

Author: Paul F. Bosch [pbosch@golden.net]
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THE SCRUTINIES

THE CATECHISM FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP IN LENT AND EASTER

2: Four Gospels and the Creed

Here is the second of six Scrutinies intended for use in Sunday worship in Christian congregations during Lent and Easter. See the previous Essay for an introduction to this series.

As I maintained in introducing this series in [Essay 146](#), I'm indebted to both Don Johnson and Frank Senn for the concept — and even the language! — of adapting Luther's Small Catechism for use in parish worship. A second tip of my hat to both of these giants!

And also as I noted in [146](#), I'd likely have this Rite conclude the sermon. In the best circumstances, I'd do without a print piece altogether, since Pastor and Assisting Ministers do most of the speaking, and the people themselves have *ELWorship* for the texts of the *Small Catechism*, pages 1160 - 1169.

You might want to enlist several voices to speak at (A). I've numbered these (A) parts as well, suggesting at least four speakers. Perhaps each Assisting Minister could read from a different "Book of the Gospel": A selection from the handsome decorated three-ring binders I picture below could serve the purpose.

And could some sorts of visual aid be useful in communicating certain of the meanings explored here? Perhaps four banners placed behind the four speakers, each with its own symbol of an Evangelist, as the text evokes. I'll leave that possibility to your own imagination...



The Rite of the Scrutinies ~ 2: Four Gospels and the Creed

P = Pastor A = Assisting Minister Congregational responses in **bold**.

Prayers

The people stand.

P Gracious and everlasting God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you created the human family and restored it as well. Look with mercy on your adopted people. Set the offspring of your new race within your new covenant, so that what we cannot attain by our own efforts, we may joyfully receive by grace, as beloved children of your promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

P God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of Sarah, and Miriam, and Hannah, you appeared to your servant Moses on the holy mountain and led the children of Israel out of slavery, sending to them the angel of your goodness to guard them by day and by night. We pray, O Lord, send your holy angel to guard your servants who belong to you, and lead us all to complete the promises of our baptism, in our conforming to your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

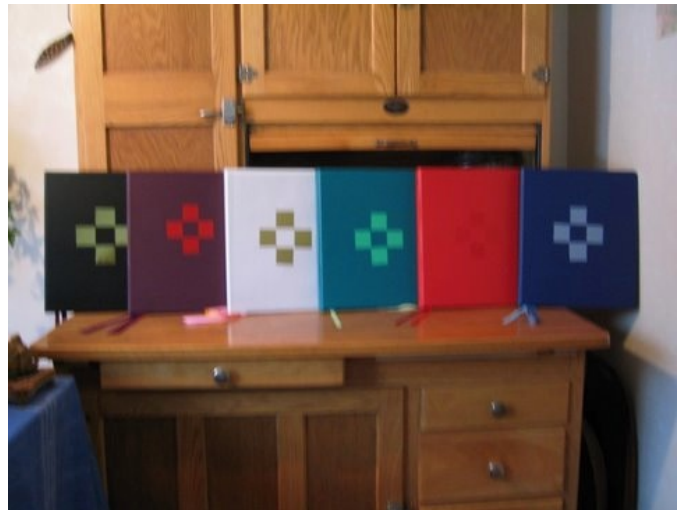
The people sit.

The Exposition of the Four Gospels and the Creed

P Beloved, we shall open to you now the Gospels and the Creed, that is, the story of God's promises in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word "Gospel" properly means "Good News", and indeed, such is the news of Jesus our Lord. The Gospel comes to us in order to set forth and show that One who has spoken by the prophets came among us in the flesh, as it is written: "Behold, I who speak to you am he."

The prophet Ezekiel says, "And the likeness of the the face of them was as the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side, and the face of an ox and the face of an eagle on the left side." Thus are the Gospel writers represented



in art and iconography.

- A1 Abide in silence and listen attentively. St. Matthew has the symbol of a human being, since it is from the generations of human parentage that Matthew traces Jesus' birth. *Reads Matthew 1: 1-2, 17.*
- A2 Abide in silence and listen attentively. St. Mark has the symbol of a lion because of its power and vigour, and because it begins with the voice of one crying in the wilderness where wild beasts rule unconquered. *Reads Mark 1: 1-3.*
- A3 The evangelist Luke has the symbol of an ox, an animal of ancient sacrifice, as figure and sign of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Abide in silence and listen attentively. *Reads Luke 1: 1-4.*
- A4 The evangelist John has the likeness of an eagle because his words soar to the greatest heights: "Your youth shall be renewed like that of an eagle." Abide in silence and listen attentively. *Reads John 1: 1-5, 20:30-31.*

The people stand.

- P Dearly beloved: The Holy Spirit spoke to our forbears in faith and delivered to them the saving confession of the Apostolic Creed, of such eloquence and brevity that their truth can neither escape our understanding nor burden our memory. So let us learn the Creed with attentive minds and write its truth on the pages of our hearts.

Pastor and people repeat the Creed from The Small Catechism, ELWorship, page 1162, the Pastor taking the role of interlocutor.

- P Beloved, allow this brief abundance so to live in your hearts that at all times you may use the defense of this confession against all snares of the Enemy. Enjoying the protection of the One whom we confess, let us persevere in the confirmation of our baptism, so that receiving the forgiveness of sins and newness of life, we may have our share in the fulness of God's Dominion, according to God's promises in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Next time: The Lord's Prayer...

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