

301. Practising Close Communion Is Eminently Charitable.

Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. / Cor. 11, 27.

No other Church than our Lutheran Church insists upon strict adherence to the Bible in every respect. With us Lutherans it is the Bible first and last because we believe it to be the Word of God from beginning to end. We admit no one to church-membership who does not accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and does not know and believe at least the chief doctrines of the Bible. Nor do we permit anyone to remain a member of our Lutheran Church who no longer believes the teachings of the Bible or leads an ungodly life. Thus also, if we know anyone to be ungodly and impenitent, we must deny him the Sacrament until he repents; for the Lord says: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."

We have therefore in our Lutheran Church what people are pleased to term close Communion, that is to say, we permit only those to commune at our altars who confess the right faith and, as far as man can judge, are penitent sinners. Such close Communion, however, is a stumbling-block to many, and numerous objections are raised against it, not only by sectarians, but also by many who call themselves Lutherans. So sensitive have people become these days that when a clear Scriptural presentation of this matter is given, they will stop their ears and, without giving thought or attention, will say: "You are illiberal and uncharitable." But are we not just as liberal as God's plain Word permits us to be? Guided by the Bible, we cannot justify and hold fellowship with societies teaching doctrines contrary to the Bible. Christ never intended that there should be another Church than that which teaches men to observe all the things whatsoever He has commanded His followers. Whoever fails to adhere to the truth of Christ and to the Church of the pure doctrine, does not deserve to be admitted to the Lord's altar. Who will call this care on the part of the Church, this so-called close communion, uncharitable? Shall we suffer the unworthy communicant to become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to eat and drink damnation to himself? Does not true charity demand that we warn him?

Prayer.

O Lord, the bread which we break is the communion of Thy body given for us on the cross; and the wine which we drink at the altar is the communion of Thy precious blood, shed for us throughout all Thy painful sufferings. In what manner have we deserved to receive such great proofs of Thy goodness? Who are we that Thou dost draw so nigh to us by uniting with us so closely that Thou art and ever wilt remain in us and we in Thee as members of Thy body? What return can we make to Thee for taking so deep an interest in our souls, giving Thine own self as a pledge of their salvation? Grant us grace, therefore, to show deep gratitude for Thy unbounded love and mercy. Amen.

Abide with richest blessings
Among us, bounteous Lord;
Let us in grace and wisdom
Grow daily through Thy Word.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries. You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

You are invited to go to www.scholia.net for the other devotions from *Daily Bread*.