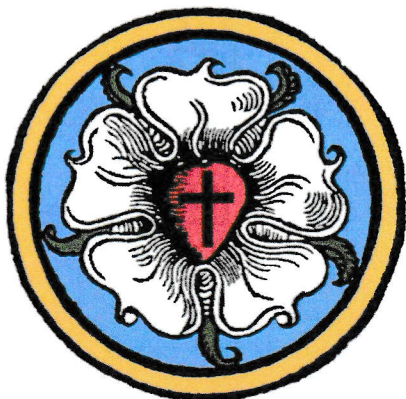


“Catechism Corner” – The Apostles’ Creed II



As Lutherans, our exposure to the Catechism should not be limited to what we learn during Confirmation. Since the Catechism contains the chief articles of the Christian faith, we should be reviewing it often. St. Paul writes, *Continue in what you have learned and firmly believe* (2 Timothy 3:14). Jesus himself urges us to *Abide in his word* (John 8:31; 15:17).

Even more, each section of the Catechism begins, “As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.” The most important job of the head of the household is to pass on the faith to their children.

Each month, Pastor Squire will help us in this task by focusing on one of the “chief parts” of the Catechism. This month, he will explore some common questions about the Creed that arise after learning the basics.

The First Article: “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

What does it mean to ‘believe’ in something or someone?

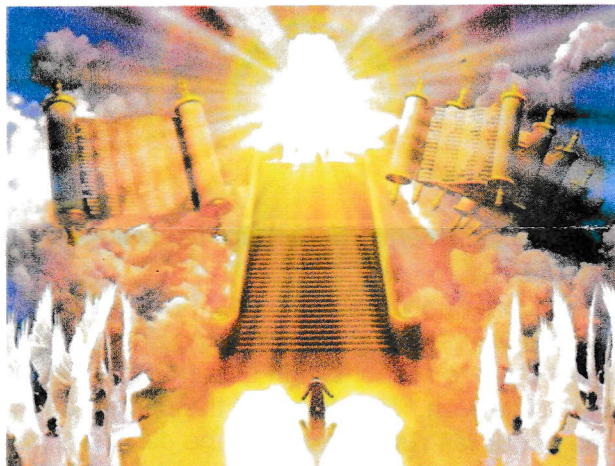
To believe in something means more than to acknowledge that it exists. Yes, we believe that God exists. But even the demons know that – and shudder! (James 2:19). Faith is different in that we trust in God and his Word. We acknowledge that we are but creatures and that God is God. Thus, we are dependent on him for all things.

Why do we have a creed at all?

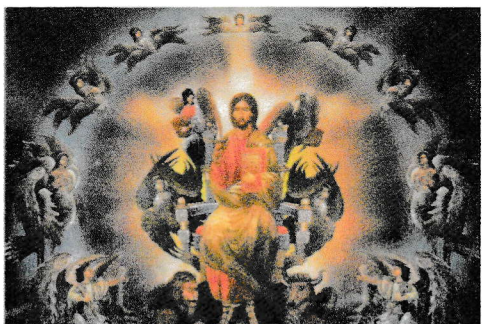
Some church bodies don’t use creeds. In fact, some are openly “anti-creedal.” Opponents of creeds say that creeds are not biblical. In fact, confessing a creed, for them, is like yoking yourself with manmade teachings. However, creeds are simply faithful expositions of what the Scriptures teach us. Each article—yes, even each line—is taught in the Scriptures and confessed by the Holy Christian Church on earth. Creeds, then, are helpful summaries of what we believe as Christians.

Why do we call God “Father?”

God is our Father, first, because he has created us. Even more, God has made us his children by adopting us. He has marked us with his name in the waters of Baptism, redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, and even now is making us holy through the work of his Holy Spirit. Indeed, in Christ, we Christians are beloved children of God.



The Second Article: “And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord...”



Why is Jesus called “Christ?”

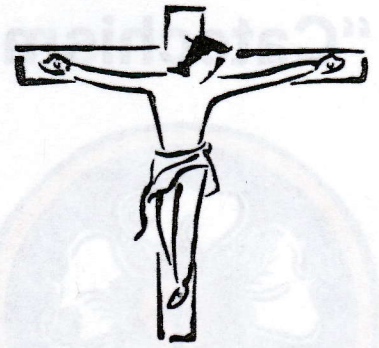
“Christ” is not the last name of Jesus. “Christ” means “the Anointed” in Greek (in Hebrew, the term “Messiah” means “the Anointed”). To confess Jesus as the Christ means to confess him as the one whom God the Father sent to carry out his saving work and to reveal the love, mercy, and salvation that he would have us enjoy. As God’s anointed, he is our Lord and King.

Is Jesus just a man?

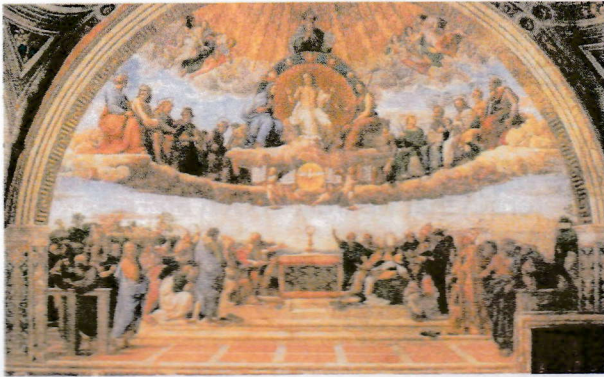
Some teach that Jesus was simply a good man or a wise teacher. In other words, he was just like you and me, except that he commanded the respect and authority of a rabbi. But Jesus was much more than simply a “good teacher.” He is the Son of God come down to earth, who took on our flesh to fulfill the law of God, as well as to give himself for the sins of the world. Indeed, Jesus is true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and true God, Son of the Father.

What does Jesus' life and ministry mean for me?

Jesus came proclaiming the coming of God's reign in history. When Jesus came, he preached repentance. He forgave sins. Jesus healed diseases. He taught how the people of God should live—in love for God and one another. Jesus was not simply a miracle worker or teacher, though. His death on the cross accomplished once and for all our forgiveness. Even more, his resurrection is a pledge and promise that God will one day raise us also and make us new and whole. We have been baptized into his death and resurrection and have new life through him (Romans 6:1–11). That new life starts even now as we battle in his power against our sinful flesh.



The Third Article: "I believe in the Holy Spirit..."



Why do we confess the "Church" and the "Communion of Saints"?

To confess belief in the Church means to confess that God has sent Christ to draw to himself those whom he has chosen. In other words, when the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, we become part of something much larger—the Body of Christ. Simply put, this is the Church: the people whom God has called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified (made holy) through the power of the Holy Spirit. So, we shouldn't try to live out our faith on our own, as if we didn't need other brothers and sisters in Christ to help support us in faith and life.

What does it mean to believe in "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting?"

During Confirmation questioning, I ask the confirmands what the ultimate Christian hope is. Some people might expect them to respond with something like "dying and going to heaven." But, this isn't the correct answer! The hope of our faith is that we will one day be physically raised from the dead, given new and glorified bodies, and dwell with Christ forever in his new creation. Death is our enemy, Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 15:26). Like every enemy, it has been put under the feet of Christ and will be defeated once and for all when Jesus returns. Jesus' own resurrection is the beginning of this ultimate victory. Paul writes, "In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). Our final hope as Christians is not that we "get to heaven." "Heaven," whatever it is and whatever it's like, is not where we will spend eternity. Rather, we will spend eternity with God in the new creation, where we will live without sin and pain, and where God will reign forever in glory with his Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 21–22).



Come soon, Lord Jesus!