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Examination Table

– for –

Communicants

– by –

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– in –

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“Let a man examine himself.” 1 Cor. 11.28

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Forward

The orders piling up have made this seventh edition of the booklet you are looking at necessary. As it was produced out of the need to give confirmands a guide to examine themselves, it has already been introduced to confirmands in many places as they finished confirmation instruction specifically to prepare them for confession and holy Communion. It has become a handbook for many younger as well as older guests at Communion to pick up whenever they want to prepare for the Sacrament. The recommendation given in “*Der Lutheraner*” might well suffice for those who care for souls (*Seelsorger*) to take special note of this resource and to see how useful it might be. For they must shoulder the responsibility of making sure that everyone has diligently and rightly done this self-examination which is necessary prior to coming to holy Communion. In issue 5 of the 44th volume of “*Der Lutheraner*,” it says of this booklet, “It is recommended as a gift at confirmation. It contains a brief, clear teaching on the Sacrament of the Altar, on preparation for Communion, on the way of Confession, and, above all, as the title promises, an examination table, by which those who desire to go to the Sacrament are presented questions especially addressing their consciences from the holy Ten Commandments. Here the Law of God, according to its simple sense and understanding, is applied to the heart and life of the Christian. This examination table avoids the deficiencies of some other resources designed to reveal sins found in other communion booklets, which make some things sinful that are not sins for the readers and examiners, while the most egregious and significant matters are not sufficiently brought to light.” Dr. G. Stoeckhardt.

The instruction on Communion fellowship from the Epistle Postils of the blessed Dr. Walther, which is excerpted in the primer, will be a welcomed supplement to many. The same for the addendum: “The Solemn Vow of the Pious Confirmand,” which will be a useful preparation for Confirmation and serve as a constant reminder.

P r i m e r

– for –

Communicants

This booklet is written for those who have the true doctrine and the right understanding of holy Communion – and desire to go to the Lord’s table. What the sacrament is, its benefits and who should receive it is taught, as Dr. Luther so wonderfully explains in the Large Catechism, in the Words of Institution.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

“It is the true body and blood of our Lord Christ, in and under the bread and wine, through Christ’s Word, which Christ has commanded us to eat and to drink.” From these Words you can strengthen your conscience and say: Even if a hundred thousand devils along with all the enthusiasts step forward and ask, how can bread and wine be Christ’s body and blood... yet I know that all the spirits and the learned men put together in one heap are not so clever as the smallest finger of the divine majesty. Now Christ’s Word stands: Take, eat, this is my body. Drink of it all of you, this is the New Testament in my blood... There we stand and we will see what becomes of those who want to be his master and bring forth something other than what he has said. It is certainly true. If you remove the Word or look at it without the Word then you would have nothing but plain bread and wine. But when you allow the Word to remain with it, then it is purely the same as he says, the true body and blood of

Christ. For as Christ's mouth declares and speaks, so it is, for he can neither lie nor deceive."

What are the benefits of the Lord's Supper?

"Now you can see further the power and the benefit for which the Sacrament has ultimately been instituted, which is also of utmost importance, so we know what we should seek and receive there. Now that is clearly and easily heard in the memorial Words: This is my body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. That says so much in just a few words: We go to the Sacrament for this reason, that we receive such a treasure there, through which and in which we receive the forgiveness of sins. Why is that? Because the Words state this and give us just that. It is for that reason that he commands me to eat and drink, that it is mine and for my benefit as a sure banner and sign, yes, even that same treasure which is established for me against my sins, death and all misfortune. That is why it may well be called a food for the soul which feeds and strengthens the new man.

Who should receive the Sacrament of the Altar?

"Now we must also observe who receives such power and benefit. Most succinctly, as is said above of Baptism and in many other places: whoever believes there has what the Words say and what they bring. For they are not declared or proclaimed to stone or wood, but to those who hear them to whom he says: Take and eat... And as he proffers and promises forgiveness of sins it cannot be received in any other way than through faith. He himself demands such faith

in the Word, as he says: Given for you and shed for you; as if he would say: That is why I am giving it and why I am commanding you to eat and drink, that you should receive it and enjoy it. Now whoever lets this be said to him and believes that it is true has it. But whoever does not believe it, has nothing as he lets it be offered him in vain and does not want to enjoy this salutary wealth. The treasure is certainly opened and stands at everyman's door, yes, laid upon his table. But it is also necessary that you receive it from him and surely regard it as the Words declare it to you. In this, now, lies the entire Christian preparation for worthily receiving this Sacrament."

Where Will you Attend Holy Communion?

I may venture to say that you would answer: Only at a Lutheran altar. Only, you must be aware that some merely use the name "Lutheran" as a sign on their door since there are also false Lutherans. So never enter into communion fellowship with any congregation before you have investigated whether the whole Gospel, pure and clean, without additions or subtractions, is preached and confessed. The blessed Dr. Walther explains this in his Epistle Postils at length as follows:

"When the Apostle writes in our text: 'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes,' when he explains the reception of Communion as, simultaneously, a congregational act of confessing their faith, so, at the same time, he is commanding us, secondly, that we should only celebrate holy Communion with those who confess with us one and the same faith. If holy Communion were only instituted for the goal of our

eating the body of Christ with our mouths and drinking the blood of Christ with our mouths, then we could and should freely receive it altogether wherever Communion is celebrated rightly, according Christ's institution. But Paul says here, that by it 'we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' That means, we must confess, so it would be obviously against Christ's will if we would celebrate where the confession of our faith is denied.

Holy Communion, wherever it is celebrated, is the banner and flag of the faith of the congregation or church in the midst of which it is received. As one publicly enlists in the army to whose flag he gives allegiance and has peace and a rallying point in war around that flag, so every Christian enlists in his congregation, in whose midst and in whose fellowship he enjoys the sharing of holy Communion. Now if the congregation confesses the true faith, so also the communicant confesses that same faith by appearing at her altar with her. But if the congregation confesses a false faith, so the communicant also confesses her false faith through his partaking of her celebration of Communion, and publicly gives evidence by his actions that he denies the true faith.

But what does Dr. Luther say of those who never or very seldom receive holy Communion?

He writes in the Large Catechism: "Finally, as we now have the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament it is also an exhortation and warning that such a great treasure that is daily performed and distributed among Christians is not to be dispensed with. I mean that those who claim to be Christians should also prepare themselves to receive this most precious Sacrament frequently. For we observe that there are some set so negligently and lazily, and there are a great heap of those who hear the Gospel who, since the

Pope's trumpery has been removed and we have been liberated from his intimidation and law, can well go about for a year or two or three or longer without the Sacrament as if they were such strong Christians that they don't need it. Some let themselves hesitate or be frightened away by our having taught that nobody should also be driven to receive it without experiencing hunger and thirst for it. Some twist this teaching to say it is a matter of freedom and not necessary and that it would be enough that they believe without it. Thus they become completely wild and finally despise both the Sacrament and God's Word... But, nevertheless, you must know that such people who absent themselves and separate themselves so long from the Sacrament are not to be regarded as true Christians."

God be praised! There are always yet some Christians who crave the Sacrament and who receive it often. The examination table that follows is written for them. Only he who knows himself as a sinner can know that he needs the Sacrament.

He needs a doctor, who's afflicted and ill,
With longing he asks him come round.
O sweet Jesus! Show me how deep the wounds
Which also in me are found.

Kyrie Eleison!

You are surely the doctor to whom I call,
Upon whom my longing hopes lay.
O, help me, for you are God and Man!
Without you, I perish for 'aye.

Kyrie Eleison!

E x a m i n a t i o n T a b l e

– for –

Communicants

You desire to come to confession and to holy Communion. So remember: “Whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself.” No! – You don’t want to fall into God’s judgment. If you would, it would be better that you stay away from the Lord’s table! But should you ask: How must I begin so that I do not unworthily receive holy Communion, then hear St. Paul’s answer in 1 Corinthians 11.28: “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.” What should you examine and investigate before you go to holy Communion? Yourself. Dr. Luther says: “Examine means nothing else but that you consider well how fit you are.” “But your whole life is to be examined, that is, that you feel inside yourself a gnawing conscience, that is weighed down with sin, that desires grace and that fears before death and hell and would gladly be strong and seeks and receives this with a firm trust in Christ’s Word in the Sacrament, to receive such grace, strength and help.” “It is not enough that you should examine and be motivated by learning how evil you are if you do not much more remember and consider how pious you desire to be.”

So a communicant must consider four things in his self examination. I will recount them to you here: Make sure that you 1. acknowledge your sins; 2. that you are heartily sorry for them; 3. that you believe in the forgiveness of sins which

is declared to you through the holy Absolution in Confession and is sealed to you through the reception of the body and blood of Christ; 4. that you have an earnest intention to improve your life. If that is your desire, then you can place before you the following questions with heartfelt groaning to God. Pray: "Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts and see if I am on the evil way and lead me upon the eternal path." Ps. 139. 23,24. And so give an honest answer to each of the following questions.

I.

According to the holy Ten Commandments.

(First Commandment)

1. Do you have a God, or do you join the fool in saying in your heart: "There is no God?"

2. Is God only an abstract concept to you, the "deity," the "great spirit," the "great architect of the world," a "higher being," which the Jews, the heathen, Islam and Christians all honor according to their various understandings, "only in another form," (as also the lodges who want to build one temple out of all these religions) or do you from your heart believe that there is no other God but the true revealed God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost?

3. Do you apprehend the Triune God as your God and Lord, whom alone you are responsible to serve and from whom alone you are to anticipate help?

4. Do you also walk in the fear of God, that you sin before him who is always watching, or are you only careful to keep your sins hidden before people while you ignore God?

5. Do you have a child-like love of God even when he chastens you or does your heart cling more to created things, to people, to good things in this world, to your honor, to good living than to God?

6. Do you rely in every need on God and his promises and trust in him because of his great faithfulness, or do you seek the counsel, comfort and help of people or yourself?

(Second Commandment)

7. Is the Name of God and his holy Word, his Sacraments and everything that is ordained of God holy to you and do you give witness of this by your thoughts, words and deeds?

8. Have you habitually used the Name or the Word of God carelessly by saying, "Oh God!" "Jes'!" and by the flippant use of passages like: "Faith saves," and the like?

9. Have you cursed, that is, spoken blasphemously of God or his Word, and of your hidden faith, wishing evil upon a neighbor, or even yourself in your resentment? ("God damn you!" "Lightning strike you!" "Go to hell!" and the like.)

10. Do you habitually swear for no good reason and in insignificant matters call upon God to witness the truth and to avenge whatever is not true? ("I swear to God!" "My God curse me and strike me dead, if its not true" and the like.)

11. Have you lied under oath before justice?

12. Have you sinned against the Name and the Word of God through magic, through magic charms, magic words, fortune telling, tarot, and similar secret, divining arts, or through the use of the same?

13. Are you indifferent to false doctrine and have you denied your Lutheran confession by attending false worship services, foreign Sunday schools or under the guise that you just aren't very discerning when it comes to the truth?

14. Do you treat God's Word, your worship, singing, praying, going to Communion, and, Christianity in general, hypocritically?

15. Do you freely pray privately?

16. Do you pray in the morning and at night, before and after meals, do you groan during your labor to God and seek his help in every trouble?

17. Do you also have devotions in your house where God's Word is read and prayed?

18. Do you have a desire to sing and to praise God?

19. Do you also thank God for his gracious favor, which he has demonstrated to you with others and more than others, both temporally and spiritually?

(Third Commandment)

20. Do you often allow yourself to be hindered from going to Divine Service through work, laziness, friends visiting, or through the schedule that you choose and by other insignificant matters?

21. Do you only go to holy Communion seldom, or without diligent self examination?

22. During the Divine Service do you like to sleep, to jabber or to fool around in some other way?

23. Are you a heedless listener who retains nothing from God's Word, who retains nothing of it in his mind and does not lead his life according to God's Word?

24. How do you spend the rest of your Sunday?

25. Do you bring your offering with a willing heart, or only for the sake of (being seen by) men?

26. Are you mindful of your duty, having committed to being a member of a congregation, to attend the gathering of the congregation, to build the kingdom of God by warning those who are erring, strengthening the weak, comforting the afflicted and through your own pious walk?

(Fourth Commandment)

27. Do you care for your family's temporal and spiritual needs; do you faithfully lead child and household as a father, a mother, a master, a mistress to God's glory; do you teach them God's Word, do you keep them in prayer, in attending divine Services, in attending the Christian School and do you yourself present them with an example of a pure faith, a rightly fashioned life and good behavior?

28. What is your heart's disposition towards your parents and authorities; do you honor them out of respect for divinely appointed order?

29. Have you become betrothed or married behind the backs or against the prohibition of your parents?

30. Have you troubled them or provoked them to anger so that they must groan before God because of you?

31. Have you been lazy and disobedient?

32. Have you complained about them or cursed them?

33. Do you serve your parents and other authorities in the fear of the Lord and have you sought to appreciate the favors which they have given you?

34. Do you make known your love to them in return so that you bear their shortcomings and weaknesses in patience and long suffering?

35. Do you pray, father or mother, for your children; master and mistress for your household; son or daughter for your parents; students for your teachers, congregation for your pastor (*Seelsorger*), workers for those under whom you work, servant or maid for your master?

(Fifth Commandment)

36. Have you been envious, wrathful, hateful, vengeful?

37. Have you sinned through an angry demeanor, threats and abusive language?

38. Have you caused anyone harm or pain, aggravated him, overworked him, or done any other such things?

39. Have you done harm to your own health through inordinate worry, through pleasure, drinking, eating, dancing or through a miserly depriving yourself of nourishment, or even through working too much?

40. Have you joked about wanting to take your own life?

41. Do you endeavor in relating to others to apply kindness, humility and gentleness or are you more often moody, sullen, irascible, contentious?

42. Do you bear a grudge against someone who has offended you and remain irreconcilable, as much as saying you will forgive but not forget and are you unable to prevail over your own failures by asking for forgiveness?

43. Do you also pray for those who do you wrong and hope for the best for him or are you at all happy when things go badly for him?

44. Do you give gladly, do you receive the needy, do you give loans even when you do not expect to be repaid?

(Sixth Commandment)

45. Do you love and honor your spouse?

46. Have you sought divorce or prostitution?

47. Have you fostered and pursued impure thoughts in your heart and have you been accustomed to indulging your impure desires?

48. Have you provoked yourself or others to unchastity through peeking at what is shameful, through gestures, through words or deeds, for example, through kissing in public, through shameful nudity, touching, dirty jokes and the like?

49. Have you defiled your body through private sins?

50. Do you exercise yourself in the fear of God, in prayer, in work and moderation by which the devil is deprived opportunity to plunge you into sexual impurity?

51. Do you guard yourself against pride, extravagant fashion, idleness, late night partying, drunkenness, gluttony, shameful music, masquerade parties, dancing and theaters?

(Seventh Commandment)

52. Have you in any way dishonestly taken or kept your neighbor's money or goods?

53. Have you taken anything from your father or mother and secretly made it your own?

54. Have you cheated or defrauded anyone through faulty scales or measures, false wares, unfair pricing or

through usury to get what is his?

55. Have you withheld from anyone the payment owed him, unjustly reneged on what was fair or not given a timely payment you owed?

56. Are you an impious forger who neither pays for things nor returns what he borrows?

57. Have you taken care of your own property?

58. Have you concealed stolen goods?

59. Have you restored and given back or kept what you have unjustly taken when you have cheated others?

60. Do you not begrudge your neighbor his property, do you help him to keep and improve it, and are you satisfied with the property that God has given you?

61. Do you work diligently, do you give good counsel to your household or do you forsake your household or your needy neighbor by sitting around at the public houses, through speculation, through making shallow excuses for errors, through games, through any kind of worthless activities, or through inattentiveness to anything that God has entrusted to you as your household duty?

(Eighth Commandment)

62. Have you, for no good reason, had angry thoughts about your neighbor?

63. Do you like to hear reports about other people and do you listen to wicked slander?

64. Do you pass judgement on others without knowing his reasons or giving him a chance to defend himself?

65. Have you entertained or rendered a false report about someone and thus lied?

66. Have you been guilty of committing a so-called 'white lie' and have you never, until now, regarded it as sin?

67. Have you passed on to others what you accidentally discovered or what was told you in confidence?

68. Do you try to be friendly to others when they are present but then speak evil of them behind their backs?

69. Have you slandered anyone's reputation?

70. When you are able, do you defend your neighbor against unfair accusations?

71. Would you rather speak good than evil of others?

72. Do you put the best construction on others' actions and make allowances, when it is possible for you to find some circumstance, to explain them kindly?

73. Have you as a judge or juryman, as an advocate, as a defendant or plaintiff, as a witness, in any way committed perjury?

(Ninth and Tenth Commandments)

74. Have you ever desired anything that belongs to your neighbor or sought to make it yours by deception or force?

75. Have you, by sending urgent bills, through the threat of legal proceedings or other clever schemes, perhaps even presenting yourself as having a clear claim, gained possession of a stranger's goods?

76. Have you alienated from your neighbor his wife, servant, maid or animal or enticed them to yourself?

77. Do you fail to look with satisfaction only upon what belongs to you but also eye what belongs to your neighbor, and do you help him retain his own property?

78. Have you learned that your heart is completely ruined by original sin and is stained with lust from that sin

against this Word: “Thou shalt not covet”?

79. Do you confess that you are guilty of transgressing every commandment of God in thought, word and deed by neglecting the good that you could have done and by carrying out what is evil?

II.

In General.

1. What is the condition of your confession of sins?

80. Do you think that you have done enough when you outwardly acknowledge and speak your confession of sins, or do you stand in genuine acknowledgment of your sins, your specific sins, your pet sins?

81. Are you living under dominating sins, that is, do you allow any sins (as, for example, wrath, lying, laziness, games, unchastity) to rule over you, instead of battling against them?

82. Do you hold the Holy Scriptures as God’s revealed Word and will and follow them as the single rule and guide for your faith and life so that you acknowledge as sin everything that they declare sinful?

83. Do you gladly allow yourself to fight against your sins, or do you become angry with whatever restrains your sinning?

2. What is the condition of your contrition?

84. Do you take your sins lightly in your conscience or

are you aware that by each one, even the most minute sin, you have earned God's temporal and eternal wrath?

85. Do you try to dishonestly evade facing up to your sins personally or to others or even excuse them?

86. Do you make excuses for your sins based on your weakness or the sins of others, the customs of the world, and the like?

87. Have you actually boasted of your sins and shameful deeds to other people?

88. Do you especially remember the sins of your youth with contrition and sorrow?

89. Have you learned that your contrition is never as deep and the anxiety of your heart never as great as they should be?

3. What is the condition of your faith?

90. Do you just attend Communion by habit or because you are forced to go by your parents, spouse and others?

91. Do you believe from the heart that in the holy Sacrament you receive in, with and under the bread and wine the very body and the very blood of Christ?

92. Do you believe that the Absolution spoken to you in Confession is God's forgiveness by which you are actually loosed from your sins?

93. Are you comforted when you receive holy Communion after having received the Absolution, because you will thus also approach the altar robed in the righteousness of Christ?

94. Do you hold fast to the grace which you also receive in the Sacrament? Are you aware that Christ has made his dwelling in you?

4. How is your intention to improve your life?

95. Have you promised to improve, as you came the last time for Communion and also directly to God many times besides that?

96. Have you fallen back into old sins again, or even done much worse?

97. Have you wantonly, against the warning of your conscience, let old sins rule over you again?

98. Do you avoid temptations to sin, evil associations, places and people that are tempting? With whom do you associate?

99. Do you want to avoid everything that you have learned is sinful, that you know are your special sins, with your utmost efforts?

100. Is there a serious intent on your part to always progress, to seek after holiness and to grow in every way into the One who is our head, Christ?

Now may the true God come to your aid. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Yet never forsake your good intention. You will never find the power to avoid sins and to accomplish every good work in you, yourself. Christ will bestow it unto you through your partaking of his body and blood. He makes his dwelling in you through holy Communion. Thus you can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." "I can do all things through the one who gives me might, Christ." But the God of peace sanctify you through and through and your whole spirit, along with your body and soul, will be preserved unassailable unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the blossoms, brought forth for my healing,
Whose nectar life forever's sealing;
That takes from me all my disgraceful virtue,
And restores me to gladly serve you. O Lord, have mercy!
In you I find all that is heav'n's best
In your fount of grace I find my rest;
Let me always be in Thee,
And remain fore'er in me. O Lord, have mercy!

If you have learned of your sins, and if you still feel weak in faith and in sanctification, if you are walking in the path of your sins or the sins of another which entice you to sin, then do not run from Christ and do not avoid going to Communion as do some who think that they must become good before they receive the Sacrament. Run to the one who takes away your sins, hurry in your battle with sins and despite every obstacle that Satan throws in your path to keep you from Communion; run to your Savior. If you feel that you are not fit, if you regard yourself as completely unworthy to receive holy Communion, then only ask yourself this one thing: Ask yourself if you have desire for the **forgiveness** of your sins and if you yearn to **become** pious and saved. If that is the case, then the Holy Ghost has kindled faith in your heart. He wants to lead you to Christ along with all of your sins. Come as you are. He has said: "Whoever comes unto me I will in no way send away." Take his Word for it and come. Only confidently say:

O Jesus, full of grace
On your command and Word
I bring my troubled spirit
To your great grace and merit;

Please grant to my despair
A drop of grace most rare.

So lead my heart and mind,
By your Spirit ever kind,
That I avoid whatever
Might you and me 'ere sever,
That I remain your member
And stay with you forever.

Appendix

Confirmation Hymn.

1.

Lord God, we come before Thee, as prodigals, your sons;
You're steadfast, true, today anew, your promised grace
for sinners.

2.

Lord Jesus Christ! You are always even the abandoned
Shepherd; Discard us not, your Light of Grace remains
for us, the straying.

3.

O Spirit of God! Aid us 'till death to keep what here we
pledged Thee; That faith's good cheer and love's strong
flame may never be extinguished.

Confirmation Vows

1. Are you determined to now renew and affirm the covenant which you once had made with the Triune God through your sponsors at your Baptism?

Answer: Yes!

2. I therefore ask you: Do you renounce anew the devil and all his works and all his ways?

Answer: Yes!

3. Do you believe in God the Father?

Answer:

Yes, we believe in God the Father, Almighty maker of heaven and earth.

4. Do you believe in God the Son?

Answer:

Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.

5. Do you believe in God the Holy Ghost?

Answer:

Yes, we believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

6. Do you desire to be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church?

Answer: Yes!

7. Do you hold the canonical books of the holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments, to be God's revealed Word and the Doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church drawn from out of these books, as you have learned them from the Small Catechism of the blessed Dr. M. Luther, to be the only truth?

Answer: Yes!

8. Do you desire to retain always the confession of this church and would you prefer to suffer anything, even death, rather than fall away from it?

Answer: Yes, with the help of God.

9. Finally, do you desire to direct your whole life according to the guidance of the divine Word, to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ and in faith, word and deed remain true to the Triune God until death?

Answer: Yes, by God's grace.

