



# Catechesis Manual

## St. John Ev. Lutheran Church and School Sherman Center



### **A Note from Pastor Gillespie:**

As your pastor, I believe that instruction in the faith is one of the most valuable experiences a young person can have. What a privilege it is to learn the marvelous truths that God shares with us!

But catechesis is more than a process of learning facts – instead, it is a formation in Christian identity and living. Our catechesis classes seek to instill the habits of faith into the children of our parish.

On the Sunday of your confirmation, it is my joy and honor to declare to this congregation that the young people who stand before them confess the faith of their Baptism. I will say that they have been taught the Holy Scriptures, are fully aware of their sins, and are assured of the complete forgiveness purchased for them by the precious blood of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To this end, may the Holy Spirit lead our catechumens, their sponsors, and their parents into an ever-deeper understanding of living a life of repentance and faith-centered in God's Word and Sacraments. May He equip them with wisdom and a love for His Word. And may He instill in catechumens and parents alike deep regard for the seriousness of this path of catechesis and formation in the Christian life.

God bless your learning and growing in the faith!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Christopher R. Gillespie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Christopher R. Gillespie

# LUTHERAN CATECHESIS

**Catechesis** is not a new word but familiar to our Lutheran parents. It is not merely education. Catechesis is God's way of teaching the Word of God in which God gives faith.

Catechesis passes on the language of our holy faith as God's gift that is received as a gift, rather than as something that is "force-fed" into the catechumen. The Christian life of faith is lived from the Word of God that is received and believed.

## **The Christian life of faith has concrete expressions:**

- in the ongoing reception of God's gifts in the Divine Service through the hearing of Scripture, the hearing of preaching, and the eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood;
- in the daily prayer of the Christian;
- in the confession of one's faith in the world;
- in the admission of one's sins to God or a brother;
- in forgiving the sins of those who have sinned against him;
- and in living "concretely" by faith in Christ in the vocation to which God has called him.

**Catechesis** is, therefore, much more comprehensive and involves the actual doing of things that Christians will continue to do for the rest of their lives: attend Divine Service, listen to preaching, receive the Lord's Supper, confess their sins, receive absolution, pray, confess their faith, forgive one another, live as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, workers of every kind, etc.

## Scope and Sequence

- **Divine Service** (weekly)
- **Congregation at Prayer**
  - \* Prayer at home with the family using the weekly prayer guide
- **Sunday Morning Catechesis and Sunday School**
  - \* Pastor introduces Bible Passage, Catechism, and Hymn for the week from the *Congregation at Prayer*
- **Learn by Heart the Catechism** (six chief parts)
  - \* At home through the use of the *Congregation at Prayer*
  - \* In Sunday Morning Catechesis
  - \* Through O.T. and N.T. Catechesis courses
- **O.T. and N.T. Catechesis**
  - \* Typically beginning at third grade and above, once a week, alternating years
- **Lutheran Catechesis**
  - \* 24 weeks for 90 minutes/session

## General Structure of Catechesis at St. John

The path of Catechesis at St. John is a three-year program which usually begins no later than fifth grade but which may begin at an earlier age based on the child's preparation and the parents' judgment.

We use the *Lutheran Catechesis* Series published by the Concordia Catechetical Academy. This three-year curriculum begins with 32 Old Testament narratives, drawing on their connection to Christ, the Sacraments, and the liturgical life of the Church. The second-year considers the age of the Church through the book of Acts and the life and ministry of Jesus with an emphasis on the cross and resurrection. The final year is an intensive study of the Catechism, again through the lens of the Biblical narratives.

## Role of the Parents

The rationale for our method of catechesis and confirmation is simple. It is Bible-based not only in content but also in format. It recognizes the Biblical truth that passing down to our children the teachings of Scripture is most properly the parents' task. The Church's mission is to support the parents.

"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. *Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.* Write them on the doorframes of your houses and your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth." **Deuteronomy 11:18-21**

"*We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.* He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he *commanded our forefathers to teach their children so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they, in turn, would tell their children.*" **Psalms 78:4-6**

"*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*" **Ephesians 6:4**

From these passages, it is clear that the instruction in the faith and training of each child rests with that child's parents, particularly the father. The Church stands ready to assist parents in this excellent task, but would never presume to rob parents of either the responsibility or the joy of teaching their children. With this Biblical background in mind, outlined now is the confirmation program for St. John Ev. Lutheran Church.

## Class Structure and Schedule

The class will meet at an agreed-upon time. One parent will also be required to be in attendance for each class, as explained below. The class will begin with a quiz and memory work taken and graded. Previous results will be given to the parents. Following the quiz and memory work, a teaching session will be led by Pastor. We will cover the material assigned in the previous week. Finally, next week's lesson will be introduced, and the assignments are given.

## What Is Expected Of Catechumens

Number of classes held: About 32 (per year)

Yearly Requirements towards Confirmation:

- a. Attending all *classes*, including O.T., N.T., and Lutheran Catechesis courses (3 years)
- b. Completing all *written assignments*.
- c. Completing *28 sermon studies*.
- d. Completing all *memory assignments*.
- e. Completing all *quizzes*.
- f. Weekly attendance at *worship services*.
- g. Regular *Sunday Morning Catechesis attendance*.
- h. *Acolyte, altar guild, or other service responsibilities*.

## What Is Expected Of Parents

1. At least one parent is required to attend with Pastor every Monday. Parents must be in attendance even if their child is not there that night (due to illness, etc.). In this way, parents will be prepared either to reinforce what was taught by Pastor (if their child was there) or to do the primary teaching of the lesson (if their child was absent). Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child does not fall behind.

2. Parents are expected to work with their child during the week. They are to see to it that all work is done to the best of their child's ability and that their child meets all of the requirements stated below.

## **Notes About Requirements**

1. **Classes:** All catechumens must attend all classes. On weeks where a confirmand is absent from class due to sickness, etc., the parent who was in attendance must teach the lesson to their child. If this is done, the absence will not be counted. *Frequent absences will require a meeting with Pastor to review their commitment to the catechesis program and if they want their child to continue in it.*
  
2. **All Written Assignments:** All written assignments must be completed and handed in. All tasks must be completed. Incomplete work or missed assignments must be made up or redone. Unsatisfactory work will be repeated. □
  
3. **28 Divine Service Reports:** A one-page report on the Divine Service from the previous Sunday is expected. Blank reports are in the slots by the mailboxes or can be printed off (<https://stjohnrandomlake.org/catechesis>). Do not attempt to write down everything that was preached. Instead, write down the things that you thought were important -- the main points, how God's Word in the sermon applies to our lives, etc. There is no wrong sermon study, except the one that isn't done at all. Sermon studies do two things: (1) They teach the confirmand how to listen carefully and think through what they hear, and (2) they help Pastor by letting him know when a sermon message came through sharp and clear and when it didn't. *Approximately 45 different sermons will be preached from September through April, including Lent, Holidays, etc.*



4. **Memory Assignments**: Catechumens are required to memorize Bible passages and a portion of the Small Catechism for each lesson. They will recite their memory work as part of the quiz they take during each class. If they do not complete the memory assignment, they may retake it at a later date.
  
5. **Quizzes**: At each session, catechumens will take a brief quiz. These questions, which will be true/false, multiple-choice, or short answer, will test their understanding of the lesson they learned the previous Monday. All quizzes must be taken. Unsatisfactory exams will be retaken
  
6. **Worship Attendance**: Catechumens are expected to be in Divine Service every Sunday (or Wednesday evening if a Sunday is missed) and on festival holidays. Their family is expected to be with them. Faithful worship attendance is expected of us by our heavenly Father. The Divine Service is the center of our lives as His people. Catechesis prepares a young person for a life of worship, both now and in the life to come. On Confirmation Day each confirmand promises to remain faithful in Word and Sacrament. That faithfulness begins now.
  
7. **Sunday Morning Catechesis Attendance**: Sometimes, young people in our confirmation program feel they're too young for Bible Study. Nothing could be farther from the truth. No one is too young or too old. Studying God's Word is not something from which we graduate. Bible Class and private home study should be a part of our lives for as long as we live. Parents and Students are expected to attend Pastor's Sunday Morning Catechesis during the Sunday School hour. *24 Sunday School or Bible Classes must be attended to pass each course.*

8. **Acolyte, Altar Guild, or other Service:** Each catechumen in the program will be asked throughout the year to light candles or carry the processional crucifix for worship services. They may also assist with the Altar Guild or helping the Elders in clearing the table on Sunday. Other service opportunities may be proposed and approved.
  
9. **Examination and Absolution:** The Confessions of the Lutheran Church state that no person is to be admitted to the Lord's Table until the Pastor has examined their faith and they have received individual absolution (*Ap XXIV.1*)

### **Other Items**

1. **Notification of Progress:** Pastor will contact parents concerning their child's progress. Parents are also encouraged to share any questions or concerns they have with the Pastor.
  
2. **Weather-Related Cancellations:** We will have class unless driving conditions are dangerous. Use your best judgment. If in doubt, call Pastor at 920-994-2228.
  
3. **Class Visitation Policy:** Other children and adults, whether family, visitors or prospective students, are invited and encouraged to sit in on their child's class at any time.
  
4. **Class books and prices:** There are six required books for the three years of Catechesis class. Each catechumen must have his/her copy of each of these items. They may not borrow from an older brother or sister, etc. You may purchase them all at once or as needed. If a family is undergoing financial hardship, the costs for the texts will be waived.

1. *Lutheran Catechesis*: \$18
2. *O.T., NT, or Catechesis Term cards*: \$8 ea
3. *Small Catechism* with explanation: \$8
4. *Old Testament Catechesis*: \$3
5. *New Testament Catechesis*: \$4
6. *Holy Bible* ESV Concordia Edition: \$30

## **Conclusion**

This catechesis program may be very different from what most parents remember about their own experiences, in that direct parental involvement is expected. It has been necessary to rethink our instruction in the faith. The diversity of children (abilities, attitudes, and needs) has changed over the years. The position of many parents has also changed. We have gotten away from our Biblical roots, where the family was the real classroom for a child's religious education. Some parents have given away the responsibility and the joy of teaching their children. In doing so, parents have lost the closeness that comes from spending time (primarily spiritual time) with their children. Children don't know the joy of learning from their parents, and parents don't know the joy of learning for themselves as they prepare to teach their children.

We believe that involving parents more fully points to a much better and more Biblical way. We hope and pray that you feel the same way too.

**S.T. JOHN EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH  
& SCHOOL - Sherman Center**

*Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*

**W5406 Hwy. S.S.**

**Random Lake, WI 53075**

[www.stjohnrandomlake.org](http://www.stjohnrandomlake.org)

Church Office: 920-994-2228

[pastor@stjohnrandomlake.org](mailto:pastor@stjohnrandomlake.org)