

ALL STANDING, a hymn may be sung.

Having entered, the Priest opens the Word and reads a sentence of Scripture.

The CONGREGATION SITTING, the CANDIDATE comes forward.

PRIEST: Since you have come before the Lord to confess your faith in Him and to make manifest your intention to obey His Commandments, hear now the Word of the Lord from the Sacred Scripture and the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem.

The Priest then reads from the following or other selections from the Word.

172 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and just altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. *Psalm 19: 7–11*

173 In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore, for Your name's sake lead me and guide me. *Psalm 31: 1, 3*

174 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! *Psalm 119: 9, 10*

175 I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me Your judgments. Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. The entirety of Your word is truth, and every judgment of Your justice endures forever. *Psalm 119: 15, 16, 34, 108, 133, 160*

176 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." *John 3: 3*

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and confined is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. **177**

Matthew 7: 13, 14

Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. **178**

Matthew 7: 24–27

Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. **179**

Matthew 10: 32–34, 37, 38

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. **180**

John 1: 6–13

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **181**

John 15: 7–10

It may be clearly seen that people have free choice in spiritual things, for there is permission of the evil which exists in everyone's internal person. People would have no free choice in civil, moral or natural things if they did not have free choice in spiritual things. **182**

TCR 479, 482: 1

183 All people, as long as they live in this world, walk midway between heaven and hell. This gives them a balance so that they have the free choice to look upward to God or downward to hell. If they look upward to God, they acknowledge that all wisdom comes from Him; and in their spirits they are actually in heaven among angels. But all those who are in falsities from evil look downward; and in their spirits they are actually in hell among devils. *TCR 69e*

184 That everyone has the freedom of thinking evil and falsity, and also of doing them so far as the laws do not restrain, is in order that he might be reformed; for goods and truths are to be implanted in his love and will, that they may become of his life; and this cannot be done unless he has the liberty of thinking evil and falsity as well as good and truth. This freedom is given everyone by the Lord. For that which is inseminated in freedom remains, but what is inseminated under compulsion does not remain, because it is not from the will of the person himself but from the will of him who compels. *NJHD 143*

185 People have free choice because they feel life within themselves just as if it were their own. God allows people to feel this so that He can be conjoined with them. For He cannot be conjoined with them unless it is reciprocal, and it becomes reciprocal only when they act in freedom altogether as from themselves. *TCR 504: 7*

186 There are two principles, one of which leads to all folly and insanity, and the other to all intelligence and wisdom. The former principle is to deny all things, or to say in one's heart that he cannot believe them before he is convinced by what he can grasp or feel. This principle is the principle which leads to all folly and insanity, and is to be called the negative principle. The other principle is to affirm those things which are of doctrine from the Word, or to think and believe within oneself that they are true because the Lord has said them. This is the principle that leads to all intelligence and wisdom, and is to be called the affirmative principle. *AC 2568: 4*

187 Read the Word and believe in the Lord, and you will see the truths which should constitute your faith and life. Everyone whose soul desires it is capable of seeing the truths of the Word in light. *AR 224*

188 One must first learn the doctrinals of the Church, and then exploration is to be made from the Word as to whether they are true; for they are not true just because the leaders of the Church have said so and their followers confirm it. When this exploration is done from an affection of truth, then one is enlightened by the Lord so as to perceive, without knowing whence, what is true, and he is confirmed in it according to the good in which he is. If these truths dis-

agree with the doctrinals, let him beware lest he disturb the Church. Afterward, when he is confirmed and thus is affirmative from the Word that they are truths of faith, it is then allowable for him to confirm them by all the knowledges that he possesses, of whatever name and nature. *AC 6047: 2, 3*

When anyone begins to think from himself, his first and chief concern **189** must be to desist from doing evils because they are sins against the Word, thus against God, and because if he does them he will gain not eternal life but hell; afterwards as he matures and grows up he must shun them as damned, and turn away from them in thought and intention. But in order so to refrain from them, he must pray to the Lord for help. The sins he must shun and turn away from are chiefly adulteries, frauds, illicit gains, hatreds, revenges, lies, blasphemies, and conceit. So far as anyone detests these evils because they are opposed to the Word and thus opposed to God, so far there is granted him communication with the Lord, and conjunction is effected with heaven. *AE 803: 3, 4*

Since wisdom is a matter of life first and consequently of reason, the question arises, what wisdom of life is. In brief summary, it is this: to refrain from evils because they are harmful to the soul, harmful to the civil state, and harmful to the body, and to do good things because they are of benefit to the soul, to the civil state, and to the body. *CL 130: 4*

All religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good. So far as anyone shuns evils as sins against the Lord, he does good, not from himself but from the Lord. *Life 1, 18*

So far as anyone is in the love of use, so far is he in the Lord, so far does he love the Lord and love the neighbor, and so far is he a human being. *Divine Love XIII*

Addressing the Candidate, the PRIEST says:

You have been baptized into the faith of the New Church and instructed in the Heavenly Doctrine. You have now come forward to make your own the confession and the promise made for you by your (parents/guardians) at your baptism. Now let me ask:

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one God of heaven and earth?

ANSWER: I do.

PRIEST: Do you believe in the Sacred Scripture and in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem?

ANSWER: I do.

PRIEST: Do you believe in keeping the Lord's Commandments, that you may enter into spiritual life?

ANSWER: I do.

PRIEST: Will you now declare your faith?

The Candidate shall then make a declaration of faith and purpose (see CONFESSIONS OF FAITH at #613–617). In composing a personal statement the Candidate may consult the SUMMARIES OF DOCTRINE at #618–721.

PRIEST: Let us pray.

ALL KNEELING, the Priest offers one of the following or another prayer.

A

Bless, O Lord, this Your servant who has made (his/her) confession before You this day. Defend (him/her) by the power of Your Word. Fill (him/her) with the love of Your truth, that (he/she) may daily increase in intelligence and wisdom, and be prepared for the life of Your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

B

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we beseech You to bestow Your blessing on this Your servant, who has come before You to confess (his/her) faith in You and in Your Word; give (him/her) strength and power to keep Your commandments, that (he/she) may enter into life, and be evermore conjoined with You in Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

C

O Lord, our Father in heaven, the source of all good and truth to angels and to people on earth, send Your Holy Spirit on this Your servant; teach (him/her) the hidden things of Your wisdom; warm (his/her) heart with the sacred fire of Your love, and strengthen (him/her) in a righteous and holy life, that abiding in You always, (he/she) may bring forth fruit to eternal life. Amen.

ALL: Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9–13

The PEOPLE STANDING, and the Candidate still kneeling, the Priest, laying on his hands, says:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6: 24–26

The PEOPLE SITTING and the Candidate having risen, the Priest may give the following or other instruction:

You have by this act of public confession placed yourself voluntarily under the government of the Lord. You are now to shun evils and do good from no one but the Lord alone. The Lord is now to be your Father, and the Church your Mother, and these are the Father and Mother you are now to honor and serve.

Guard your gift of spiritual freedom. But remember that with freedom comes responsibility before God and people; and the exercise of responsibility requires knowledge, enlightenment, and judgment. Read therefore the Word of the Lord in the Sacred Scripture and in the Heavenly Doctrine. Avail yourself of the means of instruction which the Lord has provided, in order that you may receive light from heaven. If this light becomes your light, the Lord Himself will be with you and will bless you in all the days that are to come, even to the end of life in this world and in heaven forever.

“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.” Amen.

Joshua 1: 7

A musical selection may be sung.

ALL STANDING, the Priest pronounces the Benediction, closes the Word, and retires.

Church Membership

Neither the sacrament of baptism nor the rite of confirmation bestows membership in any ecclesiastical body. They imply a readiness to enter into the life of the church. For membership in the General Church of the New Jerusalem, application should be made to the presiding Bishop. Such a membership gives the right to join the particular society or circle of one's residence, on signing its roll.