

## The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar

*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." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)*

Our Lord Jesus has given us a precious sacrament, we call the Lord's Supper, to be administered by His church. As we share in the Lord's Supper, we receive with the bread and wine the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus sacrificed for us on the cross. His body and blood are in and with the bread and wine in an invisible, mysterious, godly way we cannot understand. He gives us this sacrament as a means of grace and through it we receive the renewal and reassurance of forgiveness. Only through the pure grace and mercy of God is this renewal possible and properly received. It is important for us to understand that by sharing in this sacrament we are not *earning* forgiveness of our sins in any way.

It is essential that we partake of this sacrament correctly. The correct use of the sacrament strengthens our faith and our relationship with our God; incorrect use of the sacrament hurts a person's relationship with God and hardens him in impenitence. We are warned in 1 Corinthians 11:27, *"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."* The apostle Paul continues with this exhortation in verse 28: *"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."*

We believe a person should be of sufficient age and understanding to comprehend the basic truths of sin and grace and the nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper. Therefore we do not serve this sacrament to babies or little children, to those in a coma or uninstructed, or to those who for some other reason are unable to understand the nature and purpose of this sacrament. It is the custom of most Biblically-conservative Lutheran congregations to have youth confirmation classes for our youth followed by their public profession of faith before they receive the Lord's Supper. It is our custom to conduct these classes for our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders with the reception of the Lord's Supper beginning near the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

A person who understands the nature and purpose of this sacrament should be able to answer "yes" to the following questions as a means of examining himself:

1. Do I recognize that I am a sinner who has violated the will of God countless times?
2. Do I recognize that these sins have separated me from God?
3. Do I regret the sins of thought, word, and deed I have committed?
4. Do I recognize these sins have truly offended a holy God and have brought great pain into the lives of others?
5. Do I truly desire to turn from all these sins with no intent to keep them in my heart?
6. Do I truly believe that Jesus sacrificed Himself for all my sins with His own body and soul when He suffered the pain of the cross and the pain of hell?
7. Do I truly believe that God has forgiven all my sins freely and completely for Jesus' sake?
8. Do I abandon all self-righteous ideas of trying to earn God's favor through my own efforts or prayers, and do I place all my hope and all my confidence in Jesus, my Savior and my Lord?
9. Do I believe that in this sacrament Jesus is giving me His true body and blood together with the bread and wine as a reassurance and renewal of forgiveness through His sacrifice on the cross?
10. Do I earnestly intend, with the power of God's Spirit within me, to change whatever is sinful in my life so that my life is genuinely and honestly lived for Jesus Christ and my heavenly Father?

If, by the grace of God, you can answer yes to each of these questions, then you can know that the Holy Spirit is enabling you to partake of this sacrament correctly! Partake of it with joy and thanksgiving, and leave today with a burning desire to serve your God in all you think and do and say!

### **Note to visitors:**

If you sufficiently understand the nature and practice of the Lord's Supper in our fellowship, you are welcome to join us. If there remains any doubt in your mind about whether or not you should attend the Lord's Supper with us, it is best to wait until you can talk personally with our pastor.