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THE SCRUTINIES

THE CATECHISM FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP IN LENT AND EASTER

6: The Holy Communion

Here is the last of six Scrutinies intended for use in Sunday worship in Christian congregations during Lent and Easter. See [Essay 146](#) for an introduction to this brief series.

As I maintained in introducing this series, 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. Again, I salute both of these friends for their inspiration and their imagination!

Perhaps Scrutinies 1,2,and 3 can be used in your parish during the Sundays in Lent. Then Scrutinies 4, 5, and 6 can be utilised during the Easter season. This system would have the effect of preserving the ancient tradition of mystagogia. Since Lent itself was traditionally devoted to instructing catechumens in the meanings of Christian discipleship in preparation for their baptism at the Easter Vigil, the Sundays of Easter were given over to interpreting and deepening the meanings of the sacraments themselves. However you use them, these Scrutinies might help.

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.

Once again, could some sort of visual aids be useful in communicating certain of the meanings explored here? I'll leave that possibility to your own imagination...

As before, you might want to enlist several voices to speak at (A).



The Rite of the Scrutinies ~ 6: The Holy Communion

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 conformation to your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The people sit.

The Exposition of the Sacrament of Holy Communion

P Beloved, we shall open to you now the Sacrament of the Altar, or Holy Communion, in which we meet the Holy in, with, and under these common forms of bread and wine.

A1 The bread of Holy Communion can be seen as a sign and symbol of all our human labour. It is not the naked wheat alone, direct from the hand of God. It is bread — wheat which human hands have milled into flour and kneaded into dough and baked into loaves.

A2 Therefore within this one loaf we may presume to find signified all that is most blessed and all that is most accursed in human labour. On the one hand, this loaf speaks of our greed, our selfishness, our self-seeking, and our weariness in work. On the other hand it is also, at the same time, a sign of our joy in work, our satisfactions and sense of fulfillment. We offer in this loaf, then, all that God has given us, and all that we have made of what God has given us: all that makes us justly proud, and all that makes us ashamed.

P Such are the raw materials for Christian sacraments.

A1 The cup of Holy Communion can be seen as sign and symbol of all our human festivity and refreshment. It is not the naked grape alone — nor grape juice — direct from the hand of God. It is wine — pressed from grapes by human labour, fermented and aged and bottled by human hands, and placed upon the tables of our festivities. It is precisely not innocent in its power or potency. It has the ability in other circumstances to make you drunk.

A2 Therefore this one cup can be seen as sign and symbol of all human celebrations, at their most blessed and at their most accursed — at their most re-creative and at their most destructive. We offer in this cup, then, all that God has given us, and all that we have made of what God has given us — all that makes our life rich and rewarding, and all that makes life mean and base.

P Such are the raw materials for Christian sacraments.

The people stand.

P Dearly beloved: The Holy Spirit spoke to our forbears in faith and instituted the sacrament of the Altar, or Holy Communion, whose meanings are of such eloquence and brevity that its truth can neither escape our understanding nor burden our memory. So let us learn the meaning of Holy Communion with attentive minds and write its truth in the pages of our hearts.

Pastor and people stand and repeat the Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism, ELWorship, page 1166, 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 gift 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 fullness of God's Dominion, according to God's promises in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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