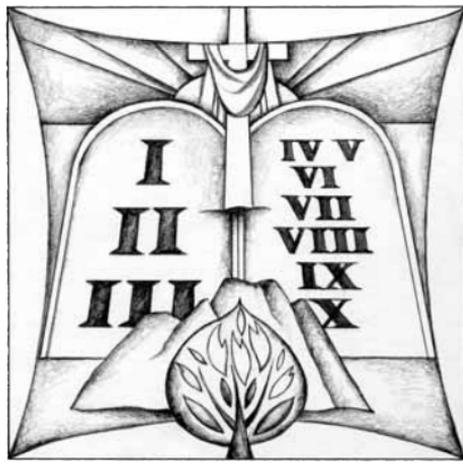
#### Section 3

Table of Duties	35
-----------------	----

#### Section 4

Christian Questions with Their Answers	40
--	----

<b>An Explanation of the Small Catechism</b>	45
Introduction	47
The Ten Commandments	54
The Apostles' Creed	102
The Lord's Prayer	174
The Sacraments	202
The Sacrament of Holy Baptism	204
Confession	217
The Sacrament of the Altar	231
Appendix	
Luther's Preface	246
Books of the Bible	253
Creeds and Confessions	255
Explanation of Luther's Seal	257
Salvation Outline	258
The Church Year	259
Terms Relating to Worship and God's House	265
The Time between the Testaments	269
Symbols and Their Meanings	275
Index of Biblical Quotations	284
Index of Topics	292



## Section 1

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As the head of the family should teach them  
in a simple way to his household

#### *The First Commandment*

**You shall have no other gods.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

#### *The Second Commandment*

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

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or

deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

### *The Third Commandment*

#### **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

### *The Fourth Commandment*

#### **Honor your father and your mother.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

### *The Fifth Commandment*

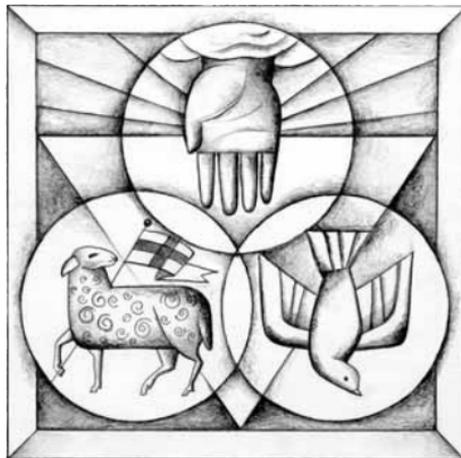
#### **You shall not murder.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

### *The Sixth Commandment*

#### **You shall not commit adultery.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.



---

## THE CREED

---

As the head of the family should teach it  
in a simple way to his household

### *The First Article*

Creation

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

*What does this mean?* I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

### *The Second Article*

#### Redemption

**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.**

*What does this mean?* I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord,

who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death,

that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,



---

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

---

As the head of the family should teach it  
in a simple way to his household

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever. Amen.*

### *The Introduction*

#### **Our Father who art in heaven.**

*Our Father in heaven.*

*What does this mean?* With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

### *The First Petition*

#### **Hallowed be Thy name.**

*Hallowed be Your name.*

*What does this mean?* God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

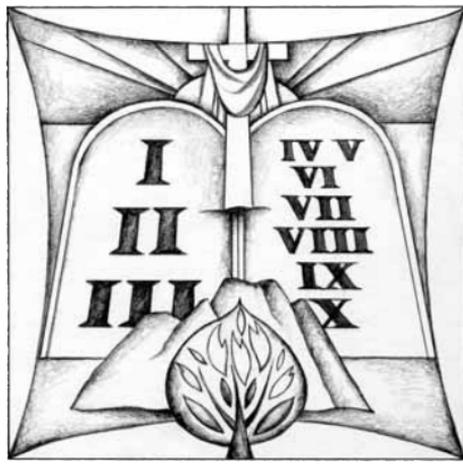
*How is God's name kept holy?* God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

### *The Second Petition*

#### **Thy kingdom come.**

*Your kingdom come.*

*What does this mean?* The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

### *13. What are the Ten Commandments?*

The Ten Commandments are the Law of God.

Note: God gave them in this order but did not number them (**Deut. 5:6–21; Ex. 20:1–17**).

### *14. How did God give His Law?*

When God created people, He wrote the Law on their hearts. Later He arranged the Law in Ten Commandments, wrote it on two tables of stone, and made it known through Moses.

- 40 **Rom. 2:14–15** For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also

bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

*Bible narrative:* God wrote His commandments directly for the Israelites (**Ex. 19–20; 31:18**). There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament: the moral law, which tells all people their duty toward God and other people; the ceremonial law, which regulated the religious practices in the Old Testament; and the political law, which was the state law of the Israelites. Only the moral law was written into the human heart.

**15. What is the summary of commandments 1–3 (First Table)?**

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (**Matt. 22:37**; see **Deut. 6:5**).

**16. What is the summary of commandments 4–10 (Second Table)?**

“And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (**Matt. 22:39**; see **Lev. 19:18**).

**17. What is the summary of all the commandments?**

Love is the summary of all the commandments.

41 **Rom. 13:10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

**18. Whom does God mean when in the Ten Commandments He says, “You shall”?**

He means me and all other human beings.

42 **Matt. 5:19** Whoever relaxes [looses] one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of

heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

- 43 **Rom. 3:19** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

*Bible narrative:* Jesus explained the meaning of these commandments for all people (**Matthew 5**).

### *The First Commandment*

*[God]*

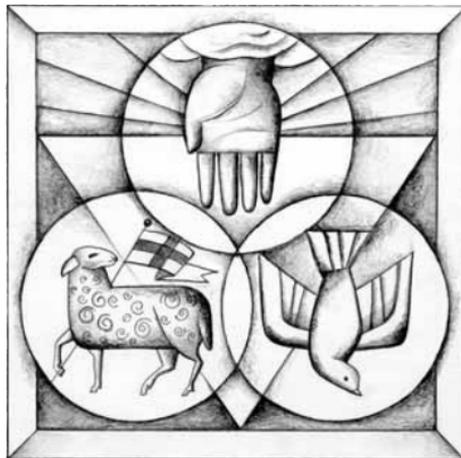
You shall have no other gods.

*What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

#### *19. Who is the only true God?*

The only true God is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine being (the Holy Trinity).

- 44 **Num. 6:24–26** The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.
- 45 **Deut. 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
- 46 **Matt. 28:19** 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.
- 47 **1 Cor. 8:4** There is no God but one.
- 48 **2 Cor. 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.



## THE APOSTLES' CREED

### *86. What is a creed?*

A creed is a statement of what we believe, teach, and confess.

275 **Rom. 10:10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

### **I Believe**

### *87. What is meant by "I believe in God"?*

It means I trust God and His promises and accept as true all He teaches in the Holy Scriptures.

276 **Ps. 31:14** I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."

- 277 **Ps. 37:5** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him.
- 278 **Rom. 10:17** Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
- 279 **Heb. 11:1** Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

### **88. Why do we say, "I believe," and not, "We believe"?**

Everyone must believe for himself or herself, no one can be saved by another's faith.

- 280 **Hab. 2:4** The righteous shall live by his faith.
- 281 **Luke 7:50** Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

*Bible narrative:* The foolish virgins could not obtain oil from the wise virgins (**Matt. 25:1–13**).

### **89. What three creeds are used by the church?**

The Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian.

### **90. Which creed is used in Luther's Catechism?**

The Apostles' Creed.

### **91. Why is it called the Apostles' Creed?**

It is called the Apostles' Creed, not because it was written by the apostles themselves, but because it states briefly the doctrine (teaching) that God gave through the apostles in the Bible. The Creed is trinitarian because the Scriptures reveal God as triune. Christians are baptized in the name of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- 282 **Matt. 28:19** 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.

283 **Eph. 4:4–6** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**92. In what ways does the triune God make Himself known?**

A. Through the existence of the world (natural knowledge of God).

284 **Ps. 19:1** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.

285 **Rom. 1:19–20** What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

286 **Heb. 3:4** Every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

B. Through conscience (natural knowledge of God).

287 **Rom. 2:15** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

C. Especially through the Holy Scriptures in which God clearly reveals Himself and His gift of salvation in Christ (revealed knowledge of God).

288 **John 20:31** These [acts of Jesus] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

289 **2 Tim. 3:15** From childhood you have been



---

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

---

### *193. What privilege and command does God give to those who believe in Jesus Christ?*

God commands and invites believers in Jesus Christ to pray.

684 **Matt. 7:7–8** Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

685 **1 Thess. 5:16–18** Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

### *194. What is prayer?*

Prayer is speaking to God in words and thoughts.

686 **Ps. 19:14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

687 **Acts 7:59–60** And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

*Bible narratives:* Abraham prayed for Sodom (**Gen. 18:22–23**). Jesus in Gethsemane (**Matt. 26:36–44**). Thanksgiving for the release of Peter and John from prison (**Acts 4:23–31**).

### *195. To whom should we pray?*

We should pray to the true God only, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not to idols, saints, or anything God has created.

688 **Ps. 65:2** O You who hear prayer, to You shall all flesh come.

689 **1 John 5:20–21** We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

690 **Rev. 22:8–9** I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

*Bible narratives:* Elijah and the priests of Baal (**1 Kings 18:25–29, 36–39**). Daniel in the lions' den (**Dan. 6:1–23**). Paul in Lystra (**Acts 14:8–18**). Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (**John 17**).

### *196. Whose prayers are acceptable to God?*

Only those who believe in Jesus Christ may pray to God and expect to be heard.

691 **John 14:13–14** Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

692 **John 15:7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

### *197. What should be the content of our prayers?*

In our prayers we should ask for everything that tends to the glory of God and to our own and our neighbor's welfare, both spiritual and bodily blessings. We should also praise and thank God for who He is and what He has done.

693 **Phil. 4:6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

694 **Ps. 136:1** Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.

### *198. How should we pray?*

We should pray

A. in the name of Jesus, that is, with faith in Him as our Redeemer;

695 **John 16:23** Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you.

B. with confidence, that is with firm trust that for Jesus' sake our prayers will be answered;

696 **Matt. 21:22** And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

697 **James 1:6–7** Let him ask in faith, with no doubting,