

Friends of the Center

A Eucharist for Humanity

The Eucharist has been practiced by Christians since the earliest days of the Church and is one of the oldest rites of the Christian faith, having been instituted at the Last Supper. Christians continue to participate in the Eucharist today, and many traditions recognize it as a sacrament. Because it has become such a staple of Christian worship, we can participate in the Eucharist without considering why we do so. In this reflection, as I invite you to think about the theological meaning of Communion, I will also share how I have recently encountered the Table.

Throughout Christian history, there have been differing understandings of what happens at the Table. Many traditions affirm, in one way or another, that Christ is present among us (*in persona Christi*) at the Table, whether as the physical presence of Christ's body and blood in the blessed elements or as Christ's spiritual presence among believers. Whatever tradition you come from, I invite you to reflect on the following question: *When I partake of Communion, what does it mean for me?*

The answer can take many forms, and it is a question that church leaders and theologians have wrestled with throughout Christian history. For example, John Wesley understood Communion as an act of grace and even received Communion every day as a way of receiving God's grace at the beginning of the day. Swiss Reformation leader Huldrych Zwingli, on the other hand, understood the sacrament primarily as an act of remembrance of what Christ accomplished on the cross.

My understanding has deepened into an admiration for the sacrament of Communion and what it means for both me and humanity. The Table, as I have come to know it, is a place where Christ meets us and where his humanity is made visible to us. Communion is an act of relatedness, as we remember Christ's humanity through the bread and the cup, which present his body and blood. It is also a place marked by deep lament, as the Table calls us to remember the suffering Christ endured in this world, a suffering that reflects the pain and brokenness humanity continues to experience today.

At the Table, I feel seen and connected to God. We recognize Christ's humanity and the suffering that comes with being human. Therefore, the Table is where Christ meets us—in our suffering and in our humanity. In that place, I find hope in knowing that God is truly with us through the hardships of this life because Christ has known that pain himself. At the Table, we not only acknowledge our unity with Christ but also our unity with one another as we share this meal with believers around the world. When I hear Christ's words at the

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Last Supper, “This is my body, broken for you; do this in remembrance of me,” I am also reminded of the brokenness we share as human beings. In this sense, I hear an invitation to remember not only Christ’s suffering but also our shared suffering: “This is the Body, broken for us; do this remembrance of our shared suffering.” And when Christ says “Drink, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins,” I hear an invitation to remember the hope that Christ brings: “This is my blood, poured out for us; do this in remembrance of the hope Christ brings.” Perhaps this is the part of what makes the Table so meaningful: Christ meets us in the places where we suffer, reminds us that we do not suffer alone, and signals that there is hope to come.

So, the next time you partake in Communion, I invite you to reflect: *What does it mean for me to be at the Table?* You may find, as I have, a renewed appreciation for the beauty of this sacrament and for the ways the Table continues to bring believers together in remembrance, suffering, hope, and communion with Christ and one another.

– Sophia Porter