



Adult Catechism Study | Session Seven: Communion

Overview

Large Catechism: "The chief point is God's Word and ordinance or command. For the Sacrament has not been invented nor introduced by any man... The Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed keep their nature and worth, even if you never keep, pray, or believe them. So also this honorable Sacrament remains undisturbed. Nothing is withdrawn from it, even though we use and administer it unworthily." (432)

First: What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

LC: " 'When the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament.' This saying of St. Augustine is so properly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better...The Word must make a Sacrament out of the element, or else it remains a mere element." (432)

"The Sacrament is not founded upon people's holiness, but upon God's Word...The Word by which it became a Sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief... Note and remember this well. For upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all errors and deception that have ever come or may yet come." (434)

Second: What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."



LC: “[Communion] is indeed called a food of souls, which nourishes and strengthens the new man. For by Baptism we are first born anew. But as we said before, there still remains the old vicious nature of flesh and blood in mankind. There are so many hindrances and temptation of the devil and of the world that we often become weary and faint, and sometimes we also stumble. Therefore, the Sacrament is given as a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself.” (434)
“Although the work is done and the forgiveness of sins is secured by the cross, it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word.” (435)

Third: Who receives this Sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well-prepared who has faith in these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.

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LC: “Whoever now accepts these words and believes that what they declare is true has forgiveness. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, since he allows it to be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at everyone’s door, yes, upon his table. But it is necessary that you also claim it and confidently view it as the words tell you. This is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily.” (435)

From Large Catechism: Why take Communion?

1) “[Jesus’] inviting and commanding words”

- a. “If a person withdraws from the Sacrament, he will daily become more callous and cold, and will at last disregard the Sacrament completely. To avoid this, we must examine our heart and conscience, and we must act like people who desire to be right with God. The more this is done, the more the heart will be warmed and enkindled, so it may not become entirely cold.” (437)
- b. “Therefore, we must make a distinction here between people. Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away. They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and who desire to be godly, must not absent themselves.” (438)

2) “There is besides this command also a promise.”

- a. “Here He offers to us the entire treasure that He has brought for us from heaven.” (438)
- b. “To be sure, it is true that those who despise the Sacrament and live in an unchristian way receive it to their hurt and damnation. Nothing shall be good or wholesome for



them. It is just like a sick person who on a whim eats and drinks what is forbidden to him by the doctor. But those who are mindful of their weakness desire to be rid of it and long for help. They should regard and use the Sacrament just like a precious antidote to the poison that they have in them.” (439)

- 3) “**Besides this, from yourself, you have your own distress, which is around your neck.**”
- a. “If, therefore, you are heavy laden and feel your weakness, then go joyfully to this Sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort, and strength. If you wait until you are rid of such burdens, so that you might come to the Sacrament pure and worthy, you must stay away forever. In that case, Christ pronounces sentence and says, ‘If you are pure and godly, you have no need of Me, and I, in turn, no need of you.’”
 - b. “But if you say, ‘What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?’
 - i. “I know no better counsel than that they *put their hand into their shirt to check whether they have flesh and blood...* the fact that we do not feel our weakness just makes things worse. It is a sign that there is a leprous flesh in us that can’t feel anything... if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. In short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.” (439)
 - ii. “In the second place, *look around you...* if you are in the world, do not think there will be lack of sins and misery. Just begin to act as though you would be godly and cling to the Gospel. See whether no one will become your enemy, and, furthermore, do you harm, wrong, and violence, and likewise give you cause for sin and vice.” (439)