

Incarnate Word Tract Series #4 The Weekly Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

The Lord's Supper Every Sunday

For the first 1500 years of her history the Holy Christian Church celebrated Holy Communion every Sunday. And, as all informed Lutherans know, the Lutheran Church continued this practice. At the time of the Reformation of the Church, the Lutherans were accused of neglecting the celebration of the Blessed Sacrament. But the Augsburg Confession (the main Confession of Faith of the Lutheran Church) made the position of the Lutheran Church clear by saying:

“Falsely are our Churches accused of doing away with the Mass, for the Mass is retained among us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. We hold one Communion every holy day (that is, every Sunday and Feast Day), and, if any desire the Sacrament, also on other days, when it is given to those who ask for it.”

There was no thought in the minds of the Blessed Reformers that a Sunday or Holy Day should go by without the celebration of the Sacrament instituted by our Lord.

The Neglect of the Sacrament

About 200 years after the Reformation, a serious decline in the frequency of the celebrations of the Sacrament of the Altar became evident. At this same time, almost all phases of Church life were suffering.

Restoring the Weekly Eucharist

The reasons for this decline are too involved to discuss here. But now that many, many Lutheran parishes are again returning to the original Lutheran doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper, it is well that we look at some of the reasons the Church has always insisted on at least a weekly celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

A Word of Warning

In restoring or using the weekly celebration of Holy Communion, we must never think of it as something about which we can boast. We must never imitate the Pharisee and say: “I thank Thee God, that I am more Lutheran than other men are.” Nor ought we to consider the weekly celebration of the Holy Eucharist as the satisfaction of the Law of Lutheran Doctrine. Least of all ought we ever to look upon the frequent celebration of the Blessed Sacrament as a ceremony which we perform in order to make ourselves more acceptable to God.

Why Every Sunday?

The two main reasons given by our Holy Religion for the frequent celebration of the Sacrament are: the command of God; and the need of sinners.

God's Command

The Holy Eucharist was instituted by Christ Himself, with the command: "This do as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me." Blessed Martin Luther wisely calls our attention to the fact that the Holy Eucharist is the only form of public worship instituted by Christ. We poor mortals must never make up any other service to put in its place. No man-made service is to be made of more importance than the Service instituted by our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Need

Every Christian needs the Sacrament. The Augsburg Confession quotes one of the Fathers of the Church as saying: "Because I always sin, I am always bound to take the medicine." The Sacrament is the Real Presence of Christ – we need Christ – therefore we need the Sacrament. We always need the increase of faith and love which the Sacrament gives. We can never get too much of the forgiveness of sins, and the love of God.

"O Holy Author of the Eucharist, grant that Thy people may grow mightily in their love and devotion for Thy Sacred Body and Most Precious Blood. Amen."