

Dear Saints,

I am learning Luther's Small Catechism. Again!

I think it is fair for our catechism students to expect their pastor to know Luther's Small Catechism by heart. I also believe that it is fair for our catechism students to expect you to know it by heart as well. After all, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

If you were confirmed in the Lutheran Church, you knew it well at one time. It has been my experience that most adult Lutherans do not know it that well at all. If you are like me, you never learned it as a youth. We typically do not expect our adult converts to learn the Catechism by heart. Maybe we should. (On a side note, converts is not the best word as they are typically already believers, but I cannot think of a better one.)

Anyway, I had to learn the Catechism by heart at seminary. Before you go on vicarage, you are tested orally by a graduate assistant. It took me two tries. The graduate assistant was impressed with all of us who did not grow up Lutheran and could pass the oral exam. He knew that we were handicapped because we did not grow up with it in our ears, minds, or hearts.

As with all catechism students who are tested, I learned it for the exam and did not retain it fully. This seems to be the way of things. I certainly cannot remember everything I learned in school growing up. I do retain what I care about. And there is the rub. I am supposed to love the Catechism because it is drawn directly from God's Word. And yet, I do not know it as I ought. God be merciful to me, a sinner.

Luther's Small Catechism is not as simple as it appears. The longer I have been a pastor, the more impressed I am with how simple, deep, and necessary it is to meditate upon the Catechism. This is what Luther says about it:

"It must be true that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures. So, in all matters and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters. Such a person must be qualified to sit in judgment over all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in the world." (LC, Pref. 17)

I certainly do not measure up to that standard. And so, I continue to learn and relearn and meditate upon the Catechism. I encourage you to join me in this endeavor.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Maggard