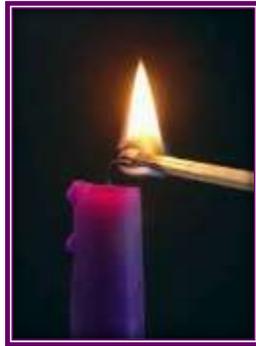


ABOUT THE FUTURE

#3 Luther's Small Catechism

Martin Luther's Small Catechism is an amazing gift to the Church. For almost 500 years this little pamphlet has laid out the basics of Christian faith and teaching in a way anybody can understand. *"What does this mean?"* is a question designed to live in the heart of any inquisitive Christian. It's all about the basics. If you're a Christian, memorize the Small Catechism. It couldn't hurt!



However, we do not live in a Christian culture any more. Our needs are different. *What does this mean?* It means a lot! For example, here we are in the middle of Advent, we may find ourselves deeply embedded in practices of consumption rather than prayer. Soon it will be Christmas and we may talk about gifts rather than Incarnation. The "unchurched" - not just young people, but individuals of all ages and identity - hunger to talk about over consumption and what it's doing to our earth. How the Divine manifests itself in the everyday? People long to explore the mystery of incarnation. Yet, they perceive, rightly or wrongly, that this is no longer what we in the Church are about.

What does this mean?

The question of the Catechism is not about calling forth the Reformer. The Catechism is about our common grounding. What is different in today's world is that the teachings of the faith alone can no longer form our cultural, common grounding. The Church is no longer "the voice" of the culture. We are simply "a" voice.

Let's talk about Baptism as the Small Catechism does. Yes! But when Luther asks "What is Baptism?" and writes, *"Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead, it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word."* Let's talk more about that part. What is God's command for water, and how is it connected, deeply connected, with the incarnate Word? That's a question that has traction today. Let's talk ecology, faith and life!



Or, when reading Luther on the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." And Luther asks, *"What does this mean, 'Daily Bread?'"* saying, *"Daily bread is everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, house, farm ..."* let's talk more about that part. Luther insists that God gives us our daily bread *"Without prayer."* How does that work?

"The basics" for our world today are not to be taught. They are to be discovered. Like the baby Jesus, cradled in a bed of straw, you and I must start again. Listen, love, and learn.

You'll find more at www.oregonsynod.org/500

Bp. Dave Brauer-Rieke

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