

The Congregation at Prayer

*A Guide for Daily Meditation and Prayer for the week following
The Third Sunday after the Epiphany (January 22nd – January 28th)*

CATECHETICAL THEME:
Who Is to Be Forgiven?

This Week’s Catechetical Theme: Who Is to Be Forgiven?
Jesus came to save sinners, and His death on the cross was the payment offered on behalf of all sins—everyone’s sins—for “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). And while this is true, Scripture also teaches that many will die in the darkness of unbelief, and will therefore have their sins held against them. He will separate the sheep from the goats, after all (Matt. 25:32-33). So how do we know whose sins are to be forgiven, and whose are to be retained, as John 20 teaches us to do? This is the question focused upon in this week’s devotional material. Who is to be forgiven? The one who confesses, along with the tax collector, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13)!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Ten Commandments & The Apostles’ Creed

The Catechism: *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.”(John 20:22-23)

What do you believe according to these words?

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ 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.

| Daily Readings | Catechetical Narrative | Second Reading | Psalm |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| Sunday | The Transfiguration Matthew 17:1-9 | | Psalm 33 |
| Monday | Repent Acts 3:19-20a | Exodus 9 | Psalm 34 |

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| Tuesday | Let Him Be to You as a Gentile Matthew 18:17 | Exodus 10 | Psalm 35 |
| Wednesday | The Pharisee and the Tax Collector Luke 18:9-14 | Exodus 11 | Psalm 36 |
| Thursday | If We Say We Have Fellowship 1 John 1:6-7 | Exodus 12 | Psalm 37 |
| Friday | Are We to Continue in Sin? Romans 6:1-4 | Exodus 13 | Psalm 38 |
| Saturday | Exodus 34:29-35 | 2 Peter 1:16-21 | Psalm 39 |

Questions to Discuss in the Home

Sun: Reflect upon today's text and sermon. **Mon:** What does this passage say will come with repentance? How is this refreshing? **Tues:** What would cause a person to be treated as a Gentile and a tax collector (unbeliever)? **Wed:** What did the tax collector say about himself? What did the Pharisee say about himself? With which confession was their justification and the forgiveness of sins? **Thurs:** Is it possible to remain in darkness (sin) and continue to have fellowship with God? **Fri:** Does this passage encourage us to continue in sin? See verse 4. What sort of life is to flow from a baptized and forgiven child of God? If a person chooses to remain in sin, should he/she be forgiven? **Sat:** In preparation for Sunday, reflect upon today's texts.

Memory Verse

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”
(Luke 18:14)

In Our Prayers this Week

For Those Who Mourn: The family and friends of Rodney Tate (Randy Tate's father). **For Those Recovering from Surgery:** Marla Corry, Lynn Michael. **For Those Undergoing Medical Treatments:** Beth Jones (daughter-in-law of Mike Jones), Joe Childress (father of David Childress), Beth Mayer (niece of Mia Zimmermann). **For Those in Need of Healing:** Alan Kleiboeker, Roger & Marilyn Sullens (father & mother of Linda Reckling). **For Those Who Are Dealing with Chronic Pain:** Barb Mueller, Sam Tepe (brother of Angie Siddell), Ariana Nolte, Randy Zimmermann, Connie Schilling. **Homebound Members:** Earlene Lange, Ruth Onken, Paul Schierschwitz. **Baptismal Birthday:** Jason Brammeier (1/26), Katherine Zimmermann (1/28).

The Lord's Prayer and Morning or Evening Prayer From the Small Catechism

Hymn of the Week: O God of God, O Light of Light (LSB 810)