

Re-Membering Christ's Body

[World Communion Sunday]

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From time to time, it's important for us all to revisit - and reassess - the deeply ingrained ideas and feelings we have about our Faith, and our Faith Practices. For example, as a child, the concept that was firmly planted in my impressionable mind by my church's inflexible practice, was that Holy Communion is an extremely serious, strict, and *restrictive* event. At Zion Lutheran Church in Canton, one way we kept Communion's severity and rarity, was by only celebrating it *four* times a year [though it certainly never felt like a "celebration"]! We would start those services by humbly confessing to God "that we are by our very nature sinful and unclean" and "that we have grievously sinned against Thee by thought, word and deed." Then, Confirmed *members only* would go forward, kneel at the altar rail, and meekly open our mouths to receive that special, thin wafer, followed by a tiny cup of wine, that we dare not spill! Then we'd return to our pew, to further contemplate our moral depravity. But, hey, at least we were covered for another three months!

Now I certainly don't mean to *demean* the profound power or purpose of Holy Communion. On the contrary, I want raise-up the importance of taking this Sacrament *more* seriously, by taking ourselves *less* seriously! I'd like us Christians to "humbly confess" that the power which Holy Communion contains and conveys, comes exclusively from the Holy One, and not from our own personal or denominational claims to understand, interpret, or control it! I'd like us to do-away with any restrictive practices that push-away others from this Divine Gift of Grace. I'd like us to raise-up a renewed image of Holy Communion: One that looks less like a dreary funeral for the dead and departed, and more like a joyful reunion with the best friend a person could ever have!

Jesus Christ offers this Sacrament as a celebration of his life - and love - which transcends culture, race, and religion; as well as betrayal,

denial, and even death itself! He gives the first “Holy Communion” to a group of *Jewish* people, including a couple of guys named Judas and Peter - both of whom are about to betray his trust and friendship. This group has absolutely no idea what Jesus is talking about, when he calls the bread his body, and the wine his blood. He says to them, “Take and eat - this is for you, just as I am for you!” So they take it and share it with one another; simply trusting that Jesus’ love for them is strong enough to overcome any doubts or confusion, fears or failings that they might have.

World Communion Sunday presents an excellent opportunity for Christians to once again trust that Christ’ love is strong enough to overcome any doubts or confusion, fears or failings that *we* might have! It’s also the perfect occasion for us to stop treating the Body of Christ as exclusively “ours”; to understand that every person in this world is a loved and cherished Child of God who is welcome at Christ’s Table! That’s why we at Brecksville United Church of Christ always extend to *all* who are present, a specific and sincere invitation to partake of the Bread and Cup. We embrace a Faith which recognizes the inter-connectedness of *all* our lives - regardless of one’s faith tradition, personal background, or present situation. It’s a Faith which shows us, that to truly honor the “*Body of Christ*” means more than being concerned for people’s *spiritual* well-being. It also includes caring for the physical needs of *their* bodies! It’s a Faith that calls us to reach-out and help *all* our neighbors in need, just like Jesus does!

Jesus doesn’t just talk about feeding the hungry, he does it! He doesn’t preach about free health care for the poor, he provides it! He not only believes in the abundance of Divine Compassion and Grace - he faithfully shares that abundance every day, in every way! Jesus Christ proclaims and embodies the *Good News*:[News](#): that [News](#): though our human tendency is to fearfully push-away people we perceive as being different or deficient, the Divine Desire is to lovingly gather us all around the Table as One Human Family.

This morning, as you and I eat and drink together, we not only remember Jesus; we are also empowered to *re-member* the Body of Christ: to graciously welcome all God's children who have been cut-off and tossed-aside, and to lovingly help them re-connect. So, even though this is a really simple "meal" that we share, because we do *share* it with all who desire, it becomes so much more!

It connects us to all our sisters and brothers throughout the world, *and* throughout time!

It links us to the ancient Hebrew Passover Story, and sets us free from our *own* slavery to fear and prejudice, self-centeredness and narrow-mindedness.

It awakens within us that age-old practice of extending hospitality to strangers and sojourners.

It opens our minds and our hearts to a New, Divine Image: a glorious vision where *all* are welcome to share together a *foretaste* of that Great Heavenly Feast which awaits us all!