

## 16. That Little Gem

A law student, enrolled in an adult membership class, expressed his delight and excitement over the contents and the format of the Catechism. The teachings were expressed so clearly. He was greatly impressed. At about every session he had something to say about the Catechism, such as: "This is such a fantastic little book! It leads one right into the Bible! This is a gem! This is a jewel!" And then one evening he asked, "Do the people of your congregation realize what they have in this precious book?" Isn't it true, so often we simply take things for granted. We don't realize what we have until someone "from the outside" comes along and reminds us.

Dora was in her 80's and her eyes were failing quite rapidly. One day, when her pastor stopped by, Dora was ironing clothes. On the ironing board was an open Catechism. When the pastor asked Dora about it, she said, "In my early years I learned by heart many Bible passages. So I thought I would go over them and store them up just in case I lose my sight altogether."

How beautiful! And note, she didn't say *I committed to memory Bible verses*, but "*I learned by heart Bible passages.*" In your youth, you may have "learned by heart" many of the "passages" and the Six Chief Parts of Christian doctrine in Luther's Small Catechism. *Colossians 3:16* exhorts: "Let the word of Christ *DWELL* in you richly in all wisdom." To have it  *dwell there* we had better "*learn it by heart.*"

The Catechism contains the Bible teachings we believe. But did you ever note that the Catechism is also about *relationships*? We call ourselves Children of God. So we are. We have a *relationship* with God like the *relationship* between a good father and his child.

The First Chief Part, the Ten Commandments, give the pattern for the ideal or perfect *relationship* with God (Commandments 1-3) and our neighbor (Commandments 4-10). The Commandments teach us that we are not what God wants us to be, and that if we are to be His children He must establish the *relationship* because we cannot.

The Second Chief Part, the Apostles Creed speaks of the Triune God with whom we live in the father-child *relationship*. It emphasizes all that He has done for us as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

The Third Chief Part, the Lord's Prayer, teaches us how this *relationship* is exercised and developed. It is not merely a prayer to pray, but a pattern for all of our prayers.

The Fourth Chief Part of Christian doctrine is the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Here we are taught that it is God Who creates the *relationship* between Himself and us. It also teaches that we live in that *relationship* daily in repentance and faith.

The Fifth Chief Part, the Office of the Keys speaks about how God keeps the *relationship* healthy through confession and absolution and reminds us that the Holy Ministry was established to aid us in this father-child *relationship*.

Finally, the Sixth Chief Part, the Sacrament of the Altar teaches us how our *relationship* with God is nourished and strengthened.

So the Catechism is more than a textbook of doctrine. It is a handbook to help and guide us in our *relationship* with God. It is a valuable aid to develop a growing and healthy faith that is fruitful in love. Above all, it firmly fixes our attention on God and His Son, Jesus, with Whom we live in a vital and enduring *relationship*.

The Apostle John says: "Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children live in the truth." 3 John 4. The Catechism, which leads into the truths of Scripture, will help you '*live in the truth.*'

# That Little Gem

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## We Begin

Leader (L) and Group (G)

- L: How sweet are Your words to my taste,  
G: Sweeter than honey in my mouth!

## We Search Scriptures - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Leader (L) and Group (G)

- L: But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
- G: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## We Meditate

Follow this outline as the meditation is presented

Thoughts of two people:

A law student: "The Catechism is a gem!"  
Dora: "Learning by heart!"

The Catechism is about our *relationship* with God:

- √ Ten Commandments    How to live in it
- √ Apostles' Creed        The Trinity is involved in it
- √ Lord's Prayer            Prayer develops it
- √ Holy Baptism            God started it
- √ Office of the Keys        Confession helps it
- √ Holy Communion        God keeps it going and growing

## We Respond

- L: Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.  
G: O Lord, we need Your Word daily.  
L: Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.  
G: It teaches us, guides us, corrects us, and saves us.  
L: Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.  
G: Help us, Holy Spirit, to read, study, inwardly digest and learn by heart Your Word of truth, that it may refresh us throughout life.

## We Pray

Father in heaven, we praise You for the rich treasure You have bestowed on us with Your Word. We also thank You for Luther's Small Catechism, for it contains the truth of Your Word, showing the loving relationship You have established with us. Help us to find joy in learning by heart Your Holy Word. Wherever we go, whatever we do, may Your Word go with us - in our hearts and in our minds - and through us, as we speak its message of love to others.

