

## The Divine Service: Distribution

- P** The true body of Christ, given for you. **R** Amen.  
**P** The true blood of Christ, given for you. **R** Amen.  
**P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart † in peace. **C** Amen.

“Come, for everything is now ready!” So goes the invitation in the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:17). Similarly, what our Lord has prepared for us by his incarnation, death, and resurrection, by his word and institution, by the office of the ministry and minister he has given to fill it, not to mention by produce of grape and grain, now awaits the Christians for whose eating and drinking it has been prepared.

The pastor, whose duty it is to be the “steward of the mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1–2), is Christ’s instrument in distributing his Supper to his people. St. Paul carefully teaches us that the Lord’s Supper is here to be given and there not, that to he who is prepared worthily to receive, the Supper is unto salvation, but to the one unworthy and unprepared, it can do great harm (for example, when taken in unrepentance, or by one who does not discern the body of Christ or whose heart is set in some respect against the truth of God’s Word taught from his altar). (1 Cor 10:1–22; 11:17–34) While the pastor does not see into hearts (and is, in many respects, glad he cannot), he can perceive what a person confesses and what outward acts known to him indicate. It would be evil of a pastor to give the Lord’s Supper to one he knew ought not receive it, for whom it would not be “for you, for the forgiveness of sins,” but instead “sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.” The pastor therefore carries out the distribution with care and discernment.

Likewise, the people come with reverence and in faith. Believing they are to receive the true body and blood of Jesus, they treat these sacred things in a proper manner. At the words of distribution, “The true body / blood of Christ,” the people may say softly, “Amen,” confessing faith in our Lord’s words, which make it so.

Old traditions suggest a couple of brief, quiet personal prayers before receiving the Lord’s body and blood. Before receiving the host: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.” (Matt 8:8) And, before receiving the cup: “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.” (Ps 116:12–13; 18:3) Out of what contexts are these prayers drawn? Looking up these contexts, what have they do to with the Lord’s Supper, and how do they unfold what it is you eat and drink, and why?