

*a sermon from MATTHEW 26:26-28:*

ON THE BLESSED JOYS OF RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

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9/26/2005 AD

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I. REFERENCES

## I. A PRAYER

Whenever we have the privilege of receiving The Holy Communion, let us always offer up such a prayer: “O Sacred Banquet, in Which CHRIST is received, the memory of His passion is renewed, the soul is filled with Grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us!”<sup>1</sup> Let us then receive and be thankful! AMEN.

## II. A PROPOSITION

In receiving The Holy Communion worthily and in humble faith, we are drawn into JESUS CHRIST Himself, assuring our souls of salvation in Him and professing our common faith in The Lord, Who gave up His Body and Blood for the remission of our sins!

## III. A SCRIPTURE - MATTHEW 26:26-28 – THE INSTITUTION

26 And as they were eating, JESUS took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My Body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is My Blood of The New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.<sup>2</sup>

## IV. INTRODUCTION

Who was it that commanded Christians to keep The Lord’s Supper? Was communion ordained by men? No! Was it instituted by The Church? No! Rather, communion was ordained and commanded by our Lord JESUS CHRIST Himself at the occasion of The Last Supper before His crucifixion on The Cross. It is not optional to The Christian man to receive, nor is it a peripheral focus of The Faith. And as we shall see, when we receive The Holy Communion worthily and in humble faith, we are drawn into JESUS CHRIST Himself, assuring our souls of salvation in Him and professing our common faith in The Lord, Who gave up His Body and Blood for the remission of our sins!

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, “O Sacred Banquet,” by Saint Thomas Aquinas, p 67.

What does GOD do for us and in us when we worthily receive Communion rightly administered within The faithful Church? It is “a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another.” It is “a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death.” It must be received “rightly, worthily, and with faith.” It is a special mystery of GOD given to the faithful and administered by The Church. The consecrated Bread we receive “is a partaking of the Body of Christ“ and the consecrated Cup “is a partaking of the Blood of CHRIST.”<sup>3</sup>

CHRIST's sacrifice on the Cross to redeem mankind from sin and its terrible consequences, being “once made,” is all sufficient for all times. It is totally “perfect [to work] redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction” on our behalf, requiring nothing further to be added to it by man. It covers “all the sins of the whole world,” which includes those resulting from The Fall of mankind in the “original” sins of Adam and Eve, and the “actual“ sins committed by men.<sup>4</sup> So “there is... [no] other satisfaction for sin “ but that of our Lord JESUS CHRIST: The Old Testament of salvation by the blood of animals ended. No amount of good works will gain us entrance into Heaven. And no false religious system devised by man's vain imagination can save the lost sinner from the flames of hell.<sup>5</sup>

Saint Thomas Aquinas sums up the nature of The Sacrament of The Eucharist, in that it “...is a sign that commemorates what precedes it – CHRIST's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through CHRIST's Passion – Grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us – future glory!”<sup>6</sup>

## V. THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION INSTITUTED BY CHRIST

Where shall we start, but with the basics. It was our Lord JESUS CHRIST Who instituted The Sacrament of Holy Communion as a Divine Command of The New

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<sup>2</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 26:26-28.

<sup>3</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper.

<sup>4</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXXI. Of the one Oblation of CHRIST finished upon The Cross.

<sup>5</sup> 3, Ibid, Article XXXI.

<sup>6</sup> 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, The Sacraments of Eternal Life, # 1130, p 320.

Testament. So Saint Matthew records The Lord's Words of institution which opened the doors of salvation to men by the atoning sacrifice of His Own Body and Blood given up for us as in MATTHEW 26:26-28, "And as they were eating, JESUS took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My Body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My Blood of The New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins!"<sup>7</sup>

Prior to this time, The Old Testament was in force by GOD's command to the ancient Israelites for the forgiveness of sin. Animals were sacrificed and their blood was accepted by GOD as an atonement for the forgiveness of the people's sins. But now CHRIST, having sacrificed Himself on behalf of the sins of men, becomes the very source of atonement for all those who confess CHRIST as Lord and repent of their sins. Holy Communion then is the "sacrament of the reception by the power of the Holy Ghost of CHRIST's Body and Blood, instituted by CHRIST Himself at the Last Supper, for a perpetual remembrance of His one sacrifice of Himself once offered as a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."<sup>8</sup>

So Holy Communion brings to the Christian a most remarkable power of GOD in which CHRIST's substitution for all of mankind on The Cross is sufficient to cleanse from The Father's sight all the sins of the entire world! Yet, unless the individual confesses CHRIST earnestly as Lord and Saviour, that sufficient atonement for all sins is not applied to a man's soul. And it is within The Church alone that this most precious grace of GOD is administered.

This New Testament "was put in force by the death of CHRIST. The old covenant given by GOD to Israel required continual sacrifices [of animals] for sin. But CHRIST's death provided a perfect sacrifice."<sup>9</sup> CHRIST's sacrifice on our behalf makes us seen as righteous and without sin before GOD The Father, thus saving our eternal

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<sup>7</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 26:26-28.

<sup>8</sup> 5, Tarsitano, "Outline of Anglican Life," What is the sacrament of Holy Communion, p 34.

souls from everlasting damnation or separation from GOD. CHRIST's sacrifice on our behalf also begins the process of rebirth into a new Christian life of righteousness in this life. But these priceless gifts of GOD are only for those who earnestly confess CHRIST as Lord and Saviour and receive them in the body of CHRIST on earth, which is The Church!

Sing, my tongue, The Saviour's glory,  
Of His Flesh the mystery sing;  
Of The Blood, all price exceeding,  
Shed by our immortal King,  
Destined for the world's redemption,  
From a noble womb to spring!<sup>10</sup>

#### VI. THE PROMISED MESSIAH FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

Holy Scripture prophesied of a day when GOD would bring the Old Testament sacrificial system to a close and open a better and fuller day in which a New Testament sacrifice would be established. The Israelite prophet Jeremiah foresaw by revelation from GOD a day when a New Covenant would replace the Old Covenant in redeeming man from sin and being made righteous before GOD. He foresaw that it would indeed be a day when The Almighty would write His holy Law upon the very hearts of the His saints!

So the prophet recorded these Words for us in JEREMIAH 31:31-34, "Behold, the days come, saith The LORD, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their GOD, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know The LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith The LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more!"<sup>11</sup>

While the Old Covenant enforced the Laws of GOD externally and was written by

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<sup>9</sup> 6, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, MATTHEW 26:26-28, p 978.

<sup>10</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, "Pange Lingua, a Eucharistic Hymn," stanza 1, by Saint Thomas Aquinas, p 67.

GOD's finger on the tablets given to Moses in Mount Sinai, the New Covenant "shall be written in their hearts by the finger of The Spirit." By CHRIST's sacrifice on The Cross, our Heavenly Father works in the hearts of Believers "a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law," which the Christian keeps with joy and which is the greatest treasure of The Church on earth! <sup>12</sup>

What a wondrous and glorious day Jeremiah foresaw - a day when men would not simply know of GOD from a distance, but know GOD personally! This now is the Age when both Jew and Gentile may become children of The LORD, being rescued from everlasting separation from The Creator by the passion, death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST! For the ancient Israelite Priests "preached [of GOD's ways] but now and then, and [only] in the temple, and to a few in comparison; but now all... may know GOD by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the Church, good knowledge of GOD shall be taught." <sup>13</sup>

So when we are reborn into a new life as a Christian by confessing our Lord JESUS CHRIST as The Saviour, our sins before GOD fall away and we are cloaked in the righteousness of The Son! For when our sins are taken away in CHRIST, "by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction [to fellowship with GOD] is removed, ...Divine grace runs down [into our lives] like a river, like a mighty stream" of unstoppable joy! <sup>14</sup> And though in Heaven our fellowship with GOD will be face-to-face, in this world that full fellowship with GOD is to be found only within The Church.

Of a pure and spotless Virgin  
Born for us on earth below,  
He, as Man, with man conversing,  
Stayed, the seeds of truth to sow;  
Then He closed the solemn order  
Wondrously His life of woe! <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 2, KJV, JEREMIAH 31:31-34.

<sup>12</sup> 7, Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary, JEREMIAH 31:27-34, p 1291.

<sup>13</sup> 7, Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 7, Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, "Pange Lingua, a Eucharistic Hymn," stanza 2, by Saint Thomas Aquinas, p 67.

### VIII. THE FINISHED WORK OF CALVARY REVEALED TO ST. PAUL

Consider then St. Paul's inspired words on the New Testament, which we celebrate at each Communion. It is not by good works of the Old Testament Law that GOD ever justified any man, but rather He has always looked for a penitent and humble heart. And let us not think that GOD would be so unloving as to leave men without a means for justification from sin when the ancient Jewish Temple came to its final destruction! For CHRIST's sacrifice on our behalf alone can justify our souls and remove the sin-guilt that separates us from GOD!

This is what Saint Paul declares to us in ROMANS 5:1-10, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our Lord JESUS CHRIST: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD. But GOD commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us... Much more then, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to GOD by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life!"<sup>16</sup>

For although, "CHRIST died under our sins," we can rejoice that "He was raised and exalted to GOD's right hand, now to appear in the presence of GOD for us." Oh, the rejoicing that is ours, for our certain future hope of eternal life in the very presence of The Creator Himself is assured in CHRIST! So every time we receive Holy Communion within The Church, let us recall that "we, for whom He suffered, are [now] completely justified" before GOD and reconciled to Him!<sup>17</sup>

Oh, the love of GOD beyond our human understanding - that He would love us so much as to send His Own Son JESUS CHRIST to become the ultimate sacrifice, that we who confess CHRIST as Lord and Messiah should be reconciled to Him in this life and in eternity! It is thus no wonder that the faithful Church carefully guards and dutifully administers Holy Communion to the Faithful with joyous worship and boundless

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<sup>16</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 5:1-10.



thanksgiving!

On the night of that Last Supper  
Seated with his chosen band,  
He, The Pascal Victim eating,  
First fulfils The Law's command:  
Then as Flood to all his brethren  
Gives Himself with His own hand! <sup>18</sup>

#### IX. SEEING THE FULLER DEPTH OF THE NATURE OF HOLY COMMUNION

We have seen that Holy Communion is ordained by CHRIST as a Command to all Christians in MATTHEW 26:26-28; it is not optional to The Fatih! While the Old Testament system of animal sacrifices offered as an atonement for sin has ended with the destruction of the ancient Israelite Temple, GOD has not left mankind without a means of grace. That one and only sacrifice as an atonement for man's sins is found in the passion, death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST and nowhere else. This is the great vision revealed by GOD in JEREMIAH 31:31-34, which indeed causes The Law of GOD to be written upon the hearts of His saints! Communion is the constant reminder to faithful Christians of the forgiveness of our sins by the body and blood of our Lord, safely guarded and rightly administered by the faithful Church.

We have seen the many functions of Holy Communion to the penitent Believer and to The Church: First as a sign of Christian love. Second as a sacred means of salvation and forgiveness of sins. Third as a grace of GOD that must be received worthily and with faith. Fourth as a reminder of our spiritual union with CHRIST. Fifth as a sacrifice sufficient for all of man's sins. Sixth as requiring nothing further to be added by man for salvation. Seventh as covering, not just the original sin of mankind, but also those of the penitent Christian. And while many so-called religions may claim to offer forgiveness of sins, peace, joy and eternal life, Holy Communion reminds us that only The One True Religion of Christianity - found in The faithful Church alone - does in fact do so!

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<sup>17</sup> 8, Scofield KJV Bible, ROMANS 5, footnote 1, p 1197.

<sup>18</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, "Pange Lingua, a Eucharistic Hymn," stanza 3, by Saint Thomas Aquinas, p 67.

And we have seen in ROMANS 5:1-10 that we are justified only by faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Only at The Cross can we receive peace with GOD and reconciliation with Him. It is the grace of GOD upon which our salvation unto eternal life in Heaven rests, guarded by The faithful Church. And our justification in The Saviour reveals the love of GOD for us that is beyond our human understanding, that while we were yet sinners, GOD sent His Son to undergo His passion, death and resurrection on The Cross on our behalf!

Words made flesh, the bread of nature  
By His Word to Flesh he turns;  
Wine into His Blood He changes;  
What though sense no change discerns?  
Only be the heart in earnest,  
Faith her lesson quickly learns!<sup>19</sup>

#### X. IN CONCLUSION

So what is to be said of Holy Communion in light of all these blessed truths of The LORD? Perhaps a warning to all men not to take The Lord's Supper in vain. For if one dares to receive this most blessed Sacrament with an unrepentant soul, or a rebellious mind, or a perverted and sin-loving lifestyle, or an unbelieving heart, there is a great danger! For the very same Bread and Cup of Divine of Holy Communion that The Church gives to the upright man as a blessing is to the impious man eternal damnation!

And so the faithful Church warns: "The Wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth... the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ; yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."<sup>20</sup> But in receiving The Holy Communion worthily and in humble faith, we are drawn into JESUS CHRIST Himself, assuring our souls of salvation in Him and professing our common faith in The Lord, Who gave up His Body and Blood for the remission of our sins! In

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<sup>19</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, "Pange Lingua, a Eucharistic Hymn," stanza 4, by Saint Thomas Aquinas, p 68.

<sup>20</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXIX. Of the Wicked, which eat not The Body of CHRIST

The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

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