

With New Voices Preaching Prompts for Lent and Easter 2017

In support of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton's invitation for all members to hear the catechism "With New Voices", Southwestern Minnesota Synod Bishop John Anderson has partnered with "Sundays and Seasons" to create catechism preaching helps for all of 2017. You're invited to use them in your preaching and alongside "Free Indeed: Devotions for Lent 2017."

Link to resource: <https://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/22245/Free-Indeed-Devotions-for-Lent-2017-Pocket-Edition>

Second Sunday in Lent 3-12-2017

A review of the Large Catechism's Concerning Baptism section opens up sacramental themes in today's Gospel. "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved.' This is the simplest way to put it: the power, effect, benefit, fruit and purpose of baptism is that it saves. For no one is baptized in order to become a prince, but, as the words say, 'to be saved.' To be saved, as everyone well knows, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, to enter into Christ's kingdom, and to live with him forever" ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 459).

Third Sunday in Lent 3-19-2017

Jesus does the will of God. God's will is mysterious and sometimes provokes surprising developments, like what happened to the woman at the well when Jesus arrived. God's will moves us like the woman witnessing to her neighbors about Jesus. How does this come about? "Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will ... that would not allow us to hallow God's name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his word and faith until the end of our lives. This is God's good and gracious will" (ELW, p. 1163).

Fourth Sunday in Lent 3-26-2017

Today's Gospel provides an opportunity to talk about blindness in its many forms. For example, the debate about the sabbath (John 9:13-16) could open the theme of how we turn God's commands into weapons instead of receiving them as gifts (Third Commandment). Blindness manifests itself when people "know" why bad things have happened to others. Another path connects the last three petitions of the Lord's Prayer: We are all sinners even though some are blind to that reality, or worse, blind to God's gracious forgiveness.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

4-2-2017

The raising of Lazarus in today's Gospel connects to the Third Article of the Creed. "[B]ecause holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. ... In that life there will be only perfectly pure and holy people, full of integrity and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all misfortune, living in new, immortal, and glorified bodies" ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 438).

Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday

4-9-2017

Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism states that Jesus Christ "has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, ... with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death" (ELW, p. 1162). This image of an innocent, suffering Savior connects with all the readings today. Consider especially Isaiah 50:9a; Philippians 2:5-8; and Matthew's entire passion narrative, especially 26:27-28, 27:3-4, 27:19, and 27:54.

Maundy Thursday

4-13-2017

If you choose to explore the command and promise of sharing the Lord's Supper, read through the Sacrament of the Altar in the Large Catechism as background ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 467-475). Proclaim the good news that God commands us to come to this meal and promises to be present in it. "Here stand the gracious and lovely words, 'This is my body, given FOR YOU,' 'This is my blood, shed FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.' These words ... are not preached to wood or stone but to you and me; otherwise he might just as well have kept quiet and not instituted a sacrament" (p. 473).

Good Friday

4-14-2017

Explore the Second Article of the Creed in both catechisms but particularly the end of the Large Catechism's discussion. "Let this be the summary of this article, that the little word 'LORD' simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness and keeps us there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished—that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion" ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 434).

Resurrection of Our Lord, Vigil of Easter

4-15-2017

Baptism—dying and rising—is a major theme and focus for this night of nights. There is a clear and compelling connection to the Small Catechism’s questions and answers about Holy Baptism: “What then is the significance of such a baptism with water? It signifies that the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever” (ELW, p. 1165). Luther also quotes from Romans 6 in this section; this same portion of Romans 6 is the New Testament reading for tonight’s Vigil.

Resurrection of Our Lord, Easter Day

4-16-2017

The Large Catechism’s explanation of the Second Article of the Creed provides resources for today’s proclamation: Christ “became a human creature ... suffered, died, and was buried so that he might make satisfaction for me. ... And he did all this so that he might become my LORD. ... Afterward he rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death” (“Book of Concord,” Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 434–435). And, “the entire gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based, and it is so rich and broad that we can never learn it fully” (p. 435).

Second Sunday of Easter

4-23-2017

Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Reflect this week on Luther’s explanation to the Third Article of the Creed in the Large Catechism: “the Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the following: the community of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. That is, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church’s lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ” (“Book of Concord,” Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 435–436).

Third Sunday of Easter

4-30-2017

The Large Catechism’s explanation of the Sacrament of the Altar (“Book of Concord,” Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 467–475) opens our eyes to the spiritual challenges of Luther’s time and ours. His thoughts invite us to ponder what questions hinder people from sharing the meal as the disciples did. In their confusion, doubt, and grief, the breaking of the bread opened the disciples’ eyes to the presence of their Lord and inspired their witness (Luke 24:30-35). Luther’s explanation may cause us to wonder about what has changed and not changed regarding God’s gift of holy communion.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

5-7-2017

We have a good shepherd but other shepherds and other things want to distract us and take God's place at the center of our life. Luther's explanation of the First Commandment and its appendix in the Large Catechism ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 386–392) help us explore our misplaced loyalties. "See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never search for another.' In other words: 'Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl to me and cling to me. I, I myself, will give you what you need and help you out of every danger'" (p. 387).

Fifth Sunday of Easter

5-14-2017

Today's second reading invites exploration of God's call to be a gathered and sent church. The Large Catechism's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 435–439) encourages reflection about the image of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5) and the gathered community of believers. "The Creed calls the holy Christian church a *communio sanctorum*, 'a communion of saints.'... The word *ecclesia* properly means nothing but an assembly in German. ... in good German it ought to be called 'a Christian community or assembly,' or best and most clearly of all, 'a holy Christian people'" (pp. 436–437).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

5-21-2017

Today's Gospel seems naturally to pull us toward Luther's discussion of the Holy Spirit in the Third Article of the Creed. Yet the language about commandments (John 14: 15, 21) also makes a case for reviewing Luther's Preface to the Large Catechism and especially his explanations of the Ten Commandments ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 379–431). "We think we can learn in an hour what God himself cannot finish teaching" (p. 382). A brief review of all 10 commandments could conclude with Jesus' commandment to love God and neighbor. Who can guide us as we discern what it means to keep the commandments? The Advocate.

Ascension of Our Lord

5-25-2017

We cannot say that Christ's followers today are "continually in the temple blessing God" (Luke 24:53). Yet our days of rest are hallowed by having our minds "opened ... to understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45) and discovering the word's demands and promises. Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment in the Large Catechism reminds us "At whatever time God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or pondered, there the person, the day, and the work is hallowed, not on account of the external work but on account of the Word that makes us all saints" ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 399).

Seventh Sunday of Easter

5-28-2017

The Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the Large Catechism connects to today's second reading from 1 Peter by drawing on the imagery of the "fiery ordeal" being experienced by believers (1 Peter 4:12) and the devil as a roaring and prowling lion (1 Peter 5:8). "This, then, is what 'leading us not into temptation' means: when God gives us power and strength to resist, even though the attack is not removed or ended. For no one can escape temptations and allurements as long as we live in the flesh and have the devil prowling around us. We cannot help but suffer attacks, and even be mired in them, but we pray here that we may not fall into them and be drowned by them" ("Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, p. 434). Jesus' prayer, "Holy Father, protect them in your name" (John 17:11) connects here, too.

Day of Pentecost

6-4-2017

This is Holy Spirit day par excellence. Delve into Luther's explanations of the Third Article of the Creed in both catechisms (ELW, p. 1162; "Book of Concord," Kolb/Wengert, 2000, pp. 435–440). The Small Catechism subtitles this article: "On Being Made Holy." Its explanation is most evocative, speaking with clarity and power. Notice how it points to what God does through the Holy Spirit: calls, enlightens, makes holy, forgives sins, raises to eternal life. The word "catechize" means "to repeat." Find ways to repeat the article's meaning several times in today's worship. It is countercultural and full of promises.