

Congregation at Prayer
✠ First Sunday after Christmas ✠

A Guide for Daily Family Prayer
For the Week of December 30th to January 5th

Catechesis Notes for the Week...

Abide with Me (LSB 878) might be the most common funeral hymn. We sing it at every graveside service as a cry for comfort and in order to hear the promise that Christ will never leave us—even at our death.

The hymn comes from the words of Jesus in John’s Gospel—a portion of which are this week’s *learn-by-heart Scripture* passage:

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Abide means to stay. It is a word of rest and permanence. You might abide in your home, or in a confession of faith, or even in your arrogant disbelief. To abide is to be immovable and located firmly in one spot.

Our hymn is a prayer that the Lord would remain firmly located and permanently united to us. And these words of Jesus are a call to us, that we be permanently located in Him. That sort of permanent union is what we call a marriage: the two become *one flesh*. And God’s blessing placed upon this marriage comes with the strict command:

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (Mt 19:6)

If we abide in Christ and He in us, then the promise is given:

“ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Sounds dangerous, right? Ask for...*anything*? That’s often the way our catechumens view this sort of promise. That’s also the way our unbelieving, sinful, old Adam sees it too. But our Lord isn’t a genie in the bottle. We’re not asking for something as if we are apart from Him or He apart from us. We are asking, above all else, that His will be done among us as it is in heaven. When we are so intimately united with Christ, as we are through our Baptism and the communion we share in His body, then what we ask for is precisely outlined in the Lord’s Prayer.

As we bring these petitions to a close, we ask that the Lord would not lead us into temptation, but that He would deliver us from evil. Here pray against the devil, against our sinful flesh, and against this ungodly world. We pray that our fear, love, and trust would remain *and abide* firmly in Christ alone. That way, at our life’s end, *He would graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself.*

“I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness. Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still if Thou abide with me!”

Asking and Abiding in Christ

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

Learn-By-Heart Scripture...

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

John 15:7

Learn-By-Heart Catechism...

The Lord’s Prayer

Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

Seventh Petition: But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

Daily Readings...

Monday (12/30): Isaiah 58:1-59:3, 14-21; Luke 1:26-38

Tuesday (12/31): Isaiah 60:1-22; Luke 1:39-56

Wednesday (1/1): Isaiah 61:1-11; Luke 1:57-80

Thursday (1/2): Isaiah 62:1-12; Luke 2:1-20

Friday (1/3): Isaiah 63:1-14; Luke 2:21-40

Saturday (1/4): Isaiah 63:15-65:7; Luke 2:41-52

Sunday (1/5): Isaiah 65:8-25; Luke 3:1-20

Prayer of the Week...

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm of the Week...

Psalm 111

Hymn of the Week... *“Let All Together Praise Our God”*

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Looking Forward to Next Week...

1 Kings 3:4-15

Ephesians 1:3-14

Luke 2:40-52