From Conflict to Communion: Justification & Eucharist

Discussion Leaders:
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Introduction

• Welcome – Pastor Les Weber
• Opening Prayer
• Introducing Our Discussion Leaders
• Brief Background on Our Purpose
• Our Topics for Tonight:
  – Justification
  – Eucharist
• Questions?
• Let’s Begin . . .
Most high and holy God, pour out upon us your one and unifying Spirit, and awaken in every confession of the whole church a holy hunger and thirst for unity in you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006)
Why are Lutherans and Catholics discussing...

JUSTIFICATION
What is Justification?

A simple theological definition:

The action of declaring or making righteous in the sight of God.
Why talk about Justification?

• It was a big deal for Luther.

• Am I saved?

• Did I confess everything?

• Luther’s “Aha” moment:
  – We are justified by Faith alone:
    • Romans 3:21-28
    • Ephesians 2:8
    • Romans 1:17
Why talk about Justification?

- Different answers—
  - “Saved by faith and works” or “Saved by faith alone”?

- Blood has spilled.

- Some consensus reached within the last 50 years.

- We rejoice and bear witness together!
Why talk about Justification?

Show agreement and our slight variations

Four points of justification that have raised contentions in the past.

– Human Powerlessness and Sin in relation to Justification
– Justification by Faith and through Grace
– The Justified as Sinner
– The Good Works of the Justified
Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

We Agree:

All persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation.
Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

Catholic Expression:

• Persons can do nothing good on their own.
• But we “cooperate” in accepting justification.
• This is an effect of grace.
Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

Lutheran Expression:

• Human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation because of sin.

• Just the same, believers are personally involved in their faith.
We Agree:

Sinners are justified by **grace alone**, in faith in the saving action of God in Christ, and **not because of any merit on our part**.
Lutheran Expression:

- God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*).
- Faith is from God through his creative word.
- God’s act in us is a new creation of hope and love.
- We are joined in Christ, who is present in faith.

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Catholic Expression:

• Justification is the forgiveness of sins and being made righteous.

• At baptism we are children of God, and infused with faith, hope and love.

• This renewal is always because of God’s grace.

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The Justified as Sinner

We Agree:

In baptism we are united to Christ, justified and renewed. But we also continuously struggle with selfish desires and are ever again called to conversion, penance and forgiveness.

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Catholic Expression

• In baptism, all sin is washed away.
• Yet we still have the inclination to sin.
• This inclination is not in itself sin.
• Healing and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation is necessary if a person commits a mortal sin.
The Justified as Sinner

Lutheran Expression:

• Christians are “at the same time righteous and sinner”.
• Believers are totally righteous – In Christ, they are made just before God.
• Through the law, they remain also totally sinners – Sin still lives in them.
  – 1 John 1:8
  – Romans 7:17,20
We Agree:

Good works follow justification and are its fruits.
The Good Works of the Justified

Lutheran Expression:

• Our righteousness—acceptance by God and shared in Christ—is always complete.

• We can grow in righteousness in Christian living.

• Eternal life is an unmerited reward—a fulfillment of God’s promise to the believer.

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The Good Works of the Justified

Catholic Expression:

• Good works, made possible by God’s grace, are part of a deepening communion with Christ.

• As scripture witnesses, a reward in heaven is promised to these works.

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Consensus

We have come to doctrinal agreement on many essential points relating to Justification!

Nothing in the Joint Declaration is condemned by either church.

Differences that remain in emphasis are treated with understanding, grace, and respect.
Choose Some Topics to Discuss

1. What do you believe is meant by the Lutheran teaching that we are both saint and sinner at the same time?

2. What is the role of good works in relation to your faith?

3. Why is this concept of Justification an issue today?

4. How do you see this matter of justification and good works practically lived out in a family today? In your family?

5. If we agree on “Christ alone is our salvation”, then how can we show full trust and reliance on Christ? In our families? In our work? In our church? In our community?

6. Any reactions or thoughts that you’d like to share?

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Why are Lutherans and Catholics discussing...

EUCHARIST
Issues Relating to Eucharist

- The Lord’s Supper/Eucharist
- The Real Presence of Christ
- Reception of Holy Communion
- Reverence of the Elements/Eucharistic Devotion
- Eucharistic Sacrifice
- The Office of Eucharistic Ministry
- Thoughts on Intercommunion
We Agree:

• The Lord’s Supper is a precious gift of nourishment, consolation, and renewal.

• The words of institution were given by Christ as a promise.

• Christ freely gives himself, his body and his blood, whether we believe this or not.
The Real Presence of Christ

We Agree:

In the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus Christ is present, wholly and entirely, in his Body and Blood under the signs of bread and wine.

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Catholic Understanding:

Through the concept of transubstantiation, the *substance* – the essence of what makes a thing a thing – actually changes.

The bread and wine *fully change* to the body and blood of Christ, while the *accidentals* – the chemical make up of the bread and wine – remain the same.
The Real Presence of Christ

Lutheran Understanding:

Through the concept of consubstantiation, the substance is, at the same time, both bread and wine and the Body and Blood of Christ.

The bread and wine co-exist with the body and blood of Christ.
We Agree:

The bread and wine belong to the complete form of the Eucharist.
Lutheran Understanding:

- The words of institution mean all, including lay people, should receive communion under both elements.

- The practice of intinction – dipping the wafer into the wine – is a common method of offering Communion.
Reception of Holy Communion

Catholic Understanding

• When for logistical reasons, people receive only the body, they are still fully receiving Christ.
• Receive- not take (no intinction).
• In the hands or on the tongue.
Reverence of the Elements/ Eucharistic Devotion

We Agree:

The Eucharistic elements must be treated with reverence following the conclusion of the Eucharistic service.
Reverence of the Elements/Eucharistic Devotion

Lutheran Understanding:

• The Lord’s Supper is a communal meal.

• The blessed elements are meant to be fully consumed, rather than preserved, after the celebration.
Reverence of the Elements/
Eucharistic Devotion

Catholic Understanding:

• Since the Eucharist is the Lord, Christ remains present in the elements after celebration.

• Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was and is affirmed in the Catholic church.
Eucharistic Sacrifice

We Agree:

- Christ is present as the Crucified who died for our sins and who rose again for our justification, as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world.

- This sacrifice can be neither continued, nor repeated, nor replaced, nor complemented.

- We are linked with the men and women who earlier experienced the saving acts themselves.

- Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper combines the effect of the event on the cross together with the event itself.
Lutheran Understanding:

• The divine gift of Christ in the Lord’s Supper can only be received in faith, not offered.

• We do not perform and offer the Eucharist to God as a sacrifice or “good work”.

• In worship, we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to acknowledge that we need God’s divine gift and that our situation will change only by receiving the gift.
Catholic Understanding:  

There is a sacrificial character of the Eucharist. 

The sacrament makes present the events of salvation and in particular, the sacrifice of Christ. 

Nothing better we can offer the Father than his Son.

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The Office of Eucharistic Ministry

We Agree:

The celebration of the Eucharist involves the leadership of a minister appointed by the church.
Catholic Understanding:

Apostolic Succession and communion with the whole college of bishops gives the sacramental identity of a priest.

• It enables him to act “in the person of Christ”.
• It links him to the priesthood of Christ.
• It gives the power to Consecrate the Eucharist.

Therefore, the Catholic Church does not believe Lutherans have the ability to consecrate.
Lutheran Understanding:

- Emphasis is placed on ordination.
- Through Christ, believers have been given direct access to God.
- The doctrine called the “priesthood of all believers” means that, through Christ, God is equally accessible to all the faithful (1 Peter 2:9).

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Can We Share Holy Communion?

WARNING!
ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM!

What elephant?

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Can We Share Holy Communion?

Lutheran Perspective: “Yes”
Communion Hospitality

Catholic Perspective: “Not yet”
Fruit of Full Communion

The grief of separation calls us to pray for unity.

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Can We Share Holy Communion?

Lutheran Perspective: Communion Hospitality

• We wish to become more unified by sharing with each other at the table.

• We welcome all through invitation:
  – All who believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord’s table.
  – This is the Lord’s table. He is the host. We are his guests. He welcomes everyone to come and eat and be nourished, fed and forgiven. Come and eat and live!
Can We Share Holy Communion?

Catholic Perspective: Fruit of Full Communion

• Sign of full communion with Christ and the Church.
  – Unity with successors of apostles
  – Unity in belief
  – Sacraments of initiation
  – State of grace

• Members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion.

• Catholics should not deny that union by participating in communions of other beliefs.

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Can We Share Holy Communion?

The Grief of Separation

Because of the grief we experience in our separation, we are prompted to pray always for Christian unity.
Choose Some Topics to Discuss

1. Why are we not yet able to fully share Holy Communion? What are the signs of agreement and signs of hope?

2. How have you seen the practice of Holy Communion change in your church? Is there a more frequent reception of Communion?

3. How does the liturgy prepare you for Holy Communion? Has the liturgy changed in your church? How?

4. What is your lived experience with liturgy and Holy Communion in your church? In your family?

5. How can our mutual grief from separation in the Eucharist prompt us to pray for unity?

6. Any reactions or thoughts that you’d like to share?
Pulling It All Together

Final Thoughts or Questions?

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The Lord’s Prayer

Please feel free to use the language you are most comfortable with. We will blend our voices, if not our words.

And the people said:

AMEN!
Let There Be Peace On Earth

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be

With God as our father
We are family
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony
Closing Hymn

Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now
With every step I take
Let this be my solemn vow

To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me

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