

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage just down the road! Have you had enough snow days yet? I think I have—the only other one I want is the one where I'll finally learn to snowboard with the LYF.

WORTHY?

As we continue with the Sacrament of the Altar, it is good to review the last two article's concepts in brief. First, this sacrament, like Holy Baptism, is God's work, and therefore all who partake of the bread and wine served at the communion rail receive Jesus' very body and blood—whether they believe it or not. Second, the Sacrament brings Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of our faith. That brings us, then, to who should partake and how often.

In last month's article, I gave you a foretaste of the answer: those who recognize the body and blood of their Lord and trust what He says they contain ("for the forgiveness of sins"). Here we come to some ponderings that even we today might wonder. One such wonder is whether we are worthy to partake. In the Large Catechism, Luther reminds us that we are no longer under the authority of the pope—that we have to partake of the sacrament due to human command.

Yet, there are times when the sinfulness we find in ourselves seems so bad that we should not partake because we feel that we are unworthy.

To this, Luther reminds us who is calling us to the sacrament: our Lord Jesus Christ, who lovingly prepared the sacrament for us. And we remember that it was the same Lord Jesus who said “[Matt. 9:12], ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick (BoC, p.474).’” Our Lord knows the state which we are in, and that is why He came and went to the cross—so that in Him, and in His sacrament, we might receive the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith.

“Of course, it is true that those who despise the sacrament and lead unchristian lives receive it to their harm and damnation...But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you are to receive from Christ’s lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and brings with it God’s grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death, the devil, and every trouble (BoC, p.474).”

I pray that you and I always partake knowing the great treasure that this sacrament is for our souls.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh