

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## ***Topical Bulletin, September 2022***

This month's topic for consideration is: **The Apostles' Creed; the third Article.**

Luther's Small Catechism puts it thus:

### **THE THIRD ARTICLE**

#### **SANCTIFICATION**

**I 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. 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 Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith;

even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith;

in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers,

and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

This is most certainly true.

*Comment: Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed is truly Scriptural, for it plainly puts forth the facts concerning the Person and work of God the Holy Ghost; the facts concerning the holy Christian Church, which is the communion of saints; and, the facts concerning the forgiveness of sins received by believers through the power of the Holy Ghost, as well as the future resurrection of the body and everlasting life to be enjoyed by ALL believers in Jesus Christ and ONLY THE BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST. "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)*

We will consider, in more detail, what we confess in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, as we ponder Scripture proofs relating thereto.

**"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19)**

**"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7)**

*Comment: We see from the foregoing Scripture verses that the Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, TRUE and VERY GOD, with the Father and the Son.*

The Holy Ghost is known by other names, as the following verses from the Holy Bible relate:

**“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35)**

**“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.” (Psalm 51:11-12)**

**“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2)**

**“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)**

**“For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” (Matthew 10:20)**

**“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow .” (1 Peter 1:11)**

**“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6)**

**“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:2)**

*Thus, God the Holy Ghost is known by several other divine names, which further prove He is true God. Interestingly, some of the Holy Ghost's other names indicate His oneness with God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ, which is certainly proper since the three divine Persons are but the one, true God; each Person being God entire and not merely one third of God!*

**“But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” (Acts 5:3-4)**

*Comment: Note well that lying to the Holy Ghost IS lying to God, since the HOLY GHOST IS GOD! Indeed, the Holy Ghost is NOT merely a tool of God or a fractional part of God, as some false prophets and false religions blasphemously teach, since they, in opposition to the Holy Scriptures, deny the Holy Trinity.*

**“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost – the Spirit of God – knows ALL things and therefore has the divine attribute of OMNISCIENCE!*

**“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost – the eternal Spirit – has the divine attribute of ETERNITY!*

**“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” (Psalm 139:1, 7-10)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost – the Spirit of the Lord – is present everywhere and therefore has the divine attribute of OMNIPRESENCE!*

**“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)**

**“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” (1 Peter 4:14)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost – being holy – obviously possesses the divine attribute of HOLINESS! Furthermore, since the Spirit of God is the Spirit of glory, He is certainly due DIVINE HONOR!*

**“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6)**

*Comment: The Hebrew word translated into English as “breath” also means “spirit” which thereby indicates CREATION as a DIVINE WORK of the Holy Ghost!*

**“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5-7)**

*Comment: Notice that the renewing of a lost and condemned sinner takes place by action OF the Holy Ghost. Thus, such regeneration and renewing – such SANCTIFICATION or making one holy – is a DIVINE WORK of the Holy Ghost!*

Hence, we have now considered numerous Scripture passages which prove that THE HOLY GHOST IS TRUE GOD! We will proceed by looking at Bible verses which tell us more about the specific work of God the Holy Ghost.

**“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)**

*Comment: Observe from the underlined portion in the foregoing Bible verses that the work of the Holy Ghost is definitely SANCTIFICATION, that is, making one personally holy in God’s sight by gifting one with faith in Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness is received by the believer in Jesus. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:1, 8-9)*

**“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)**

**“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Romans 8:6-7)**

**“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)**

*Comment: It is vitally necessary for the Holy Ghost to gift us human beings with faith in Christ by His power, because we naturally conceived human beings are, by nature, spiritually blind; spiritually dead and enemies of God. We cannot, by our own efforts, move even a fraction toward Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to Him. WE NEED THE HOLY GHOST to gift us with faith in Jesus Christ and to keep us in the same. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)*

**“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)**

**“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:7-10)**

**“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17)**

**“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in**

**time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)**

**“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 15:13)**

*Comment: Note well from the foregoing Bible verses that the Holy Ghost calls people to faith in Jesus Christ by means of the Gospel of Christ. It's as the apostle Paul declares: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17) Those, whom the Holy Ghost by His power gifts with faith in Jesus Christ, are now THE PEOPLE OF GOD, GOD'S SPECIAL PEOPLE, people of light and no longer children of darkness!*

**“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” (Jeremiah 31:18-19)**  
[The God-worked turning – repentance, in the wide sense – is also known as CONVERSION.]

**“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5-6)** [The spiritual rebirth, wrought by the Holy Spirit, is also known as REGENERATION]

*Comment: Observe that the WORK of the Holy Ghost is called “CONVERSION” – a turning around – or “REGENERATION” – a new birth. Yes, “as many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)*

**“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:22-23)**

**“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)**

**“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost, by means of the Gospel, when preached or attached to water in Holy Baptism, works faith in Jesus Christ in the hearts of human beings— the very faith which personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation Jesus earned for the whole world. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16) The Holy Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Ghost works through THE MEANS OF GRACE – God's Word and the Sacraments instituted and commanded by Christ – to grant folks faith and strengthen them in that faith of Jesus Christ. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)*

**“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)**

*Comment: The Holy Ghost not only gifts people with faith in Jesus Christ, but also enables the believers to resist sin and do works that are truly good in God’s sight; that is, to live a sanctified life. [This is known as sanctification, in the narrower sense of the term.] “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7) Thus, Christians are to strive to live in full accord with God’s Word, thereby showing their gratefulness to God for His grace and mercy, being fruitful in their God-given faith.*

**“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)**

Jesus says: **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)**

Jesus says: **“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)**

**“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”  
(1 Corinthians 10:31)**

**“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Galatians 5:13-14)**

*Comment: The foregoing Bible verses make it clear that if our works are to be truly good works, they must flow from faith in Jesus Christ and love toward God and our neighbor. Furthermore, truly good works are ALWAYS done in full accord with Christ’s commands – GOD’S WORD – and are NOT the products of man’s own invention, for ALL is to be done to the glory of God! Sincere believers, from their hearts, hold with the psalmist, who says to the Lord: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:103-105)*

People, with God-given faith in Jesus Christ, are also those, **“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5)**

**“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”  
(Philippians 1:3-6)**

**“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)**

*Comment: God the Holy Ghost not only gifts folks with faith in Jesus Christ and makes them fruitful in the same; God the Holy Ghost also, by means of the Gospel, keeps folks – the whole Christian Church on earth – in the faith of Jesus Christ unto life everlasting!*

**“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11)**

**“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:9-10)**

**“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)**

*Comment: Observe, from the above quoted Scripture passages, that God the Holy Ghost truly desires to bring ALL people to salvation, by gifting them with faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. But sadly, many people stubbornly resist the Holy Ghost as He works through His Word; consequently, they are lost by their own fault! “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51) God says: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” (Hosea 13:9) Jesus, while weeping, said: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37) “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46) Accordingly, it is a fact that those who are lost are lost by their own fault. God the Holy Ghost does NOT force anyone to believe; rather, the Holy Ghost gently calls people by the Gospel of Christ, after showing them their sins in the mirror of God’s Law.*

Having addressed the broad depth of what it means when we confess, “I believe in the Holy Ghost”; we will continue with the topic of the third Article of the Apostles’ Creed in next month’s Topical Bulletin.

m.e.l.