

DOCTRINAL CATECHESIS - ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH, HILLSBORO, ND

CONFESSION AND

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS, PT. II

## WHAT IS CONFESSION?

CONFESSION HAS TWO PARTS. FIRST, THAT WE CONFESS OUR SINS, AND, SECOND, THAT WE RECEIVE ABSOLUTION, THAT IS, FORGIVENESS, FROM THE PASTOR AS FROM GOD HIMSELF, NOT DOUBTING, BUT FIRMLY BELIEVING THAT BY IT OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN BEFORE GOD IN HEAVEN.

WHAT SINS SHOULD WE CONFESS?

BEFORE GOD, WE SHOULD PLEAD GUILTY OF ALL SINS, EVEN THOSE WE ARE NOT AWARE OF, AS WE DO IN THE LORD'S PRAYER; BUT BEFORE THE PASTOR WE SHOULD CONFESS ONLY THOSE SINS WHICH WE KNOW AND FEEL IN OUR HEARTS.

# WHAT IS CONFESSION?

- As we daily fall into sin, even after Baptism, confession is an opportunity for us to repent of our sins and receive the Lord's forgiveness anew.
- Though our sins are truly forgiven through faith, confession is an opportunity to hear that "*my sins*" are forgiven.

# WHAT IS CONFESSION?

- Confession happens in three ways:
  - First, in our hearts to God - as we do every day and in church;
  - Second, to those whom we've sinned against;
  - Third, we may confess to the pastor.

WHAT IS CONFESSION?

WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO THE PASTOR, WE MAY BE SURE THAT THE FORGIVENESS HE PRONOUNCES IS NOT HIS, BUT GOD'S.

Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?

Yes.

Let it be done for you as you believe.

The pastor places his hands on the head of the penitent and says:

In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

the pastor may speak additional Scripture passages to comfort and strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed.

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS?

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS IS THAT SPECIAL AUTHORITY WHICH CHRIST HAS GIVEN TO HIS CHURCH ON EARTH TO FORGIVE THE SINS OF REPENTANT SINNERS, BUT TO WITHHOLD FORGIVENESS FROM THE UNREPENTANT AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT REPENT.



WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN?

THIS IS WHAT ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST WRITES IN CHAPTER TWENTY: THE LORD JESUS BREATHED ON HIS DISCIPLES AND SAID, "RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. IF YOU FORGIVE ANYONE HIS SINS, THEY ARE FORGIVEN; IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE THEM, THEY ARE NOT FORGIVEN."

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ACCORDING TO THESE WORDS?

I BELIEVE THAT WHEN THE CALLED MINISTERS OF GOD DEAL WITH US BY HIS DIVINE COMMAND, IN PARTICULAR WHEN THEY EXCLUDE OPENLY UNREPENTANT SINNERS FROM THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION AND ABSOLVE THOSE WHO REPENT OF THEIR SINS AND WANT TO DO BETTER, THIS IS JUST AS VALID AND CERTAIN, EVEN IN HEAVEN, AS IF CHRIST OUR DEAR LORD DEALT WITH US HIMSELF.

# THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

- We believe that Christ has given to His Church on earth a special authority, the authority to forgive sins in His stead.
- As Jesus said to the Disciples in the Upper Room, "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven them." (Jn. 20)
- He also said to them earlier, "Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Mt. 18)
- God alone forgives sins in Christ, but Jesus has also given the authority to forgive *or not forgive* sins to His whole Church on earth.

# THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

- This authority is called the office of the keys because, like a key can lock or unlock a door, so the Church forgiving or binding sins is like opening or closing the gates of heaven.
- Jesus has given us these two keys: the absolving key, which is the authority to forgive; and, the binding key, the authority to not forgive.
- Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be bound in heaven." (Mt. 16)

WHO IS TO BE FORGIVEN?

ALL THOSE WHO REPENT  
OF THEIR SINS AND ASK  
FOR FORGIVENESS ARE  
TO BE ABSOLVED.



## INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*Based on the Rite  
in Luther's Small Catechism*

Prepare yourself by meditating on the Ten Commandments (pages 321–322).  
or the penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, or 143).

Orderd with particular sins, do not trouble yourself or search for or invent  
turning confession into a torture. Instead, mention one or two sins th  
that be enough.

neel and say:

confession and pronounce forgiveness in



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# THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

## *HOW DOES THIS TAKE PLACE?*

- Because Christ has given the Keys to the Church, all Christians may forgive those who sin against them in their daily lives.
- In public - in the congregation - the authority to forgive sins is given to the pastor.
- The pastor, on behalf of the congregation and in Christ's stead, forgives the sins of those who repent.

# WHAT'S A PASTOR?

- A pastor is a man called by God through a local congregation to speak and act in His stead. A pastor's job is:
  - To preach and teach God's Word;
  - To administer the Sacraments;
  - To absolve sins.



# WHAT'S A PASTOR?

- The qualifications for a pastor are that he be, "above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, [and] able to teach." (1 Tim. 3)
- He must, "hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." (Titus 1)

# WHAT'S A PASTOR?

- In the Lutheran Church, we believe that, according to Christ's institution and the practice of the Apostles and early Church, the office of pastor is given to men only.
- St. Paul did write, "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches," (1 Cor. 14); and also, "I desire then that in every place the men should pray...I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man [in church]." (1 Tim. 2)

# WHAT'S A PASTOR?

- This isn't to say that God doesn't give many gifts to women, because He does.
- Rather, we abide by the practice of Christ and His apostles.
- Women may serve many other ways, and, often times, may be preferable to men in those positions.

# THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

- The office of the keys is the special authority that Christ has given to His Church to forgive or retain sins in His stead.
- We may all forgive those who sin against us in our daily lives, the Church administers forgiveness publicly through her pastors. Pastors are called to speak, "in the stead and by the command," of Christ.
- Therefore, we may be sure that when the pastor says that our sins are forgiven, they are forgiven.

THE BINDING KEY

- Loosing vs. Binding Key
- When a person is not sorry for their sins, they may not receive the Lord's Supper. If they continue to be unrepentant, they may be excommunicated.
- That is, after many attempts to speak with them and encourage them to repent by both pastor and congregation - if they do not desire forgiveness - they are to be excluded from the congregation until they should repent.

- Excommunication is never meant to be kicking someone out of the Church, but it is intended for that person to see the seriousness of their sin.
- If they do repent, they are to be restored and received as a brother or sister in Christ.
- This process is called Church discipline and is necessary for the welfare of the congregation.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

PLEASE MEMORIZE *WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS?*



