

Confirmation Instructions for the Mentally Retarded

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I. The mentally Retarded are Included in the Command to Baptize All Nations and to Teach Them All Things.

A. Jesus' Command

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (NIV). With these words Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as a means of grace.

He gave us the command to “make disciples of all nations”; and he gave us the means: Baptism and teaching. Since the command includes all nations, it is clear that we are to baptize all people, regardless of their physical age or their mental abilities. Therefore we practice what has come to be called infant or child baptism. Even if a person is mentally a child, though no longer physically a child, the situation is the same. They are bloodbought souls included in the Savior’s command, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

B. The Mentally Retarded Are Included in This Command.

However, the Lord did not only tell us to baptize, but also to teach all things whatsoever He has commanded. Jesus speaks of both baptizing and teaching as the means to make disciples of all nations, though the sense of the passage is that these are not necessarily done at the same time. We could even think of some situations where a person would become a disciple and remain a disciple only by Baptism. Such would be the case when a child dies soon after Baptism, for then the Lord has already taken the child to Himself. In other cases, as nearly as we can tell, even the minimum teaching is impossible. Examples would be some cases of mental retardation or brain damage; or when a person is in a coma or suffering from some kinds of mental illness. Then we are comforted to know that in Baptism God has received His children into His covenant of grace. His covenant stands forever; they are safe.

Now if Baptism already makes a person a disciple of Jesus, why is teaching necessary? In commanding teaching Jesus is not speaking about imparting mere mental mastery of certain subjects, but teaching them to observe, that is, to keep or obey all things He commanded. He is talking about preaching the living Word, which results in a growth of faith and knowledge. Because faith can be lost, and because our faith is assaulted with many temptations, faith needs to be strengthened. At the same time Christians need to grow in faith, so that they can grow in their life of sanctification, in their desire and ability to serve God in their calling in life. For these reasons we teach our children after they have been baptized.

But sometimes the mentally retarded are excluded or nearly excluded from this teaching. We may excuse this by saying: they cannot learn, or they cannot learn very much, or they do not need to learn, since they are not living in the “normal” world. Possibly we feel that we do not have the time, or the ability, or the facilities, or the proper materials to use in teaching them. Whatever the case, a survey made by the District Special Ministries Board seems to indicate that we have not always reached the goal of teaching the mentally retarded to observe all things that Jesus has commanded.

C. Who Are the Mentally Retarded?

Consider what we mean by the mentally retarded. Mental retardation is “a condition characterized by retarded intellectual development, which results in difficulties in learning and problems in adapting to the demands of society” (*Helping the Retarded to Know God*). This condition is found in varying degrees in retarded individuals. Most educators classify the mentally retarded according to a five-category system based on I.Q. scores as follows: Borderline (I.Q. 70-84); Mild (I.Q. 55-69); Moderate (I.Q. 40-54); Severe (I.Q. 25-39); Profound (I.Q. below 25). Many of the individuals considered borderline may have few problems and might be taught in regular Christian education classes, as long as we recognize the fact that they are what are often called “slow learners.” The majority of the people considered mentally retarded are in the mildly retarded category, an I.Q. of 55 to 69, or what is considered educable. They no doubt need special education classes, but may become self-supporting members of society. The moderately to severely retarded are also called trainable, because they have difficulty learning to read and sometimes have speech problems. Yet we should note that they too have some learning ability. Perhaps only the profoundly retarded, with an I.Q. below 25, are people whom we would be unable to teach at all, except for simple pictures about Jesus.

The point that we would make is that the vast majority of individuals whom we know as mentally retarded are capable of learning, if given the proper help and if enough time is involved. May we remember: these people also are a part of the flock purchased by His blood, are under our spiritual care, and are included in the Lord’s command when He said, “Make disciples of all nations.” In a congregation of 500 souls there may be only one or two people that fit into these categories. We dare not forget them. They are also called to serve their

Lord with a sanctified life; and they are also assaulted with Satan's temptations as they live here in this world. Jesus was thinking of them, too, when He said, "Teach them to observe all things."

D. What Is Our Goal in Teaching Them?

As we teach them, let us remember that the goal is a living faith which knows and trusts the Lord Jesus Christ, and which brings forth the fruits of faith. But as we teach, let us not confuse knowledge with faith. Much of our religious education, especially confirmation instructions, does emphasize learning facts. The child should be able to recite the six chief parts, know Bible stories, know definitions of theological words. We do not mean to say that this is unimportant or useless, for it is both important and useful. But knowledge is not the final goal. It is to be the vehicle for the Holy Spirit to work faith, enlighten, sanctify, and preserve faith in the heart of the recipient.

No matter whom we teach, we have one goal. To reach that goal as we teach the mentally retarded may take more time or require different methods. However, we do well to keep in mind that included in the goal is preparation to receive the Lord's Supper. As further parts of our presentation will show, it may take a long time, and it could happen that we may never be able to get to the point where we are convinced that the retarded can "examine themselves." Therefore we cannot make a firm commitment beforehand that we actually will be able to confirm the person we are going to instruct. We should, as pastors, keep this in mind, and honestly discuss these thoughts with the parents before the instructions begin. The instruction class is not a commitment to confirm. It is a commitment to teach as much as possible, according to Jesus' own command.

II. How Does The Holy Spirit Edify and Enlighten?

A. The Holy Spirit Uses the Means of Grace.

The goal in all instructions is to teach God's Word, to "teach them to observe all things," as Jesus said. The purpose is that those being instructed might grow in their faith and in their life of sanctification. This is a goal which only the Holy Ghost can accomplish. Just as Scripture teaches that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 12:3), so also the Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit enlightens us with His gifts. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). And it is the Holy Spirit who preserves that saving faith, as Peter writes: "Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (I Peter 1:5). It is always important to remember the truth we confess in our Catechism, "The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." It is essential that we confess this truth anew as we approach the task of instructing those with limited mental ability. The Holy Spirit creates, edifies, and preserves faith.

The Holy Spirit always does this through the Means of Grace, the Word and Sacraments. Our task is to proclaim that Word of God and to use the Sacraments as they were instituted by Christ. Scripture makes it plain that before the Sacrament of the Altar is received we need to examine ourselves. Before we can examine ourselves there needs to be knowledge. Therefore we need to teach the Word to those we are instructing. The Word is the means and the only means the Holy Ghost uses.

B. The Word Needs to Be Heard and Understood by Those Being Instructed.

The Word also needs to be heard and understood by those who are being instructed. Perhaps this is the most serious question we face. Can those of limited mental ability understand what they are being taught? Yet God has not left us without a way. He has given us the gift of language. At Pentecost He made it possible for people to understand the wonderful works of God in their own language. God wants people to hear the Word in language they can understand. Our task, then, is to "translate" the Word into a simple language that the mentally retarded will understand. God the Holy Ghost will work through that Word to create, strengthen, and preserve faith.

R.U.

III. "A Man Ought to Examine Himself"—What Does This Mean?

A. Introduction

First communion in WELS congregations is closely connected with confirmation. When he confirms a child, the pastor is announcing to the congregation that he considers the child ready to receive the Lord's Supper. May the mentally retarded child or adult be a guest at Holy Communion? And if he may, when should the pastor admit a retarded person to the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood?

Why don't the Scriptures answer these specific questions? There is no need for specific answers, since the same truths apply to the mentally retarded as to every other human being: "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24); Christ commands His Church to baptize "all nations" and to teach them to obey everything that He has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20); and those who have been baptized and taught He invites, "Take and eat; this is my body Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). When the Christian congregation baptizes, teaches, and communes the mentally retarded, it is simply taking seriously the word and work of the Lord Jesus, who by His cross reconciled the world to its Creator. And conversely, if a congregation only baptizes but then fails to teach and, where possible, to commune its mentally retarded members, it is to some extent denying the Word and work of the Savior.

We do not, of course, use Baptism, instruction in the Word of Jesus, and Holy Communion all at the same stage of our Christian life, even though the Holy Spirit uses all these Means of Grace. We baptize as soon as a child can be brought to church, and sooner if necessary. We begin formal instruction in the home and through the educational agencies of the Church as soon as a child is able to receive it. And we decide the age for first communion in keeping with the apostolic admonition that "a man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup" (I Corinthians 11:28).

B. The Text

When Paul wrote these words, some Christians in Corinth were treating the Lord's Supper as if it were an ordinary meal and not a very orderly one, at that. The congregation celebrated Holy Communion in connection with an agape or love feast, where all the members sat down together around the same table as one family in Christ. But according to I Corinthians 11:17ff., the love feasts became disorderly: some members ate without waiting for the others to come; the poor who brought nothing to the feast received nothing to eat; and some even used the wine to excess and got drunk. In their agapes the Corinthians had lost sight of the Lord's Supper, the only part of their common meal that Jesus Himself had commanded.

To deal with this problem, Paul reminded the congregation of what the Sacrament is according to Christ's word. The apostle repeated the words of institution: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" Paul added, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

From Christ's own words, Paul drew the conclusion which dealt with the Corinthians' abuse of the Sacrament. Because they were eating and drinking in an unworthy manner, they were sinning against Christ's body and blood and so drawing judgment instead of blessing upon themselves (11:27-29, 32). "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup" (11:28), to see that he recognizes the Lord's body and does not receive the Sacrament "in an unworthy manner."

In what respect should a person examine himself? Christ's words of institution in the immediate context suggest two questions: 1) "This is my body... my blood... given and shed for you": "Do I recognize the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament, and so distinguish it from an ordinary meal of bread and wine? 2) "Do this in remembrance of me": As I eat and drink, do I remember and so also confess the Savior who sacrificed Himself for me?

C. Application to the Retarded

Both of the above questions deserve further discussion as they refer to the mentally retarded.

1) *Recognizing Christ's body and blood* in the Sacrament requires the ability to hear His Words and to apply them to the reality which they designate. We will all agree that this does not exclude the deaf, because the meaning of Christ's statements may enter their hearts and minds through other channels besides the ear. But it does exclude those who do not know what Jesus said. As Luther wrote concerning the Sacrament in the Large Catechism, "It is not our intention to admit to it and to administer it to those who know not what they seek, or why they come." Sometimes the retarded person may well understand much more than he can communicate. As far as we can tell, however, there are some severely and profoundly retarded Christians who cannot distinguish the Lord's Supper from the breakfasts, dinners, and suppers on their plates every day. They know hunger when they feel it and recognize food when they see it, but are not able to connect the words of Jesus with the food He offers in the Sacrament. We must learn to thank God for their baptism and for ours!

2) *Remembering Jesus* includes a recognition of sin. The death of God's Son shows that human guilt is terrible indeed. If Christ's blood was shed on the cross "for the forgiveness of sins," there must be sins that greatly need forgiving. (The same recognition is implied in Paul's words, "If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment," v. 31.) It is sentimentalism that calls the mentally retarded "God's children" automatically; like all the rest of us, they are born in sin and they daily sin much. Ask their parents! The retarded communicant must learn to judge himself as God's Law judges him. Surely it is one of the challenges we meet in all instruction to get this across in a way that does not only produce the right answer, "I am a sinner," but truly humbles the sinner in repentance before his Maker.

The central aspect of remembering Jesus is the remembrance of His saving sacrifice on the cross, where He gave His body and shed His blood for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. The death and resurrection of God's Son must be real for the communicant. In terms of our instruction, the Second Article of the Creed has to mean something to him before the Lord's Supper can mean anything. To be well prepared, the communicant needs to "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The self-sacrifice of the Lamb must also be appropriated by faith. Jesus said, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Faith says, "Given and shed for me." Very properly Luther emphasized this aspect of self-examination in the Small Catechism: "He is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.... For the words 'For you' require only believing hearts."

The confessional service adds another question for our self-examination: "Do you sincerely and earnestly purpose, by the assistance of God the Holy Ghost, henceforth to amend your sinful life?" (Hymnal, p. 48). "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," Paul wrote (I Corinthians 11:26). Remembering Jesus produces a confession of Him in word and works. It certainly includes the sincere intention to avoid sin and to live according to God's Word. This aspect of remembering and confessing Christ must have been prominent in Paul's mind as he urged the unloving and disorderly members of the Corinthian congregation to examine themselves. The retarded also need to recognize that there is a close connection between what Jesus did for us on the cross and what we do, say, and think every day. The intention to avoid sin is not, however, a separate mark of "worthiness" to receive the Lord's Supper, but simply a sign of true faith. For this reason Luther does not mention it in his brief summary; the Catechism avoids giving the impression that "worthiness" to receive the Lord's Supper has anything to do with works. We do well to observe this caution in teaching the retarded.

We do not want to overlook the last word: "A man should examine *himself*." Self-examination presupposes a degree of mental maturity. In Judaism, perhaps going back to the time of Jesus or before, the boy becomes *bar mitzvah* at the age of thirteen, after instruction in the Law. This practice recognizes that there is an age at which a boy can be expected to know the *torah* and to take responsibility for his own life before the LORD. Our ordinary age of confirmation is comparable. By setting confirmation and first communion ordinarily at the age of thirteen or fourteen, we express the conviction that a child of that age can "examine himself" in his own preparation to receive the Lord's Supper. He can confess for himself that he recognizes the

Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament and remembers what Jesus did for him. There may be good reasons for confirming the mentally retarded and receiving them as guests at Holy Communion at an age somewhat above the average. The preconfirmation instruction period for the mentally retarded may well take longer than the usual two years; retarded children may act more immature because they have been treated like little ones. We also may well find that there are mentally retarded adults whom we have previously overlooked. As a pastor grows in knowledge of retardation, teaching skills, and sanctified courage, he may also change his own earlier decision not to instruct a retarded individual. He must resist the temptation to put off instruction for no good reason.

As we evaluate the readiness of a retarded child or adult for first communion, we need to remind ourselves and the parents—as well as the retarded person himself, by our attitude toward him—that we are not judging the person's heart, his Christian faith, or his love for Jesus. Our observation is limited to the outward expressions of faith, the person's confession. According to his confession, does the person discern the Lord's body in the Sacrament? Does he remember the Savior, who sacrificed Himself on the cross for the sins of the world? These are questions that must be answered to the satisfaction of the pastor as a faithful steward of the means of grace.

The steward should want to make good use of all the means that God has entrusted to him. As a Christian parent, I would not blame my pastor if his evaluation of my child's readiness to receive Holy Communion were different from my own; he must decide, not I. But it would be a severe test of my confidence in his ministry if he only told me that the Lord's Supper is not necessary for salvation and then showed no interest in my child's need for Christian instruction and in the possibility that my child might receive the Lord's Supper.

Even if the pastor has the help of a teacher or lay member of the congregation in instructing the retarded person, could he himself teach the lessons about the Means of Grace? In this way the pastor could assure himself at first hand that the retarded person has a grasp of the Gospel, knows his Savior, and can examine himself in preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper. And the retarded child or adult would learn to know his pastor as a shepherd who loves all his sheep and cares about their spiritual needs.

It is one of the benefits of studying the preconfirmation instruction of retarded children and adults that we get back to the basics—not only for the “special” members of our churches, but for the “normal” children and adults, and also for ourselves. God's gift of salvation in Christ, the gift which is offered and sealed in the Sacraments, is free. It does not depend on intellectual works any more than it depends on the other works of the Law! The purpose of instruction in the Word is not to make little professors of our children, but to create and strengthen faith in the words of Jesus, “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” When the retarded child or adult confesses that faith and shows the capacity to “examine himself,” let us welcome him as a guest at the Lord's Supper. After all, “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these!” (Mark 10:14)

P.E.

IV. How Can We Teach Them?—Hints and Cautions

A pastor who is experienced in teaching normal children knows a good deal about how all human beings learn. Retarded children and adults are more like normal children and adults than they are different. But what are some of the differences for the pastor to consider in preconfirmation instruction?

A. Mental Age

The retarded child is operating at a mental age lower than his chronological age. Sixteen-year-old Bill, for example, has an I.Q. of 60, and so his mental age is 9.6 (multiply I.Q. by chronological age, divide product by 100). But use this information cautiously: Bill has had more experience than the average nine or ten-year-old; he may well have a larger vocabulary but less reading ability than the average fourthgrader. Depending on his family and school life, Bill's social development may be either above or below that of his mental age level. He may tell you about his kitty or about plans to elope with his girlfriend. It may help the pastor initially to know that Bill, for all his physical size, will function mentally approximately on a fourthgrade level. But human

beings differ so widely from each other that there is no substitute for just getting to know Bill himself. Conferences with his parents and with his special education teacher may be especially helpful for the pastor who wants to learn about his student's abilities and interests.

B. Learning Characteristics

The special learning characteristics of the retarded fall into two groups. The first result not from the mental retardation itself but from the person's "realizing his inadequacy in a learning situation" (*Helping the Retarded to Know God*, p. 58). Bill will *probably show a low tolerance for frustration, may exhibit a negative attitude toward learning activities, and may even tend to have a low opinion of his abilities and personal worth*. Bill has to stand on the sidelines and watch while his younger brother fields grounders for the junior high baseball team. He knows that his gradeschool sister reads books that he can't understand at all. He may already have decided that "I can't do nothin'." The pastor, having steeled himself to take on the challenge of instructing a retarded child, may find these qualities very disconcerting. He may kindly ask Bill, "Would you like to come to Bible school with me and learn about Jesus?" Bill, hearing "school" and "learn," may answer "No! Would you like to play cards with me?"

Hahn and Raasch, *Helping the Retarded to Know God* (pp. 6063), list about a dozen of the retarded learner's characteristics that are a direct result of his mental condition. I'll emphasize just a few that I think have special pertinence to preconfirmation instruction.

The retarded person is *inferior in his ability to think abstractly*. He cannot easily generalize, understand principles, draw conclusions from given premises. Bill may learn easily that the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, but be quite buffaloes by the meaning of "He has redeemed me." Much probably too much of our preaching and instruction is abstract. A pastor may become quite accustomed to speaking about "Christ's redemption," but when he works with Bill he will have to translate abstract into concrete language: "Jesus bought us for His own, and He paid for us with His own blood." (We may find that instructing the retarded improves our preaching!)

Bill's general language ability may be quite restricted. We may hope that his Sunday school Bible history stories have given him a basic Biblical vocabulary, but we may still find ourselves explaining even concrete words like "cross." The pastor had better be flexible enough to call a halt to his wellplanned lesson if he senses that he isn't getting through to Bill. Maybe some words need explaining.

The retarded person has a *limited attention span*, much like that of a small child. We may plan a halfhour catechesis on one topic for a regular instruction class, but there is no way we can hold Bill's interest that long at one activity. Within the space of an hour there will probably have to be three or four different activities. Bill may just have to get up and walk around once in a while. Or maybe the pastor might leave the desk for five minutes in the middle of the lesson and play catch with his student. The result might be a new readiness on Bill's part to sit still for a while, as well as the realization that he has found a friend.

C. Teaching Hints

In keeping with the special learning characteristics of the retarded, a few teaching hints deserve special emphasis. These are again selected from a longer list in *Helping the Retarded to Know God* (pp. 6467) .

Be realistic about the student's abilities. You know that Bill is mentally younger than the age of your average instruction class. That will mean teaching at a slower rate, not at your usual conversational pace. Having the same old Adam as every other child of God, Bill will be tempted to dawdle. But at least until you get to know him better, give him the benefit of the doubt and let him experience some success and praise. He will observe like a hawk any sign of impatience; don't let him see it. Later on, you may want to test him with some challenges, but it is a much safer course to prepare many pleasant experiences of success for the retarded learner. He fails often enough. After he is secure in the knowledge that he can learn and do *something*, he may be ready to find out that he can't do *everything*!

Because of the retarded learner's inferior ability to work with abstractions, begin at a very simple, concrete level. Bible history is simpler to teach than the abstractions of the Catechism; I would think that almost

every instruction period with a retarded child would include a Bible story. The account of Christ's crucifixion, for example, certainly has its place in the lessons on the Lord's Supper. The Pharisee and the publican can teach the concepts of "worthiness," and "unworthiness" to receive the Sacrament. By videotape we saw the Bethesda chaplain teach a lesson on Baptism. One child after another went through the motions of baptizing a doll with the name of a classmate and the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In teaching the Lord's Supper, I would certainly bring bread and wine to class, take the children to the church sanctuary to see the communion vessels on the altar, and perhaps have the class taste the bread and wine. Kurth's *Catechetical Helps* has other suggestions for the illustration of Biblical truths.

Teachers of the retarded break the learning down into very small steps. When some of the retarded residents of Bethesda Lutheran Home learn to tie their own shoes, the teachers separate this simple process into more than thirty steps. A study of our explanatory catechism will show that quite often there is a considerable jump in thought between questions. The bridges are supplied by a few words from the instructor, or the normal class's intelligence jumps the gap. For example, in teaching the institution of the Lord's Supper and the real presence of Christ's body and blood, our catechism "jumps back and forth" from Christ's institution to our celebration of the Sacrament. In two parallel columns below I have listed the questions in our explanatory catechism (pp. 219-222) on the left; and on the right, a breakdown of the same questions into two brief catecheses which might be used to teach the real presence to a retarded child or adult.

Explanatory Catechism	Two Catecheses for the Retarded
<p>392. Who instituted the Sacrament of the Altar? Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Altar.</p> <p>393. When did our Lord institute this sacrament? Our Lord instituted this sacrament the same night in which He was betrayed. Therefore it is called the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>394. For whom did Christ institute this sacrament? Our Lord instituted this Supper not only for those gathered with Him that evening, but for His Christians of all times to whom He says, This do in remembrance of Me.</p> <p>395. Wherein does this sacrament differ from the other means of grace? While the preaching of the Gospel and Baptism are for all, this sacrament is intended for those only who remember and confess the death of Christ.</p> <p>396. What practice is, therefore, observed among us? Christians, before being admitted to the Lord's Supper, are instructed in the principal truths of Christian doctrine and make public confession of their faith in Christ. (Confirmation.)</p> <p>397. What are the earthly elements in this sacrament? The earthly elements are bread and wine.</p> <p>398. What use is to be made of the bread and the wine? Bread and wine are given for us Christians to eat and to drink. They are not to be used for adoration, or as a sacrifice. (Corpus Christi Festival. Sacrifice of the Mass.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">I.</p> <p>Bible Story: Jesus Gives Communion to His disciples. Note: the underlined passages are to be memorized.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who gave Communion in the Bible story? Jesus. 2. Who is Jesus? The Son of God. 3. When did Jesus give communion? The night before He died on the cross. 4. To whom did Jesus give communion? To His disciples. 5. What food did Jesus give His disciples? Bread. 6. What did Jesus say when He gave His disciples the bread? <u>"Take, eat, this is my body."</u> 7. What drink did Jesus give to His disciples in the cup? Wine. 8. What did Jesus say when He gave His disciples the wine? <u>"Take, drink, this is my blood."</u> 9. What did Jesus give His disciples with the bread? His body. 10. What did Jesus give His disciples with the wine? His blood. 11. What did Jesus give His disciples with the bread and wine? His body and blood. 12. How could He do that?

399. What blessed communion, according to our Lord's word of institution, takes place in the Lord's Supper?
 In, with, and under the earthly elements, as we eat the bread and drink the wine, Christ gives us His body and blood. His body, given into death for us, is present with the bread; His blood, which was shed for us, is present with the wine. Hence this sacrament is also, called "Holy Communion." (*A footnote rejects the doctrines of the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches.)
400. Why do we say, It is the *true* body and the *true* blood of our Lord Jesus Christ?
 Our Lord clearly stated, This *is* my body, this *is* my blood.
401. How are the words of our Lord, This is my body, this is my blood, to be explained?
 The words are plain. What is given us in the sacrament is clearly stated, but it is too wonderful for human reason to grasp.

Jesus can do everything.
Jesus gave his disciples his body and blood with the Bread and Wine

II.

Bible Story: Jesus Gives Communion to His disciples. Other words for Communion: Holy Communion; the Lord's Supper; the Sacrament of the Altar. The story might be told through the use of review questions, fillins, etc, Bread and wine should be shown.

1. Who gives Communion in our church?
The pastor.
2. Who takes Communion in our church?
The members (the congregation).
3. What did Jesus say when He gave His disciples Communion?
"Take, eat, this is my body." "Take, drink, this is my blood." "Do this in remembrance of Me."
4. Why do we keep on giving and taking communion?
Because Jesus told us to.
5. What food does the pastor put on the altar?
Bread.
6. What drink does the pastor put in the cup?
Wine.
7. What will you see in the pastor's hand and in the cup?
Bread and wine.
8. What will you taste when you come to Communion?
Bread and wine.
9. But what did Jesus say about the bread?
"Take, eat; this is my body."
10. That will He give you to eat with the bread?
His body.
11. What did Jesus say about the wine?
"Take; drink, this is my blood."
12. What will He give you to drink with the wine?
His blood.
13. Does Jesus give you His real body and blood?
Yes.
14. How do you know that?
Because He says so.

Jesus gives us his body and blood with the bread and wine.

Questions 395 and 396 of catechism are not included in the eatecheses. Question 395, "Wherein does this sacrament differ from the other means of grace?" is simply omitted from the instruction. If the Sacrament of Baptism has been properly taught and if the student has a grasp of the Gospel, he knows that Baptism and the

preaching of the Word are for all nations. Question 396, stressing the need for instruction and confession, would be included later, in connection with the worthy reception of the Lord's Supper.

D. Cautions

Because of the retarded person's need for simplicity, there is no effort made in the above presentation of the Real Presence to teach the doctrines of other churches. I think that it would be a serious mistake in most cases to try to teach a retarded child or adult the doctrines of the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches about Holy Communion. The retarded student might become confused; or he might oversimplify and conclude that all the Catholics and Methodists are going to hell. Of course, not only the retarded oversimplify!

At the same time, we ourselves must beware of oversimplifying the instruction to the point of denying the truth. If we cannot teach a Biblical doctrine simply enough, we must decide: is this particular aspect of God's revelation necessary for the child to learn in order to be confirmed and to receive the Lord's Supper? If not, we may omit it. Note, for example, the omission of an explicit treatment of the doctrines of election and of the Antichrist in the explanatory catechism.

But we dare not oversimplify at the expense of truth. To put an extreme example: we would be remiss in our stewardship of the Means of Grace if we expected the retarded child to learn no more than "Jesus loves me" in order to receive the Sacrament. Yes, that sums up the Gospel, and we should never forget it; yes, in simplest terms that is the message of the Sacraments, too; yes, that is the content of saving faith; but no, that does not do justice to the Apostle's admonition, "A man should examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup" (I Corinthians 11:28). And it does not take seriously the following words of Paul: "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (v. 29). Our retarded spiritual children "need milk, not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12), but it should be "pure spiritual milk" (I Peter 2:2).

P.E.

V. Presenting the Gospel in Simple Language

A. An Example: the Resurrection

The following example of a lesson has been worked out by the writer. It is meant to be taught in about a half an hour.

Introduction to the lesson review from the last lesson.

1. How did Jesus die?

Answer: On a cross.

2. Who buried Jesus?

Answer: Friends buried Jesus.

3. Where did the friends bury Jesus?

Answer: They buried Him in a grave.

But Jesus did not remain dead. The Bible teaches that JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD. (To be learned by memory)

1. God Raised Jesus from the Dead. (To be learned by memory)

Tell the story of the Resurrection.

A. God raised Jesus.

B. The angels told the women, "Jesus is not dead, but alive,"

C. because God raised Jesus from the dead.

(Make use of pictures of the empty tomb.)

2. Many of His Friends Saw Jesus Alive. (To be learned by memory)

Tell the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples behind locked doors. This story has details which will attract attention. It is easily remembered, because it is dramatic. It is easy to use pictures with it.

3. Jesus Kept His Promise When He Rose the Third Day. (To be learned)

Jesus said that He would rise.

Now Jesus is alive.

Jesus always keeps His promise.

Discuss with examples what a promise is.

- Review:
1. Who raised Jesus?
 2. Who saw Jesus alive?
 3. How did Jesus keep His promise?

Learn: I Corinthians 15:20“Now is Christ risen from the dead,” or Job 19:25—“I know my Redeemer lives.”

Please note: The lesson that would follow this would teach the student what assurance the Resurrection gives us.

B. An Example: the Fourth Commandment

VI. The Place of Memorization in Instructions

A. A Difficult Area

The matter of memorization could very well be a major stumbling block in confirmation instructions for the mentally retarded. No doubt it is very difficult to any of us to think of a children’s instruction class without memorization. But what do we do about the retarded children? If then can’t memorize, or if we assume that they can’t memorize, we may be reluctant to even begin instructing them.

B. Why Do We Require Memorization?

No doubt it will be helpful if we rethink the whole matter of the place of memorization in any type of confirmation instructions. To do so, let us ask ourselves a few questions. Do we all require memorization in our adult instruction course? Yet some of these people may not have attended Sunday school as children, or if they did, they may have done very little memorizing. Furthermore, we will all agree that in any confirmation class some children memorize quite well, some not so well, depending on their ability or the amount of time they put into it. Is the amount of material they have memorized, and how well they have done it, the only deciding point in whether they will be confirmed?

Perhaps we should go back to even more basic questions. Why do we require memorization at all when instructing our children? Is it because we want the student to carefully read and study the passage? Memorization then becomes a discipline to lead to more concentrated study. Or is the main reason because we believe they will retain this portion of God’s Word throughout their lifetime? Memorization then becomes an aid to a Christian life. Or are the reasons a combination of the above? Or do we have other reasons for requiring memorization? Perhaps we can put it another way. In instruction class we want to indoctrinate the student in the truths of salvation. Memorization is an aid to this end. But is memorization itself necessary for faith, or necessary before coming to the Lord’s Supper?

All that we have said is not meant to downplay the place of memorization in confirmation instructions.

This writer believes it has a definite place. The children do learn the truths of God's Word, rather than simply hearing them stated. The children may well remember what they have memorized longer than they or their parents are ready to admit. As many pastors know from personal experience, in time of trial, sickness, or at the point of death, what has been learned in childhood may stand Christians in good stead. All of which leads us to believe that an effort should be made to have mentally retarded students memorize.

C. Shall the Retarded Memorize?

This leads us to two further questions. Are the mentally retarded able to memorize? And how much memorization shall be required? The answer to the first question is very simple. Yes. It may mean simplifying the language. It may require more patience. It may mean asking them to repeat what you have said, then explaining what it means, then asking them to repeat it again. But they are able to memorize. And by that method, they would be able to memorize word for word also.

The question of how much memorization shall be required is not as simple. The answer really is as much as they are able to memorize. But that will vary, and vary greatly, with the individual. In some cases, the Commandments (without the meanings), the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and a few key Bible passages may be all they can learn.

In some cases more is possible. It will depend on the level of reading ability, the attention span of the individual, the cooperation of the parents. It would seem that to require the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer would be the minimum. In some cases much more will be possible.

Let us not be afraid of memorization or use it as an excuse for failing to instruct. Nor should this be the only criterion for successful completion of the confirmation course.

VII. How Much Time is Needed For Such Instructions?

A. Suggestions When Setting Up a Course of Instructions

No doubt most pastors have a set amount of time that the confirmands will attend the confirmation instruction class. In the vast majority of cases, the children will be confirmed after attending for that amount of time. The class is geared to the average student.

But how much time is involved for the instruction of the mentally retarded? We do not mean to evade the issue by saying that there is no one single answer. Each person is different. Each person's mental ability varies. We suggest the following guidelines when setting up a course for instructing mentally retarded persons.

1. Discuss your goals frankly with the parents. Explain the need for a great deal of time, possibly a number of years. Do not promise confirmation on a given date.
2. Learn to know the mental age and ability of the person. Do not expect more or less than he is able to do.
3. Recognize that lessons will often need to be repeated. Repetition is very important for teaching the retarded.
4. Realize that each lesson will be shorter than with your average class. You cannot "cram" or speed things up some weeks. Thirty to fortyfiveminute classes may be the maximum.
5. Have a set goal for the minimum you feel is necessary. Know why you have chosen that goal.

B. Do I, As a Parish Pastor, Have the Time for the Extra Work?

This leads to a final, though important, question. Do I, as a parish pastor, have time for this extra work? It is a question that sincere parents will also ask. We have already spoken of the need for these instructions and the command of our Lord to teach "all nations." Now each of us must put this into practice in the way that works best for us. Here we offer a few suggestions.

1. We need to enlist the cooperation of the parents. The pastor's desire and his concern will certainly encourage them.
2. We are not talking about a lot of time each weekperhaps thirty minutes to an hour. We need to agree

with the parents to meet at a given time each week, perhaps late afternoon or right after supper. Be sure it is a time that will not get changed around a lot, but is almost always the same time each week.

3. Consider the use of a Christian Day School teacher, or a lay helper. Is there a dedicated member who can help? Today many more people are interested in special education. Such persons can be a real help, especially in teaching Bible stories and even in memorization.
4. Ask ourselves honestly: Is it a matter of time, or am I using this as an excuse because I'm not sure how to go about this? If a person told us he could not attend our regular adult instruction class because he works nights, we'd probably find time to instruct him during the day. Surely we have time for the mentally retarded, too. All of this is not said to imply that our pastors are unfaithful in their calling. Rather, let us become more aware of the need, seek the opportunities, and pray for God's blessing in this area of work.

R.U.