

DO THIS FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Dear Diary,

Well, I went to Holy Communion again today. It was just like the other times. I don't see what the big deal is.

I must be missing something. A lot of people think Communion is pretty important. But shouldn't I feel something when I receive it? I just go through the motions, act pious to please the folks, and sit down again.

Am I missing something?

Ashley

Many young people feel the same way that Ashley felt when she wrote in her diary. They wonder what the big deal is over Communion, or maybe they feel bad that they don't feel much and figure that there's something wrong with them.

Holy Communion is important for Christians. But it doesn't usually evoke the same kind of feeling that you might get at a rock concert or a championship game. Holy Communion is a quieter thing—a deeper thing.

Session 6 talked about where Holy Communion came from and what is promised to you through it. This session focuses on how you can be aware of God's presence in the sacrament and how you can be open to receiving the *whole* gift that God wants to give you at the altar.

3 STATEMENTS

- The remembrance of Christ is how Christ meets us in the here and now.
- As we are drawn closer to Christ, we are drawn closer to all Christians.
- Preparing to receive Holy Communion is preparing to be encountered by Christ.



JEFF GREENBERG

the
Source

CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION

When Lutheran Christians prepare to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we do so within our worship service through the liturgy. The word *liturgy* is an interesting one. It comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "work of the people."

The primary liturgies for members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada are printed in *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Many congregations, though, choose to use other liturgies. Whatever liturgy a congregation uses, it helps provide a rich structure to the worship service.

If you use *LBW*, find the first musical setting of the liturgy that begins on page 57. If you use a different liturgy, get a copy of it and find the beginning of the service you use.

Most liturgies have these parts.

- *Confession of Sin and Forgiveness* (p. 57). We acknowledge our sin and have the opportunity to hear God's words of forgiveness spoken to us.

- *The Entrance Rite* (pp. 57-62). This usually contains a greeting, the Kyrie, the Hymn of Praise, and the Prayer of the Day.

- *The Service of the Word* (pp. 62-68). A focal point of the worship service. In this portion we hear readings from Scripture and the Sermon. Then we publicly confess (or state) our belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a Creed. We respond to what God has done by sharing our gifts in the Offering, and in the Prayer of the Church we pray together about our concerns for the world, the church, and for people we know who need God in a special way.

- *The Peace* (p. 66). The portion of the liturgy in which we prepare for and receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion and affirm a spirit of unity and forgiveness. It begins as the celebrant says, "The peace of the Lord be with you." The congregation responds, "And also with you." Then congregation members are encouraged to share God's peace with one another.

- *The Great Thanksgiving* (pp. 68-74). This is an important prayer in which we acknowledge to God all the mighty things God has done for our benefit and pray that God will be present through the Holy Spirit in the sharing of the sacrament.

The Words of Institution are part of the Great Thanksgiving. The Words of Institution recall the words that Jesus spoke on the last evening with his followers before his crucifixion—the night when he first offered them his body and his blood in the bread and the wine.

The remembrance of Christ is how Christ meets us in the here and now.

Then we receive the sacrament itself. The celebrant or assistant always has an important thing to say when giving us the bread or the wine. When receiving the bread we hear, "The body of Christ, given for you." When receiving the wine we hear, "The blood of Christ, shed for you."

Then the liturgy breaks into a tone of celebration as we sing and pray, offering our thanksgiving to God for the great gift we have received. The service ends with the familiar benediction that, though spoken by the worship leader, is actually God's last word to us.

WHAT DOES MARTIN LUTHER SAY?

Martin Luther wanted people to realize what a precious gift Holy Communion is. He took special pains in his explanation of the sacrament to help people recognize this.

Turn to Part 3 of Luther's explanation of the Sacrament of Holy Communion (page 172). He asks, "How can eating and drinking do all this?" Look carefully at his answer.

Just like we learned about Baptism, it is the power of God along with the bread and wine that makes Holy Communion a special thing. Luther puts his focus on the words "given and shed for you for the remission of sins." He points out that these words, when we believe them, are the doorway through which wonderful gifts come to us. Luther would want to point out that the words themselves are not magic, like a spell of some sort. Rather they are the truth about what God gives us.

IN REMEMBRANCE

When Jesus first shared the bread and wine with his followers and called it his body and blood, he gave a very direct command. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." A quick look at these words might give the impression that Holy Communion was no more than a memory jogger. If that was all that Holy Communion was, though, a good picture would accomplish the

same thing. "Do this in remembrance of me" has a far deeper meaning.

In Jesus' day, "remembering" wasn't limited to just thinking about something or someone. To remember in the way that Jesus used the term was to relive something—to bring the past right up into the present.

When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he wanted his followers to know that whenever they ate the bread and drank the wine in this special way, Jesus would *actually* be with them—not just as a fond memory, but as a powerful reality. Jesus would never be far from his followers. Not then. Not today! *The remembrance of Christ is how Christ meets us in the here and now.*

THE CROSS-SHAPED RELATIONSHIP

With Christ *actually* in our midst during this sacrament, something else happens, too. We become aware of how incredibly related we are to all of God's people. If Christ is our very present brother, then we are very real brothers and sisters to each other—not just in our imaginations, but for real.

Many Christians think of this as a "cross-shaped" relationship. The vertical (or up-and-down) beam of the cross reminds us of our relationship with God through Christ. The horizontal (or sideways) beam reminds us of our relationship with each other. If either beam is missing, you do not have



As we are drawn closer to Christ, we are drawn closer to all Christians.



a cross. If either relationship is missing, you do not have a true Christian church.

An important part of Holy Communion is its powerful reminder that both relationships are of utmost importance. *As we are drawn closer to Christ, we are drawn closer to all Christians.*

GETTING READY

Perhaps you are already a communing member of your congregation. Perhaps you will receive your first Communion at confirmation time. Either way, an important question is "How do we get ready to receive this gift?"

This is an important question because *preparing to receive Holy Communion is preparing to be encountered by Christ.*

Because Communion is a gift, there is nothing you *have* to do to receive it. Luther said all one needs is "simply a believing heart." But we really cheat ourselves out of the power of the experience if we treat Communion like it was just another thing to do. There might be some things you *want* to do to get ready to receive this gift.

Preparing to receive Holy Communion is preparing to be encountered by Christ.

Some Christians make sure that they are well rested and feeling as good as possible when they go to receive Holy Communion. They know that it is hard to focus all of one's self on Christ if they feel miserable!

Most Christians want to be well-prepared spiritually, too. They will say special prayers, asking that their hearts and minds be open to receiving Christ. They will pray for their brothers and sisters in the faith, because Communion always reminds them of their cross-shaped relationship.

In the margin write down some ideas about preparing to receive Holy Communion that you would like to try.

Shaping
life

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Many people believe that Holy Communion is one of the most remarkable things they ever get to do. What about you? Whether you already commune or are getting ready to, does Holy Communion mean something special to you?

1. On the following continuum line, put an "X" on the line to indicate how special Holy Communion is to you now. Put a "O" on the same line to show how you would like it to be.

Not at all _____ Very, very

2. Here's another one. Do you think Holy Communion actually brings people closer to Jesus?

Not at all _____ Very, very

3. Do you think Holy Communion actually brings people closer to each other?

Not at all _____ Very, very

4. If people understood Holy Communion better, they would be better Christians.

Not at all _____ Very, very

5. If people had stronger feelings during Holy Communion, they would be better Christians.

Not at all _____ Very, very

RENEWED IN RELATIONSHIP

Why does God care that we be renewed in relationship with others?

Sometimes people slip into thinking that Holy Communion is only a personal matter between God and them. They would like it better if they didn't have to put up with everyone else. For the most part, they want a good relationship with God, but don't worry as much about relationships with other people—especially people who are different or who think differently or who act differently.

What difference do you think it would make if *all* Christians took the cross-shaped relationship seriously? In the next column are some problems many people face. Write an idea or two about the difference a cross-shaped relationship could make among people.

Poverty _____

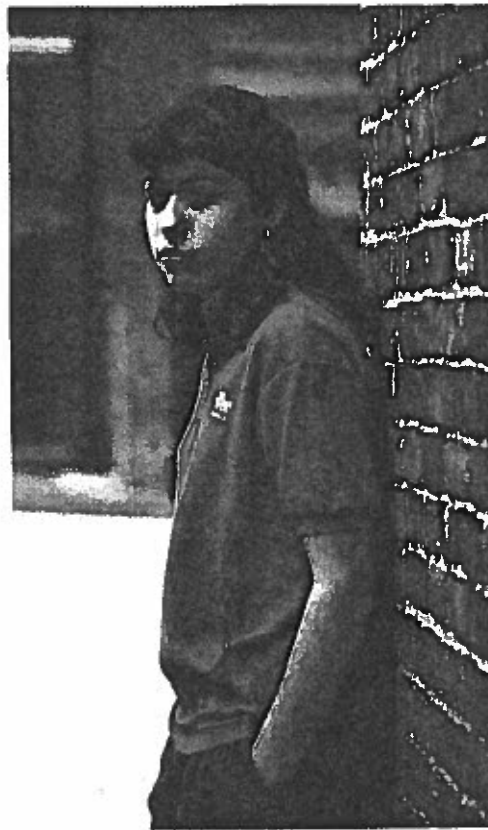
War _____

Drugs _____

Poor schools _____

Divorce _____

Loneliness _____



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FURTHER

opportunities

Bible Reading and Reflection

Read the following Bible passages and spend a few minutes thinking about each one. Think of them especially in terms of what we have learned about how Christ is really present with us in Holy Communion. Think also in terms of what the passage can teach us about a "cross-shaped" relationship.

- 1 Corinthians 11:23-25
- John 14:1-6
- Luke 10:25-28
- Philippians 1:3-11
- 1 Peter 2:1-5

Memory

Turn to Part 3 of Martin Luther's explanation to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Work each day to memorize Luther's answer to the question "How can eating and drinking do all this?"

Activity 1

If you began any of the art projects in Session 6, continue your work on them.

Activity 2

Work on cross-shaped relationships as a class or as an individual.

Think about some children of God in your community who could benefit from your attention and care. They may be elderly people at a local nursing home or new people in the community or hungry people or disadvantaged children. They may be people you know but aren't friendly toward. Then think of some good way you can live out your cross-shaped relationship with them by showing you care or giving your help.

Activity 3

Below are four sentences, but they are a mess. To unscramble the sentences, you will first have to unscramble each word and then unscramble the word order to make the sentence. Write in the margin.

● won Teh of Cihrts Ctsirh teems su in memrerbecna rehe dna si woh het.

● Csthri to loHy Cniomomun is deretnuocne rapleprgn ceirvee to eb yb raPleprgn.

● dnawr resolc Cisthr, rae ew ot we ear As Cnshrtisa to lal serclo wandr.

● yad, themosing sawn't ot "bermerinemrg" stuj In kingniht detmill touab Juses' or meoseno.

FOCUS

ON REMEMBRANCE

Have you ever smelled or heard or saw something that suddenly caused an event from your life to come back so powerfully that for a moment it was almost as if you were living it all over again? That sort of experience is dif-

ferent than just thinking about the past event. It is far more powerful than that. That's much the same as what "remembrance" meant to the Jewish people of Jesus' day. It was the kind of remembering that Jesus meant when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."