

The Large Catechism

Editors' Introduction to the Large Catechism

The material in the Large Catechism originated as sermons by Martin Luther on the basic texts of Christian teaching. Already in the Middle Ages, some regional synods in Germany had called for regular preaching on the “catechism” (usually defined as the Ten Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, Lord’s Prayer and, sometimes, the Ave Maria). The Ember Days, four times of fasting spread throughout the church year, were often designated for this purpose. Even before the Reformation, Wittenberg’s city church, St. Mary’s, also seems to have followed this practice. Luther himself preached on various portions of the catechism as early as 1518.¹

In the 1520s, John Bugenhagen, the chief pastor at St. Mary’s, doubtless carried on this practice. In 1528, with Bugenhagen temporarily away reforming the city of Braunschweig, Luther, the assistant preacher, assumed all of his colleague’s duties, including the catechetical preaching. Listeners’ notes on three series of afternoon sermons (from 18 May to 30 May, from 14 September to 25 September, and from 30 November to 18 December) survive.² They demonstrate a remarkable coincidence between Luther’s preaching and the text of the Large Catechism and help explain its personal, homiletical style.

Publication of the Large Catechism or, as the printers titled the early editions, the *German Catechism*, arose out of the need for instruction of the simple, often poorly trained clergy in the basics of the faith. In the summer of 1527, the elector of Saxony authorized an official visitation of churches in his territories. The team of visitors, which consisted of two representatives from the court and two from the university (one from the law school and one theologian), was charged with overseeing the financial and physical needs of the parishes and clergy and with investigating the state of instruction there. Philip Melanchthon, who served as the first representative from the theological faculty, drew up guidelines in Latin for the examination of pastors’ and preachers’ theology, called the *Visitation Articles*. A team of theologians, including Melanchthon, Luther, and Bugenhagen, translated the document into German and refined it, publishing it in early 1528 as *Instructions by the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony*.³

While this document served as an important synopsis of Reformation teaching and practice, it was not without its detractors. Already in 1527, John Agricola, a student of Luther serving as rector of the Latin school in Eisleben, attacked the Latin version and its author, Melanchthon. Agricola insisted that true repentance could not arise from fear of punishment but only from love of God (a position that placed the gospel before the law). Luther provided compromise language which pointed out both that repentance could arise from both fear and love and that, while a general faith in God might be said to precede repentance, it was best to view faith as following repentance. Agricola had also authored three popular catechisms that reflected many of his views. Philip Melanchthon, urged on by George Spalatin at the Saxon court, started to write an exposition of the chief parts of the catechism in response. He broke off his work at the third commandment, probably because Luther himself had begun to write his own catechisms in late 1528. The amount of space Luther devoted to the Ten Commandments and his discussion of faith, fear, and love indicates his position in this early controversy involving Agricola and Melanchthon. The Large Catechism also provided an additional means of instructing the clergy.

Luther began writing the Large Catechism shortly after completing the second series of catechetical sermons in September 1528. In December, after completing his third series of

sermons, he revised what he had written about the second and third commandments based on these later sermons. Because the material on the first commandment and the “conclusion” of the commandments had already been printed, he added new comments on these texts at the end of the section on the commandments.⁴ By January, work on the Large Catechism had progressed through the Lord’s Prayer. At that point, Luther became ill, and he stopped working until the end of March. The resumption of his work on the Large Catechism coincided with his preaching for Holy Week, 1529 (21–27 March). His sermons on Confession and the Lord’s Supper during that week strongly influenced the material in the Large Catechism on those themes.⁵

Luther’s *German Catechism* appeared by mid-April 1529. He immediately set about revising his work, adding the section on confession (based upon the aforementioned Holy Week sermons) and expanding the introductory material on the Lord’s Prayer.⁶ The printer, George Rhau, added a series of woodcuts from the workshop of Lucas Cranach Sr.⁷ The 1530 edition contained for the first time Luther’s longer preface, which he probably composed while at the Coburg Castle during the Diet of Augsburg.⁸ The edition of 1538 was the last to be published during Luther’s lifetime that contained minor corrections by him. The Latin translation by Vincent Obsopoeus appeared in 1529. The translator created a showpiece in Latin style by adding classical citations and allusions to ancient history. It influenced, among other things, the first edition of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

The Book of Concord from 1580, by including the catechisms of Luther, followed the example of several *corpora doctrinae* (standard bodies of doctrine) from the time. The catechisms represented a Bible for the laity because they dealt with material necessary for each Christian to know.⁹ The Book of Concord used as its source the Jena edition of Luther’s Works, which had reversed the order of the two prefaces and omitted the section on private confession. In contrast, the present translation follows the text of the second, revised and expanded version of 1529.

[Fifth Part:] The Sacrament of the Altar

As we heard about Holy Baptism, so we must speak about the second sacrament in the same way, under three headings, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All this is established from the words Christ used to institute it. So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and to go to the sacrament should know them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come. The words are these:²²⁶

“Our LORD Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

“In the same way also he took the cup after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and said, ‘Take, drink of this, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ ”

Here, too, we do not want to quarrel and dispute with those who despise and desecrate this sacrament. Instead, as in the case of baptism, we shall first learn what is of greatest importance, namely, that the chief thing is God’s Word and ordinance or command. It was not dreamed up or invented by some mere human being but was instituted by Christ without anyone’s counsel or deliberation. Therefore, just as the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Creed retain their nature and value even if you never keep, pray, or believe them, so also does this blessed sacrament remain unimpaired and inviolate even if we use and handle it unworthily. Do you think God cares so much about our faith and conduct that he would permit them to affect his ordinance? No, all temporal things remain as God has created and ordered them, regardless of how we treat them. This must always be emphasized, for thus we can thoroughly refute all the babbling of the seditious spirits who, contrary to the Word of God, regard the sacraments as something that we do.

Now, what is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer: It is the true body and blood of the LORD Christ, in and under the bread and wine, which we Christians are commanded by Christ’s word to eat and drink. And just as we said of baptism that it is not mere water, so we say here, too, that the sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine such as is served at the table. Rather, it is bread and wine set within God’s Word and bound to it.

It is the Word, I say, that makes this a sacrament and distinguishes it from ordinary bread and wine, so that it is called and truly is Christ’s body and blood. For it is said, “Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,” that is, “When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament.”²²⁷ This saying of St. Augustine is so appropriate and well put that he could hardly have said anything better. The Word must make the element a sacrament; otherwise, it remains an ordinary element. Now, this is not the word and ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the divine Majesty at whose feet all creatures should kneel and confess that it is as he says, and they should accept it with all reverence, fear, and humility.

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and declare: “Let a hundred thousand devils, with all the fanatics, come forward and say, ‘How can bread and wine be Christ’s body and blood?’ etc. Still I know that all the spirits and scholars put together have less wisdom than the divine Majesty has in his littlest finger. Here is Christ’s word: ‘Take, eat, this is my body.’ ‘Drink of this, all of you, this is the New Testament in my blood,’ etc. Here we shall take our stand and see who dares to instruct Christ and alter what he has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if

you take the Word away from the elements or view them apart from the Word, you have nothing but ordinary bread and wine. But if the words remain, as is right and necessary, then by virtue of them the elements are truly the body and blood of Christ. For as Christ's lips speak and say, so it is; he cannot lie or deceive."

Hence it is easy to answer all kinds of questions that now trouble people—for example, whether even a wicked priest can administer the sacrament, and similar questions. Our conclusion is: Even though a scoundrel receives or administers the sacrament, it is the true sacrament (that is, Christ's body and blood), just as truly as when one uses it most worthily. For it is not founded on human holiness but on the Word of God. As no saint on earth, yes, no angel in heaven can make bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, so likewise can no one change or alter the sacrament, even through misuse. For the Word by which it was constituted a sacrament is not rendered false because of an individual's unworthiness or unbelief. Christ does not say, "If you believe or if you are worthy, you have my body and blood," but rather, "Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood." Likewise, when he says, "Do this" (namely, what I now do, what I institute, what I give you and bid you take), this is as much as to say, "No matter whether you are worthy or unworthy, you have here his body and blood by the power of these words that are connected to the bread and wine." Mark this and remember it well. For upon these words rest our whole argument, our protection and defense against all errors and deceptions that have ever arisen or may yet arise.

Thus we have briefly considered the first part, namely, the essence of this sacrament. Now we come also to its power and benefit, for which purpose the sacrament was really instituted. For it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain there. This is clear and easily understood from the words just quoted: "This is my body and blood, given and poured out FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins." That is to say, in brief, that we go to the sacrament because there we receive a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because the words are there, and they impart it to us! For this reason he bids me eat and drink, that it may be mine and do me good as a sure pledge and sign—indeed, as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evils.

Therefore, it is appropriately called food of the soul, for it nourishes and strengthens the new creature. For in the first instance, we are born anew through baptism. However, our human flesh and blood, as I have said, have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and attacks of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint and at times even stumble. Therefore the Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened and that it may not succumb in the struggle but become stronger and stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses. But it has to suffer a great deal of opposition. The devil is a furious enemy; when he sees that we resist him and attack the old creature, and when he cannot rout us by force, he sneaks and skulks about at every turn, trying all kinds of tricks, and does not stop until he has finally worn us out so that we either renounce our faith or lose heart²²⁸ and become indifferent or impatient. For times like these, when our heart feels too sorely pressed, this comfort of the Lord's Supper is given to bring us new strength and refreshment.

Here again our clever spirits contort themselves with their great learning and wisdom; they rant and rave, "How can bread and wine forgive sins or strengthen faith?" Yet they have heard and know that we do not claim this of bread and wine—for in itself bread is bread—but of that bread and wine that are Christ's body and blood and that are accompanied by the Word. These and no other, we say, are the treasure through which such forgiveness is obtained. This treasure

is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words “given and shed for you.” Here you have both—that it is Christ’s body and blood and that they are yours as a treasure and gift. Christ’s body cannot be an unfruitful, useless thing that does nothing and helps no one. Yet, however great the treasure may be in itself, it must be set within the Word and offered to us through the Word, otherwise we could never know of it or seek it.

Therefore it is absurd for them to say that Christ’s body and blood are not given and poured out for us in the Lord’s Supper and hence that we cannot have forgiveness of sins in the sacrament. Although the work took place on the cross and forgiveness of sins has been acquired, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How should we know that this took place or was to be given to us if it were not proclaimed by preaching, by the oral Word? From what source do they know of forgiveness, and how can they grasp and appropriate it, except by steadfastly believing the Scriptures and the gospel? Now, the whole gospel and the article of the Creed, “I believe in one holy Christian church . . . the forgiveness of sins,” are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word. Why, then, should we allow such a treasure to be torn out of the sacrament? They²²⁹ must still confess that these are the very words that we hear everywhere in the gospel. They can no more say that these words in the sacrament are of no value than they can dare to say that the whole gospel or Word of God apart from the sacrament is of no value.

So far we have treated the whole sacrament from the standpoint both of what it is in itself and of what it brings and benefits. Now we must also consider who the person is who receives such power and benefit. Briefly, as we said above about baptism and in many other places, the answer is: It is the one who believes what the words say and what they give, for they are not spoken or preached to stone and wood but to those who hear them, those to whom he says, “Take and eat,” etc. And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sins, it can be received in no other way than by faith. This faith he himself demands in the Word when he says, “given FOR YOU” and “shed FOR YOU,” as if he said, “This is why I give it and bid you eat and drink, that you may take it as your own and enjoy it.” All those who let these words be addressed to them and believe that they are true have what the words declare. But those who do not believe have nothing, for they let this gracious blessing be offered to them in vain and refuse to enjoy it. The treasure is opened and placed at everyone’s door, yes, upon the table, but it is also your responsibility to take it and confidently believe that it is just as the words tell you.

Now this is the sum total of a Christian’s preparation to receive this sacrament worthily. Because this treasure is fully offered in the words, it can be grasped and appropriated only by the heart. Such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the hand. Fasting, prayer, and the like may have their place as an external preparation and children’s exercise so that one’s body may behave properly and reverently toward the body and blood of Christ. But the body cannot grasp and appropriate what is given in and with the sacrament. This is done by the faith of the heart that discerns and desires such a treasure.

This is enough on this sacrament, as far as is necessary for general teaching purposes. What else there is to say about it belongs at a different time.²³⁰

In conclusion, now that we have the right interpretation and teaching concerning the sacrament, there is also great need to admonish and encourage us so that we do not let this great a treasure, which is daily administered and distributed among Christians, pass by to no purpose. What I mean is that those who want to be Christians should prepare themselves to receive this blessed sacrament frequently. For we see that people are becoming lax and lazy about its observance. A great number of people who hear the gospel, now that the pope’s nonsense has

been abolished and we are freed from his compulsion and commands, let a year, or two, three, or more years go by without receiving the sacrament, as if they were such strong Christians that they have no need of it. Others let themselves be kept and deterred from it because we have taught that none should go unless they feel a hunger and thirst impelling them to it. Still others pretend that it is a matter of liberty, not of necessity, and that it is enough if they simply believe. Thus the great majority go so far that they become quite barbarous and ultimately despise both the sacrament and God's Word.

Now it is true, as we have said, that no one under any circumstances should be forced or compelled, lest we institute a new slaughter of souls. Nevertheless, it must be understood that such people who abstain and absent themselves from the sacrament over a long period of time are not to be considered Christians. For Christ did not institute the sacrament for us to treat it as a spectacle, but he commanded his Christians to eat and drink it and thereby remember him.

Indeed, true Christians who cherish and honor the sacrament should of their own accord urge and constrain themselves to go. However, in order that the simple people and the weak, who would also like to be Christians, may be induced to see the reason and the need for receiving the sacrament, we shall talk a little about this. As in other matters that have to do with faith, love, and patience, it is not enough just to teach and to instruct, but there must also be daily exhortation, so that on this subject we must be persistent in preaching, lest people become indifferent and bored. For we know and feel how the devil always sets himself against this and every other Christian activity, hounding and driving people from it as much as he can.

In the first place, we have a clear text in the very words of Christ, "DO THIS in remembrance of me." These are words that instruct and command us, urging all those who want to be Christians to partake of the sacrament. Therefore, whoever wants to be a disciple of Christ—it is those to whom he is speaking here—must faithfully hold to this sacrament, not from compulsion, forced by humans, but to obey and please the Lord Christ. However, you may say, "But the words are added, 'as often as you do it'; so he compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice." Answer: That is true, but it does not say that we should never partake of it. Indeed, precisely his words, "as often as you do it," imply that we should do it frequently. And they are added because he wishes the sacrament to be free, not bound to a special time like the Passover, which the Jews were obligated to eat only once a year, precisely on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first full moon,²³¹ without variation of a single day. He means to say: "I am instituting a Passover or Supper for you, which you shall enjoy not just on this one evening of the year, but frequently, whenever and wherever you will, according to everyone's opportunity and need, being bound to no special place or time" (although the pope afterward perverted it and turned it back into a Jewish feast).²³²

Thus you see that we are not granted liberty to despise the sacrament. For I call it despising when people, with nothing to hinder them, let a long time elapse without ever desiring the sacrament. If you want such liberty, you may just as well take the further liberty not to be a Christian; then you need not believe or pray, for the one is just as much Christ's commandment as the other. But if you want to be a Christian, you must from time to time satisfy and obey this commandment. For such a commandment should always move you to examine yourself and think: "See, what sort of Christian am I? If I were one, I would surely have at least a little desire to do what my Lord has commanded me to do."

Indeed, because we show such an aversion toward the sacrament, people can easily sense what sort of Christians we were under the papacy when we went to the sacrament purely from compulsion and fear of human commandments, without joy and love and even without regard for

Christ's commandment. But we neither force nor compel anyone, nor need anyone do so in order to serve or please us. What should move and induce you is that he desires it, and it pleases him. You should not let yourself be forced by human beings either to faith or to any good work. All we are doing is to urge you to do what you ought to do, not for our sake but for your own. He invites and incites you, and if you want to show contempt for his sacrament, you must answer for it yourself.

This is the first point, especially for the benefit of the cold and indifferent, that they may come to their senses and wake up. It is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as everyone will find in his or her own case, that if a person stays away from the sacrament, day by day he or she will become more and more callous and cold and will eventually spurn it altogether. To avoid this, we must examine our heart and conscience and act like a person who really desires to be right with God. The more we do this, the more our heart will be warmed and kindled, and it will not grow entirely cold.

But suppose you say, "What if I feel that I am unfit?" Answer: This is my struggle as well, especially inherited from the old order under the pope when we tortured ourselves to become so perfectly pure that God might not find the least blemish in us. Because of this we became so timid that everyone was thrown into consternation, saying, "Alas, you are not worthy!" Then nature and reason begin to contrast our unworthiness with this great and precious blessing, and it appears like a dark lantern in contrast to the bright sun, or as manure in contrast to jewels; then because they see this, such people will not go to the sacrament and wait until they are prepared, until one week passes into another and one half-year into yet another. If you choose to fix your eye on how good and pure you are, to wait until nothing torments you, you will never go.

For this reason we must make a distinction here among people. Those who are impudent and unruly ought to be told to stay away, for they are not ready to receive the forgiveness of sins because they do not desire it and do not want to be righteous. The others, however, who are not so callous and dissolute but would like to be good, should not absent themselves, even though in other respects they are weak and frail. As St. Hilary has also said, "Unless a person has committed such a sin that he has to be expelled from the congregation and has forfeited the name of Christian, he should not exclude himself from the sacrament," lest he deprive himself of life.²³³ People never get to the point that they do not retain many common infirmities in their flesh and blood.

People with such misgivings must learn that it is the highest art to realize that this sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we come to confession as if we were pure and without sin; on the contrary, we come as poor, miserable people, precisely because we are unworthy. The only exception would be the person who desires no grace and absolution and has no intention of improving.

But those who earnestly desire grace and comfort should compel themselves to go and allow no one to deter them, saying, "I would really like to be worthy, but I come not on account of any worthiness of mine, but on account of your Word, because you have commanded it and I want to be your disciple, regardless of my worthiness." This is difficult, however, for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to contend with, that we concentrate more upon ourselves than upon the words that come from Christ's lips. Nature would like to act in such a way that it may rest and rely firmly upon itself; otherwise it refuses to take a step. Let this suffice for the first point.

In the second place, a promise is attached to the commandment, as we heard above, which should most powerfully draw and impel us. Here stand the gracious and lovely words, "This is my body, given FOR YOU," "This is my blood, shed FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins." These

words, as I have said, are not preached to wood or stone but to you and me; otherwise he might just as well have kept quiet and not instituted a sacrament. Ponder, then, and include yourself personally in the “YOU” so that he may not speak to you in vain.

For in this sacrament he offers us all the treasures he brought from heaven for us, to which he most graciously invites us in other places, as when he says in Matthew 11[:28*]: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Surely it is a sin and a shame that, when he so tenderly and faithfully summons and exhorts us for our highest and greatest good, we regard it with such disdain, neglecting it so long that we grow quite cold and callous and lose all desire and love for it. We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine that aids you and gives life in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body is helped as well. Why, then, do we act as if the sacrament were a poison that would kill us if we ate of it?

Of course, it is true that those who despise the sacrament and lead unchristian lives receive it to their harm and damnation. To such people nothing can be good or wholesome, just as when a sick person willfully eats and drinks what is forbidden by the physician. But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you are to receive from Christ’s lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and brings with it God’s grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death, the devil, and every trouble.

Thus you have on God’s part both the commandment and the promise of the Lord Christ. Meanwhile, on your part, you ought to be induced by your own need, which hangs around your neck and which is the very reason for this command, invitation, and promise. For he himself says [Matt. 9:12*], “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,” that is, those who labor and are burdened with sin, fear of death, and the attacks of the flesh and the devil. If you are burdened and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the sacrament and let yourself be refreshed, comforted, and strengthened. For if you wait until you are rid of your burden in order to come to the sacrament purely and worthily, you will have to stay away from it forever. In such a case he pronounces the verdict, “If you are pure and upright, you have no need of me and I also have no need of you.” Therefore the only ones who are unworthy are those who do not feel their burdens nor admit to being sinners.

Suppose you say, “What shall I do if I cannot feel this need or if I do not experience hunger and thirst for the sacrament?” Answer: For those in such a state of mind that they cannot feel it, I know no better advice than that they put their hands to their bosom to determine whether they are made of flesh and blood. If you find that you are, then for your own good turn to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians and hear what are the fruits of your flesh: “Now the works of the flesh (he says) are obvious: adultery, fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.”²³⁴

For this reason, if you cannot feel the need, at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, since they know your flesh better than you yourself do. Yes, and St. Paul concludes in Romans 7[:18*], “For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh.” If St. Paul speaks this way of his own flesh, let us not wish to be better or holier. But the fact that we do not feel it is all the worse, for it is a sign that ours is a leprous flesh, which feels nothing although it rages with disease and gnaws away at itself. As we have said, even if you are so utterly dead in sin, at least believe the Scriptures, which pronounce this judgment upon you. In

short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the sacrament and seek its help and remedy.

Again, look around you and see whether you are also in the world. If you do not know, ask your neighbors about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be any lack of sins and needs. Just begin to act as if you want to become upright and cling to the gospel, and see whether you will not acquire enemies who harm, wrong, and injure you and give you cause to sin and do wrong. If you have not experienced this, then take it from the Scriptures, which everywhere give this testimony about the world.

Moreover, you will surely have the devil around you, too. You will not entirely trample him underfoot because our Lord Christ could not entirely avoid him. Now, what is the devil? Nothing else than what the Scriptures call him: a liar and a murderer.²³⁵ A liar who entices the heart away from God's Word and blinds it, making you unable to feel your need or to come to Christ. A murderer who begrudges you every hour of your life. If you could see how many daggers, spears, and arrows are aimed at you every moment, you would be glad to come to the sacrament as often as you can. The only reason we go about so securely and heedlessly is that we neither imagine nor believe that we are in the flesh, in the wicked world, or under the kingdom of the devil.

Try this, therefore, and practice it well. Just examine yourself, or look around a little, and cling only to the Scriptures. If even then you still feel nothing, you have all the more need to lament both to God and to your brother or sister. Take the advice of others and ask them to pray for you: never give up until the stone is removed from your heart. Then your need will become apparent, and you will perceive that you have sunk twice as low as any other poor sinner and are desperately in need of the sacrament to combat your misery. This misery, unfortunately, you do not see, unless God grants his grace so that you may become more sensitive to it and hungrier for the sacrament. This happens especially because the devil besieges you and continually lies in wait to trap and destroy you, soul and body, so that you cannot be safe from him for even one hour. How suddenly can he bring you into misery and distress when you least expect it!

Let this serve as an exhortation, then, not only for us who are old and advanced in years,²³⁶ but also for the young people who must be brought up in Christian teaching and in a right understanding of it. With such training we may more easily instill the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer into the young so that they will receive them with joy and earnestness, practice them from their youth, and become accustomed to them. For it is completely useless to try to change old people. We cannot perpetuate these and other teachings unless we train the people who come after us and succeed us in our office and work, so that they in turn may bring up their children successfully. In this way God's Word and a Christian community will be preserved. Therefore let all heads of a household remember that it is their duty, by God's injunction and command, to teach their children or have them taught the things they ought to know. Because they have been baptized and received into the people of Christ, they should also enjoy this fellowship of the sacrament so that they may serve us and be useful. For they must all help us to believe, to love, to pray, and to fight against the devil.