

Preface to the First Edition

Lutheran Catechesis was born out of twelve years of experience as a parish pastor, studying and meditating upon the Small Catechism and Luther’s approach to catechesis in the context of pastoral care. My work in catechesis has been shaped by the belief that the catechism contains everything that a Christian needs to know and believe in order to be saved, and everything the pastor needs to know and believe for the faithful administration of his office. I did not come to this conviction until I learned the catechism by heart and began to use it in prayer and meditation upon the Word of God. Only when I used it as a daily prayer book and handbook for my own life and ministry did I come to realize its scope and richness. There is no question that we might have as Christians or pastors that is not answered by the catechism. And if the catechism does not answer the question, then the question is not worth asking. I believe that all true theology is practical theology. All theology must lead us to embrace Christ by faith in every time, place, circumstance, and need of our lives. Faith in Christ is the goal of all catechesis. Any other purposes are beside the point. Prayer, meditation upon the Word of God, and suffering (with one’s own sin as well as the sin of others) is how God catechizes and makes us all theologians of the cross, who learn to rejoice in their suffering and live in the confidence of Christ’s forgiveness.

There are three catechists—“spiritual fathers”—that I must honor above all others: Dr. Robert D. Preus, Dr. Kenneth F. Korby, and Dr. David P. Scaer. As Luther writes in the Large Catechism: “The name spiritual father belongs only to those who govern and guide us by the Word of God.... They are entitled to honor, even above all others. But they very seldom receive it, for the world’s way of honoring them is to harry them out of the country and grudge them as much as a piece of bread. In short, as St. Paul says, they must be ‘the refuse of the world, and every man’s offscouring’” (Tappert 387:158-160).

The sainted Robert D. Preus was president and professor of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, when I was a student there. Above all else Dr. Preus was a pastor. His teaching on “the chief article”—the justification of the sinner before God, by grace, through faith—was the center of his life and ministry and has become the center of my own. He lived the conviction that Christian doctrine was not irrelevant, but spoke to every need of the Christian and the Church. He was no pietist. He taught justification as a pastor who understood how to apply Christ’s righteousness to his flock for their salvation and comfort. His classes on the Lutheran Confessions were classes in pastoral theology, hymnology, and catechesis. Though he never used the word “catechesis” in class, he taught us *how* to catechize and the *goal* of all learning in the Church: faith in Christ. He taught us to think clearly for the sake of the Gospel, and to preach the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake.

Kenneth F. Korby taught a graduate course for Concordia Theological Seminary at Flathead Lake, Montana, in the summer of 1988 entitled “Catechetics in the Parish.” It was this class, along with Dr. Korby’s indefatigable zeal for holding fast to the catechism, that set me upon this present course of wanting to promote the Small Catechism and faithful Lutheran catechesis. Dr.

Korby introduced me to the catechism as a prayer book and handbook for the Christian faith and life. Dr. Korby is largely responsible for a renaissance of Lutheran catechesis in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and was most certainly the unwitting catalyst behind the formation of the Concordia Catechetical Academy. I am indebted to Dr. Korby for all his wise counsel and guidance over the years. He has always been a friend, and there are many young pastors such as myself who are honored to call him father. If it hadn't been for Dr. Korby's catechesis, *Lutheran Catechesis* would never have been written.

David P. Scaer was my catechist at the seminary and in several graduate courses since. His example as a classroom teacher, in both method and substance, gave me the clearest example of what it is to be a Lutheran catechist. He embodied Luther's "repentance, faith, and holy living" paradigm in his teaching and life. To be a Lutheran catechist, the pastor must demolish all of man's notions of human piety, goodness, and righteousness; he must hold up the righteousness of Christ in His death upon the cross as the only salvation for sinners; and he must preach faith as a gift of God through the Gospel and sacraments. David Scaer relentlessly taught the total depravity of man and the utter sufficiency of Christ—central truths and stumbling blocks in Lutheran catechesis. It is my judgment that, among my teachers, no one knew or understood Luther's mind and heart better than Dr. Scaer. Finally, Dr. Scaer taught me how to interpret the Scriptures. To the extent that I have gotten it right, it is to his credit. To the extent that I have missed the mark, the fault is mine.

It is also important to acknowledge the contributions of two outstanding teachers in my educational career who have contributed in their own way to this volume and my development as a catechist: Dr. Paul Bunjes and Dr. Rudolph Heinze. The late Dr. Bunjes, professor of music at Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois, had a method of instruction that included answering a question before he had asked it, in order to have his students repeat the answer, just as he had given it, once he had asked the question. Those who have had him (or me) know exactly what I'm talking about. *Answer*: "Christ is our only Savior from sin." *Question*: "Who is our only Savior from sin?" *Answer*: "Christ!" I have employed his method of "catechetical repetition" in my own teaching. Repetition and redundancy is a hallmark of Luther's catechetical. "What is a hallmark of Luther's catechetical?" "Repetition and redundancy." "Pastors must continually repeat themselves." "What must pastors do?" "Continually repeat themselves."

Dr. Rudolph Heinze, professor of history at Concordia College, River Forest, during the early 1980s, was a great storyteller. His history lectures were punctuated by "terms"—people's names, places, and events—that became the linchpins upon which the entire story hung. One by one the terms, posted on the overhead, would be woven through the wonderful prose of his lectures. Students took careful notes, allowing the terms to serve as their outline for the story. This vocabulary became the focus of their study. If one knew the terms, one knew the history and what it meant. Dr. Heinze's method squares well with Luther's emphasis upon teaching the language and vocabulary of faith. Dr. Heinze's example inspired the writing of 600 terms included in *Lutheran Catechesis* (204), *Old Testament Catechesis* (184), and *New Testament Catechesis* (212).

I also want to acknowledge the encouragement and support of my brothers in office, fellow catechists and good friends, the Rev. John T. Pless, the Rev. Richard Resch, the Rev. John E. Klieve, the Rev. Rolf Preus, and the Rev. Stephen Wiest. Each in his own way has helped me understand what it is to be a pastor, and why we as pastors are called to teach the Word of God. The catechesis and consolation received from my father confessor over the last eight years has been an indispensable aid in helping me understand the place of private absolution and catechesis in pastoral care. I pray that all my brothers in office receive the gift of a faithful confessor. The Rev. John W. Fenton offered valuable suggestions on revisions to the final manuscript, particularly the sections on the divine liturgy. Kathryn A. Hill's dedication and attention to detail as a proofreader and technical editor, along with the questions and suggestions raised by her husband, the Rev. Michael J. Hill, helped me to sharpen the language of *Lutheran Catechesis*. Their help was very much appreciated. My wife and sons are always supportive and ever my teachers. They would not want me to say much more than this. Finally, I am indebted to my good friend and deacon, Matthew W. Gatchell. Without his loyalty, hard work, personal sacrifice, encouragement, and friendship, *Lutheran Catechesis* would never have been published.

Peter C. Bender
The Ascension of Our Lord
13 May 1999

Preface to the Second Edition

Lutheran Catechesis, Catechumen Edition, was first published in 1999. This volume was well received by pastors and members of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It has also enjoyed enthusiastic reception by confessional Lutheran pastors and catechists overseas. Portions of the book have been translated for catechetical work by Lutheran pastors in Africa and Sweden. Over 18,000 copies of the first edition are now in print.

The second edition of *Lutheran Catechesis, Catechumen Edition*, is a conservative revision of the first edition, correcting grammatical and typographical errors. There have been slight adjustments to several term definitions, and the definition of “the image of God” has been completely rewritten. The impetus for this second edition was the desire to make use of the liturgical texts (collects, prayers, liturgies, and hymns) from the newly released *Lutheran Service Book* and confessional citations from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, Second Edition*. The use of texts from *LSB* and *Concordia* are the most extensive changes from the first edition.

Lutheran Catechesis, Catechumen Edition, is intended for

- ◆ Adult Instruction/Catechesis
- ◆ Youth Instruction/Catechesis
(for youth who have learned the six chief parts by heart and who have successfully completed *Old Testament Catechesis* and *New Testament Catechesis* in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*)
- ◆ In-depth catechesis for Lutheran congregations
 - ◇ in Lutheran doctrine
 - ◇ in Lutheran liturgy
- ◆ Ongoing resource for Lutheran Christians
 - ◇ assisting them in understanding and using their Bible, catechism, and hymnal
 - ◇ as a reference for Lutheran doctrine and practice

There is more material in a single lesson than can possibly be covered during one class session. Catechists should consult the introductory material in *Lutheran Catechesis* for assistance in knowing how to use the material in various settings.

I am grateful to Susan Gehlbach, our technical editor, for her patient and painstaking work on the second edition. Her attention to detail and love for Lutheran theology is always appreciated. As always, I am grateful to Deacon Matthew W. Gatchell, the board of elders, and the members of Peace Lutheran Church, Sussex, Wisconsin, for their continued support of the Concordia Catechetical Academy and the ongoing publications in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*.

Peter C. Bender
The Week of Holy Trinity
19 May 2008