

1. Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

On the night before he died, Jesus shared a final meal, a Passover, with his disciples.

During the meal, Jesus gave to his disciples, for all time, this special way of remembering him: as bread is broken and shared and as wine is poured out.

We celebrate Holy Communion because Jesus commands us: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' This is the service Jesus gave us himself; it is the central act of worship of the Christian Church.

Share together in small groups what celebrating the Lord's Supper means for you.

2. "Do this in remembrance of me . . ."

Jesus last meal with his disciples was a Passover meal. It is a special meal instituted by God when Jews remember and re-enact the night when God set them free from slavery in Egypt. By continuing to remember this event in their history, they give expression to their faith that God's salvation is a reality for them also today.

The last time Jesus celebrates the Passover meal, He changes the way and the reason why this meal should be celebrated. He takes two elements of the old Passover, bread and wine, and gives a new meaning to them.

The bread is broken in pieces and is a sign of Jesus' body that is broken on the cross. The wine is poured and is a sign of Jesus' blood that is shed on the cross.

Both bread and wine point to the reality of a greater and deeper salvation: Jesus set us free by dying on the cross in our place.

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, then we remember Jesus' death. However, we also remember his resurrection from the dead. In fact, as our risen Saviour, Jesus is the host who invites us to his table. He is the One who serves bread (sign of his body) and wine (sign of his blood).

As with baptism, the Lord's Supper is a sacrament: the outward visible sign is the bread and wine; the inward reality is Jesus having offered up his life on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and living in community with Him and each other.

3. Looking in four directions

In order to understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper, it is beneficial to look in four different directions.

a. Looking back

You look back to the day when Jesus died on the cross some 2000 years ago. He loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20; 2 John 3:16; 4:9-11).

b. Looking up.

Jesus arose from the dead and returned to heaven. He now pleads our cause before the heavenly judge (1 John 1:9-2:1).

c. Looking forward

We celebrate the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns. At the end of history, He will return and then there will again be a meal, this time celebrating 'the marriage of the Lamb' (The Lamb is a name the Bible uses to indicate that Jesus was a perfect sacrificial lamb) (Revelation 19:6-9)

d. Looking around

We celebrate the Lord's Supper together with other members of the congregation. Although we are very different, we all belong together because we are all members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:14-21).

Discuss in small groups (1) which way you tend to look when you celebrate the Lord's Supper? How would you now answer the question what the Lord's Supper means for you?

4. An important meal requires a good preparation

The Lord's Supper is a reflective moment that focuses our attention on the center of our existence: everything revolves around Jesus who laid down his life for us. The apostle Paul exhorts the Christians in Corinth not to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a thoughtless manner. You have to prepare yourself by looking at your life in the light of the Bible. What effect does the gospel have in your life?

Our life easily disintegrates into fragments. The gospel integrates and brings cohesion to our life. It does this by establishing a **connection** between:

a. your internal and external life

God accepts and loves me on the basis of the accomplishment of someone else, Jesus Christ. Do I live in this grace and out of this grace or do I still try to earn or coerce God's favour with my own good behaviour? Does being conscious of the fact that I have been set free because Jesus offered Himself for me lead to my being willing to offer myself for others?

b. your personal and communal life

I am a member of the body of Christ. Am I a real member of this community who gives something or do I only come to receive because I attend church with a consumer mentality?

Discuss in small groups (1) how the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper tells us to prepare yourself. (2) How the Lord's Supper helps you grow in faith?

For reflection

Take a copy of the form home with you. Take time this week to read through the form carefully. Think about the words and what they mean. Make a note of anything you don't understand and ask next week. Thank God each day for his gift to us of this wonderful act of worship and all it means.

