

Congregation at Prayer

✠ Advent I ✠

A Guide for Daily Family Prayer
For the Week of December 2nd to 8th

Catechesis Notes for the Week...

When we confess the third article of the creed, we confess our faith in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. His Person is always attached to the word. And wherever that word is located there you have His work. The place of the Holy Spirit's work is *the holy Christian Church*. That's where the word goes forth, and with it the Holy Spirit.

So we confess, "*I believe in...the holy Christian Church.*" This Church is as much an article of faith as the rest. Why? Because when you look at the Church today she certainly looks far from holy. In fact, what turns most people off by the Church is the way she often acts in an unchristian sort of way. She looks offensive: discriminating, hypocritical, stand-offish, and sinful. The Church is full of drunks and addicts. She's divided, shattered really. Her faults aren't hidden, either. They're out in the open for everyone to see.

But the Church isn't known by sight, but by faith. Hebrews tells us that faith is the certainty of things hoped for, but not seen (Heb 11:1). And so we confess our faith in the Church, even while we do not see her to be nearly the holy, spotless bride our Lord claims she is.

So it is with Christians—as you know, it's Christians gathered around the Word that makes the Church what she is. These Christians are in communion together around the holy things of our Lord—His holy Word and blessed Sacraments. These holy things make the gathering holy also—even though she doesn't seem to be so. That's what is meant when we confess that we believe *in the communion of saints*—that this gathering of sinners is made holy by the holy things of God!

These Christians, found within this Church, are known only by faith. We confess that each person within the Church is what God has said he or she is: holy. So, when we look at each other, we don't expect to see the Church, or even Christians for that matter. We expect to see a sinner that God has made His own through the forgiveness of sins, which we also confess in this article of the Creed! And by this forgiveness we also believe we will rise with Him on the last day. All of this is by faith, not by sight—the Spirit does it by the Word.

The Spirit Preaches Christ to You

Responsive Prayer 2, *Lutheran Service Book* p.285

Learn-By-Heart Scripture...

"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me."

Psalm 51:10

Learn-By-Heart Catechism...

The Creed

What is the Third Article?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

Daily Readings...

Monday (12/2): Isaiah 8:9-9:7; 1 Peter 4:1-19

Tuesday (12/3): Isaiah 9:8-10:11; 1 Peter 5:1-14

Wednesday (12/4): Isaiah 10:12-27a, 33-34; 2 Peter 1:1-21

Thursday (12/5): Isaiah 11:1-12:6; 2 Peter 2:1-22

Friday (12/6): Isaiah 14:1-23; 2 Peter 3:1-18

Saturday (12/7): Isaiah 24:1-13; 1 John 1:1-2:14

Sunday (12/8): Isaiah 24:14-25:12; 1 John 2:15-29

Prayer of the Week...

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm of the Week...

Psalm 118

Hymn of the Week... "Savior of the Nations, Come"

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Looking Forward to Next Week...

Isaiah 11:1-10

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12