

Formulier Avondmaal I / Form for the celebration of the Holy Supper I

Genre : Formulier
Bundel : Book of Praise
Uitgever : Standing Committee for the
Publication BoP

Form for the Celebration of The Lord's Supper

Institution

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

The holy supper has been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of this institution as described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29: for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

In order that we may now celebrate this holy supper of the Lord to our comfort, we must first rightly examine ourselves. Further, we must use it as Christ intended it, namely, to His remembrance.

Self-examination

True self-examination consists of the following three parts:

First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that He could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in His beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.

Second, let everyone search his heart whether he also believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given him as his own, as if he himself had fulfilled all righteousness.

Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity.

Invitation and Admonition

God will certainly receive in grace all who are thus minded and count them worthy to partake

of the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgment upon themselves. Therefore, according to the command of Christ and of the apostle Paul, we admonish all those who know themselves to be guilty of the following offensive sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and we declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ: all who refuse to trust in the LORD alone or who serve Him in their own manner; all who abuse the Name of the LORD by cursing or in any other way; all who do not diligently attend the worship services and who despise the proclamation of God's Word or the sanctity of the sacraments; all who are disobedient to their parents or to others in authority over them; all who violate human life or cherish hatred against their neighbour and refuse to be reconciled to him; all who, either within or outside of holy wedlock, do not keep their bodies pure; all who by stealing, greed, or extravagance, lead a worldly life; all liars, backbiters, and slanderers; briefly, all who either in word or conduct show themselves to be unbelieving by leading an offensive life. While they persist in their sins, they shall not take of this food, which Christ has ordained only for His believers; otherwise their judgment and condemnation will be the heavier.

But all this, beloved brothers and sisters, is not meant to discourage broken and contrite hearts, as if only those who are without sin may come to the table of the Lord. For we do not come to this supper to declare that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves. On the contrary, we seek our life outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ and, in doing so, we acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. We also are aware of our many sins and shortcomings. We do not have perfect faith and we do not serve God with such zeal as He requires. Daily we have to contend with the weakness of our faith and with the evil desires of our flesh. Yet, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are heartily sorry for these shortcomings and desire to fight against our unbelief and to live according to all the commandments of God. Therefore we may be fully assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can prevent us from being received by God in grace and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink.

Remembrance of Christ

Let us now consider for what purpose the Lord has instituted His supper; namely, that we should use it in remembrance of Him. We are to remember Him in the following manner: First of all, let us fully trust that the Lord Jesus Christ was sent by the Father into this world, according to the promises made from the beginning to the fathers in the Old Testament, and that He assumed our flesh and blood.

From the beginning of His incarnation to the end of His life on earth, He bore for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished eternally. By His perfect obedience He has for us fulfilled all the righteousness of God's law. He did so especially when the weight of our sins and the wrath of God pressed out of Him the bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane. There He was bound that He might free us from our sins. He suffered countless insults that we might never be put to shame. He was innocently condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God. He even let His blessed body be nailed to the cross that He might cancel the bond which stood against us because of our sins. By all this He has taken our curse upon Himself that He might fill us with His blessing. On the cross He humbled Himself, in body and soul, to the very deepest shame and anguish of hell. Then He called out with a loud voice, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? that we might be accepted by God and nevermore be forsaken by Him. Finally, by His death and the shedding of His blood, He confirmed the new and eternal testament, the covenant of grace, when He said, It is finished.

Assurance

In order that we might firmly believe that we belong to this covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ during His last Passover instituted the holy supper. He gave the bread and the cup to His disciples in remembrance of Him, and He declared, saying: As often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you are reminded and assured of My hearty love and faithfulness towards you. It is a sure pledge that I have given My body and shed My blood for you; otherwise you would have suffered eternal death. I nourish and refresh your hungry and thirsty souls with My crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life as certainly as this bread is broken before your eyes and this cup is given to you and you eat and drink in remembrance of Me.

From this institution of the holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ we learn that He directs our faith and trust to His perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross. It is the only ground for our salvation. Thereby He has become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true food and drink of life eternal. For by His death He has removed the cause of our eternal hunger and misery, which is sin, and obtained for us the life-giving Spirit. By this Spirit, who dwells in Christ as the Head and in us as His members, we have true communion with Him and share in all His riches, life eternal, righteousness, and glory.

Fellowship

By the same Spirit we are also united in true brotherly love as members of one body. For the apostle Paul says, Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. As one bread is baked out of many grains and one wine is pressed out of many grapes, so we all, incorporated in Christ by faith, are together one body. For the sake of Christ, who so exceedingly loved us first, we shall now love one another, and shall show this to one another not just in words but also in deeds.

Expectation of Christ's Coming

Finally, Christ has commanded us to celebrate the holy supper until He comes. We receive at His table a foretaste of the abundant joy which He has promised and look forward to the marriage feast of the Lamb, when He will drink the wine new with us in the kingdom of His Father. Let us rejoice and give Him the glory, for the marriage feast of the Lamb is coming! May the almighty, heavenly God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ help us in this through His Holy Spirit. Amen.

To receive all this, let us now humble ourselves before God in prayer and call upon Him in true faith.

Prayer

Merciful God and Father, we thank Thee that in this supper we cherish the blessed memory of the bitter death of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ. Work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit so that we may entrust ourselves more and more to Thy Son Jesus Christ. Grant that our contrite hearts may be nourished with His true body and blood, yes, with Him who is the only heavenly bread, that we may not live in our sins, but Christ in us and we in Him.

Let us so truly be partakers of the new and everlasting testament, the covenant of grace, that we do not doubt that Thou wilt forever be our gracious Father, nevermore imputing to us our sins but providing us with all things for body and soul as Thy dear children and heirs.

Grant us Thy grace that we may take up our cross joyfully, deny ourselves, and confess our Saviour. Let us in all tribulation await our Lord Jesus Christ, who will come from heaven to change our lowly body to be like His glorious body and take us to Himself forever.

Hear us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Or: . . . through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray,

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy Name,

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts,

As we also have forgiven our debtors;

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one,

For Thine is the kingdom and the power

and the glory, for ever. Amen.)

Profession of Faith

Let us now profess our catholic, undoubted Christian faith. (The Apostles' Creed may be recited by the minister, said in unison, or sung by the congregation.)

Exhortation

Brothers and sisters, in order that we may now be nourished with Christ, the true heavenly bread, we must not cling with our hearts to the outward symbols of bread and wine, but lift our hearts on high in heaven, where Christ, our advocate, is, at the right hand of His heavenly Father. Let us not doubt that we shall be nourished and refreshed in our souls with His body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as truly as we receive the holy bread and drink in remembrance of Him.

Communion

(When he breaks the bread, the minister shall say:)

The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

(And when he gives the cup:)

The cup of blessing, for which we give thanks, is the communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink from it, all of you, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

(During the communion some suitable portion of Scripture may be read and a psalm or hymn be sung.)

Doxology

(After the communion, the minister shall say:)

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now nourished our souls at His table, let us together praise His holy Name. Let everyone say in his heart:

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy Name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger for ever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.

He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?

But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.

Therefore my heart and my mouth shall proclaim the praise of the Lord, from now on and for evermore. Amen.

Thanksgiving

Merciful God and Father, we thank Thee that in Thy boundless mercy Thou hast given us Thy only-begotten Son as our Mediator. We praise Thee that He is the sacrifice for our sins and our food and drink to life eternal.

We thank Thee that Thou givest us a true faith, through which we may share in such great benefits.

Through Thy Son Thou hast instituted the holy supper for the strengthening of our faith. We beseech Thee, faithful God and Father, that by Thy Holy Spirit this celebration may lead to our daily increase in true faith and fellowship with Christ, Thy beloved Son.

In His Name we pray. Amen.

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