

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



A depiction of Luther Conducting Holy Communion

The Event

Among the many controversies with the Roman Catholic Church two are brought up in this article. First, as early as **1522**, Luther pointed out that the Roman Catholic doctrine of serving only the bread was untenable. Communion is, as Luther said: “...a command to take both elements when we want to receive the Sacrament”...a command defensible by the Word of God. Second, in **1525**, Luther wrote against the denial of the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy communion. Luther spent a great deal of time in defense of the “real presence” of Christ’s body and blood received by all partakers of Holy Communion. Luther believed that the Real Presence, as expressed in Jesus’ words “*this is*”, does not mean “represents”.

What Luther Says

Luther defines the Sacrament of the Altar in the Catechism “as the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself” ...as written in the Gospel’s of Matthew, Mark and Luke and by St. Paul.

Luther: “...1 Cor. 10:16 forces us to the conclusion that all who break, eat and receive this bread receive the body of Christ and partake of it. “...the Lord Christ also ordained and commanded that in His church His essential body and blood are to be present in the Lord’s Supper...in a bodily and yet incomprehensible manner”.

Luther: “I certainly love it with all my heart, the precious, blessed Supper of my Lord Jesus Christ, in which He gives me His body and blood to eat and to drink orally, with the mouth of my body, accompanied by the exceedingly sweet and gracious words: Given for you, Shed for you.”

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s Doctrinal Position

We believe that the true body and blood of Jesus Christ are present under the bread and wine for Christians to eat and to drink. Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in this sacred meal and gives us the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. We believe that Holy Communion is a very personal way God works in our lives to save us.

Who is worthy? We practice closed communion because all who commune receive abundant blessing and unbelievers eternal harm. Lutherans “qualify” the unworthy and unprepared by first teaching them their need for Christ, and the forgiveness and life that He gives in the Sacrament.

We do not try to explain how Jesus is present under the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper; rather we believe, teach, confess and rejoice that He is present. Luther: “We maintain that the bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ.”

We believe that we should receive the Lord’s Supper often because of how much we need what the Lord gives in His Supper. There is no LC-MS rule about how often an individual should or must receive the Lord’s Supper. Synod encourages congregations to provide the opportunity, to those who desire, to receive the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day.

For August: Luther and Music