

September 1, 2002
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Holy Communion”

1 Cor 10:16-17 NIV

16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Today is the first Sunday of the month, the week we take the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion). Traditionally that is what we have done for years. But taking Holy Communion must be more than just a traditional ritual we do once a month. Jesus, Himself instituted the Lord’s Supper at the conclusion of the Passover meal He had with His disciples just before His death. The Jewish meal of remembrance of God’s deliverance became the Christian remembrance meal (Jewish deliverance from slavery in Egypt, Christian deliverance from the slavery of sin). Jesus pronounced a blessing of thanksgiving over the bread and cup (This is why some Christians call the Lord’s Supper the Eucharist. Eucharist means Thanksgiving).

We are not told the words of thanksgiving or blessing, which Jesus pronounced over the bread and cup, but a common Jewish blessing in Jesus’ day was:

“Praise be to you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.”

“Praise be to you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.”

And so the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament of the church instituted by Jesus Himself. A sacrament is a rite instituted by Jesus to be a means of grace to those who participate in it. That is, it becomes a vehicle for the blessing of God and the imparting of spiritual power. It is an outward sign of an inner and spiritual grace; “A meeting place of the soul with God.”

I still love gathering around the dinner table. When my family gets together (my mom, dad, my sisters and their families) we just stay at the table all day. We not only eat but we talk, and laugh. We love being together like that and communicating with one another. We appreciate the privilege of meeting together and we appreciate our commitment to one another.

The very purpose and intention of the eating and drinking at the Lord’s table is holding communion with God, and partaking of the privileges, and professing ourselves under the obligations, which result from the death and sacrifice of Christ. We do this together with all true Christians, with whom we also have communion.

1 Cor 10:16-17 NLT

16 When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we *sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ*? And when we break the loaf of bread, aren't we *sharing in the benefits of the body of Christ*? 17 And we all eat from one loaf, showing that *we are one body*.

The cup we take is:

1. A Participation in the Blood of Christ

Paul asks, "When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ?" (v16) (NKJV) "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

When I was in grammar school someone in my class had a cut on their finger. He wiped the blood on me and said, "Now we are blood brothers for life!" Well, I don't even remember whom it was who did that ... so I guess we did not remain blood brothers for life. He did it all wrong anyway. Usually both participants would make a little cut on their finger and then put their fingers together at the cut. Then the two would be declared blood brothers /sisters for life. Paul says when we take the cup with thanksgiving we are participating in the blood of Christ. We are proclaiming our acceptance of the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus applies the blood and says in affect, "Now we are blood brothers for life!" (Or blood brother/sister).

The Lord's Supper is a feast. To partake of the feast is to partake of the sacrifice. And so to be a guest of the one of whom the sacrifice was offered.

1 Cor 11:26 - For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Those who partake of the cup and bread partake spiritually of the blood and body of Christ and the benefits of His Sacrifice. We are acknowledging our faith in His sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. We are proclaiming that Jesus is our Savior. We share in the realization of the effects of the Lord's death as set forth in these emblems. What a joy and what a weight was lifted when I first realized and accepted Jesus and His sacrifice for the forgiveness of my sins. What a joy to participate / to share the benefits of the sacrifice / blood of Christ remembered in the cup we take.

The bread we take is:

2. A Participation in the Body of Christ

We who partake of this sacred bread are to remember that we are partakers of His Body. We have joined our selves with Him. We have fellowship with Him. We are part of His Body but He is the head. As the cup reminds us that Jesus is our Savior, the bread reminds us that He is our Lord. Because we have united with Him we must flee from idols (see v14 - Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.).

Don't let anything be more important than obeying the Lord and giving your all to Him and for His will. Devote /dedicate yourself to God only. Holy Communion reminds us and declares that we are united and dedicated to Christ. We are one with Him. His Holy Spirit lives in us and we must not take what has been made holy and use it in ungodly ways. We as God to sanctify us entirely: our thoughts, our actions – body, mind and spirit. The benefits of sharing / participation in the body of Christ is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). The benefits of sharing / participation in the body of Christ is all the promises of God "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ." (2 Cor 1:20). Including this promise from Jesus (John 14:14) You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15).

1 John 5:14-15 NLT

14 And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. 15 And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

What a blessing to share in the Body of Christ. This is what we are to remember and rejoice in as we take the bread.

The cup is the cup of Redemption through the blood of Christ that we take with thanksgiving. Our sins are forgiven. The bread is the bread of life that we take with thanksgiving. We are one with God (with all the blessings that come by being one with Him). Then there is one other thing we are reminded of in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

3. We are one body

"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body."

"By partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our (Savior's) broken body, who is the only true bread that came down from heaven, we (unite) into one body, become members of Him and one another." Those who truly partake by faith have this communion with Christ, and one another; and those who eat the outward elements make profession of having this communion, of belonging to God and the blessed fraternity (fellowship) of his people and worshippers. This is the true meaning of this holy rite (ceremony). (From Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

1 Cor 12:12-13, 24-27 NLT

“The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up only one body. So it is with the body of Christ...So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other equally. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.”

We who are Christians are part of His body and we are one body. The body works together. Every part is important. When one part hurts all parts suffer. If one part is honored we all rejoice.

A cancer cell is a selfish cell. It takes from the body (for itself) without giving to the body. But a healthy body does not function that way. And so we must care about the good of the body and do our part in the work of the church - not just take without giving. Each part must do its part and cooperate. My brother-in-law had a stroke. When it first happened he could not move his arm. He said, “you know how scary it is to tell your arm to do something and it doesn’t do it?” A healthy body does not function that way. We must work together. My brother-in-law soon discovered how important the use of that hand was even though it was not his dominant hand and he soon realized how the rest of his body would have to compensate for the loss of the use of that hand. So it is in the Church. One someone is not doing their part (because they don’t want to or can’t) we are handicapped. We may still get the work done, but it is much harder to do. And can you imagine one part of the body hating another part of your body. Impossible!

We are the body of Christ. We are reminded of that in Holy Communion. Holy Communion is for only those who believe these things. And so if you believe:

1. Take the cup with thanksgiving – you are a participant in the blood of Christ: Jesus forgives your sin- He is your Savior
2. Take the bread with thanksgiving – you are a participant in the body of Christ: You are one with God – Jesus is your Lord
3. Take from the one loaf with thanksgiving – because we who are many are one. We have God and one another – we are the church.

Write down a sin that must be confessed and renounced. – Jesus forgives
Write down what must be offered up, put to death *or* what must be accepted because Jesus is Lord.

Write down a need that you have.

And bring these things to the altar. Leave them there and have Holy Communion.