



# SACRAMENT PREPARATION REFERENCE GUIDE



FOR MINISTERS OF THE  
New Apostolic Church USA



# FOREWORD

We believe the sacraments are vital for salvation, inaugurate a person's life as a Christian, and are central to our Church's doctrine. The acts must be dispensed with this understanding, prepared for seriously, and approached with god-fear and prayer.

In Leviticus, we read of God's specific instructions for the priests of Israel. He wanted them to follow these commands precisely because *they were caring for His people*. He expects the same of us today – we cannot be apathetic. We must approach the sacraments with conviction and gravity. We must understand and believe what we are saying.

The sacraments are acts of God and are fully valid when received. However, they only develop and unfold through faith – the work of the Holy Spirit. Sacraments are the beginning of the development of a Christian's new life in Christ, and they all work together; the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

Therefore we must be able to teach and explain them correctly and with authority. It is to this end that we offer you this resource.

Laid out in the following pages are the three sacraments, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and Holy Sealing, as well as the act of adoption, broken into chapters with relevant Catechism pages, explanations, commentary, and applicable articles, based on teachings from the international and national Church. Each chapter includes a discussion guide to facilitate minister-member conversations in preparation for the dispensation of each particular sacrament, as well as the relevant liturgy pages for the sacrament. We hope you will find this work informative, comprehensive, practical, and helpful.





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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Footnote numbers corresponding to numbered entries below.

Exact words from the Catechism (mostly Chapter 8 - Sacraments)

The proper administration of the sacraments is incumbent upon the Apostles.<sup>7</sup> They have been commissioned by Christ to make the sacraments accessible in proper fashion. Although

not all sacraments need to be dispensed by the Apostles or those commissioned by them, sacraments nevertheless exist in an apostolic relationship.<sup>8</sup>

Space to write down notes and thoughts.

**7** *The proper administration of the sacraments is incumbent upon the Apostles.* This means it is one of the responsibilities of the Apostles to make sure that the sacraments are administered properly.

Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was present and active after the death of the early apostles as well. Furthermore, we must also attribute to the Holy Spirit's activity through the centuries the fact that the Christian faith was able to spread in a prudent, godly manner, and that – albeit in diverse forms – Christian characteristics of piety and a serious endeavor in living according to the gospel and traditional Christian values have remained alive up to our time. Salvation is conveyed in different ways in the various phases of God's plan of salvation, partly outside the activity of the apostle ministry (i.e. the Thousand Years of Peace).

## THE SACRAMENTS, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND EXCLUSIVITY

Our belief is that the apostle ministry is essential for the dispensation of the sacraments. However, this does not negate the validity of sacraments in other Christian denominations that truthfully profess their faith in Christ. In this respect, the Holy Spirit is also active outside the New Apostolic Church. Perhaps these statements sound like a contradiction: on the one hand, dispensing of Holy Spirit is bound to the apostolate, while, on the other, it states that the Holy Spirit can also be active in other religious denominations that truthfully profess Christ. The two statements are *not* contradictory, however.

In the first sense, the Holy Spirit is active everywhere, i.e. also outside the New Apostolic Church. Dispensing the sacrament of Holy Sealing is reserved to apostleship and is inseparably linked with the essential task given to apostles: to gather and prepare Christ's bride for the return of her Lord. In doing so, the apostles' activity corresponds to the Holy Spirit's activity, which is focused on the completion of God's work: *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"* (Revelation 22:17)

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient. He lives and reigns with the Father and the Son in inseparable unity. Therefore, He is active at all times and everywhere, i.e. universally. Already in the old covenant, He inspired human beings, thereby using them as instruments of God's will without them being – in the sacramental sense – bearers of the

The question as to who will be accepted on the Day of the Lord and whether there will be any exceptions is left to God's sovereign decision.

Taken from NAKI Position Paper *The Salvation, Exclusiveness, Apostle Ministry, Following*, as well as *The Holy Spirit and its diverse ways of activity* - NAKI 2006

Additional relevant articles are presented in colored print.

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Page numbers

Where possible, citations are given to the source document.



## 8 The sacraments

Sacraments are fundamental acts of God’s grace.<sup>1</sup> They are holy acts that are performed upon a human being in order to allow him to attain salvation, be adopted into the fellowship of life with God, and be preserved in it. Receiving the three sacraments opens up the possibility for being united with the Lord at the return of Christ.

Salvation in the sacraments is founded upon the incarnation, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as the sending and activity of the Holy Spirit.

The term “sacrament” is not recorded in the New Testament. The word *mysterion*<sup>2</sup> which is rendered in some Old Latin Bible translations with the term *sacramentum* is originally unrelated to the acts that later came to be designated as “sacraments.” In antiquity, the term *mysterion* referred to a secret matter only accessible to the initiated.

**1** To participate in the sacraments is to acknowledge the saving power of Christ and your desire to live a life that testifies of this power. John, in his Gospel, tells us, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16). Jesus is the visible, outward sign of God’s love for us. And, in turn, it is in the Church, through its visible characteristics, that Christ remains tangible for us, most particularly in our encounters with Him in the sacraments. *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me* (John 14:6). Jesus is the only way to salvation, and He instituted the sacraments as a visible way for us to come closer to Him and the Father. To look at sacraments simply as a series of signs and rituals that alone produce a guaranteed effect would be to ignore their importance for our lives. They are celebrations of our journey of faith within the community of the Church.

**2** *Mysterion* means “something hidden or secret” – and is the root of our word *mystery*. The language surrounding “sacraments” did not develop in the church for some time. We hear of a ritual of baptism in the Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles, and of the breaking of bread – the Eucharist (Acts 2:38, 41-42). These celebrations were called by their specific name; there was no generic term or categorization for these experiences. It was not until the third century that the word *mysterion*, a word that the pagans used to describe rites of initiation, began to be used to describe Christian rites. In order to avoid any confusion with pagan thinking, the theologian, Tertullian, began to use the Latin word, *sacramentum*, for *mysterion*, particularly in explaining baptism.



According to the Roman understanding, *sacrament* signified, among other things, “pledge of allegiance,” “consecration,” or “pledge.”<sup>3</sup> In the course of the second and third centuries AD, the terms *mysterion* and *sacramentum* came to be used in reference to ritual acts. Thus, for example, Tertullian (ca. AD 160-220) associated the baptismal vow and the creed - albeit not the act of baptism itself - with a military oath formulation.

The church leader Augustine<sup>4</sup> (AD 354-430) made the most significant contribution to our understanding of the sacraments in later antiquity: a sacrament comes into being through the union of a visible element with a spoken word that refers to the reality behind it.

A sacrament legitimately comes into being through four interrelated variables:<sup>5</sup>

**3** The *sacramentum* was originally a sacred oath of allegiance to the emperor taken by a Roman soldier. Tertullian suggested that just as the soldier’s oath was a sign of the beginning of a new life, so too was initiation into the Christian community through baptism and Eucharist. *Sacramentum* then became a general term for the rites of Christian initiation.

**4** A more detailed reflection on the sacraments came from St. Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century. Augustine developed the notion that a *sacramentum* is a **sign that sanctifies** (makes holy) because it is *efficacious* – it produces the intended effect. For instance, Christ and the Holy Spirit make effective, through grace, the cleansing that water signifies in baptism. Augustine called a sacrament “a visible sign of invisible grace.”

**5** Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th century, wrote of the elements that make up a sacrament. There was **the sign** itself (*sacramentum tantum*), something concrete, like bread and wine and the words of consecration in the Eucharist, or water in baptism.

The content, or **what is signified**, he calls *res et sacramentum* (literally the “thing” or the act). What is signified in the Eucharist is *the real presence of Christ*; what is signified in baptism is *the washing or cleansing from original sin*; what is signified in sealing is *the seal, that indelible mark of God*.

The final effect of the sacrament is the *res tantum*, “the reality alone,” or **the spiritual effect of God’s grace**. In the Eucharist, the spiritual effect is communion with Christ and profession of His death and resurrection. In Holy Baptism, the spiritual effect is washing away of original sin and entry into the Body of Christ. In Holy Sealing, through the laying on of hands of an apostle, the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God.

This was further developed into the following four elements:

**Sign:** the visible element. In baptism – the water and Trinitarian formula, in sealing – laying on of hands, in communion - the bread and wine. We must be sure to bring attention to them, and emphasize their meaning and importance.

- **sign** (*signum/materia*), that is the rite or the visible element,
- **content** (*res/forma*), that is the presence of salvation,
- **dispenser** (the mediator of the sacrament),
- **faith** (on the part of the recipient), so that the sacrament is received for salvation.

The validity of the sacraments is not dependent on their interpretation or the understanding a person has of them,

but rather only on the four aforementioned variables. The sign (*signum*) and content (*res*) are linked together through the word (*verbum*) of institution or consecration spoken by the dispenser.

Since this is not a magical or automatic event, as it were, the faith of the person receiving the sacrament is a prerequisite for the sacrament to unfold to its full salvific effect. However, even unbelief does not invalidate the sacrament, because that which God has done cannot be undone by the unbelieving recipient.<sup>6</sup>

**Content:** the presence of salvation, what is inferred by the sign. The sacraments are not figurative or symbolic actions, but rather real acts of God's loving care. Through these acts, the relationship between a human being and God is fundamentally changed. The effects of the sacraments act upon a person's entire being. What is signified in the Eucharist is the real presence of Christ; what is signified in baptism is the washing or cleansing from sin; what is signified in sealing is the seal that designates us as belonging to God.

**Dispenser:** a minister with the authority to dispense the sacrament, commissioned by the apostle ministry. We believe the administration of the sacraments – the dispensation of Holy Baptism with water, Holy Communion, and Holy Sealing – was entrusted to the apostle ministry by Jesus Christ.

**Faith:** (on the part of the recipient) through it, the sacrament is received for salvation. A person's faith is both a prerequisite for receiving the sacrament as well as their response to this act of God. Faith is also necessary for the unfolding of the effects of the sacrament in the life of the believer.

A person's unbelief does not undo the validity of the sacraments. God's offer and promise of salvation is still valid, He will not take it back. By not believing, one rebels against God's will to save. However, God's "yes" still stands, one would only need to accept and believe again.

**6** The sacraments are an example of God's love and faithfulness. We believe that the sacraments are necessary for salvation. In His omnipotence, God restricts Himself, and allows the sacraments to be the objective prerequisites for salvation. One enters into a new relationship with God when they are baptized, they receive the power and life of God through their sealing, and share in the body and blood of Christ in communion. These things cannot be replaced. However, we can trust in the grace of God that in times of need, when the sacraments are not able to be dispensed, that He will provide the necessary strength and nourishment through His word. *God binds Himself to the sacraments as an expression of His faithfulness and reliability*, so we can have the assurance of what is happening in these acts. For this reason, we are bound to the sacraments as well. Ultimately, we also must understand that God can do what He pleases, and can also work outside of them.

R. Kiefer correspondence paraphrase, May 2020



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Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was present and active after the death of the early apostles as well. Furthermore, we must also attribute to the Holy Spirit's activity through the centuries the fact that the Christian faith was able to spread in a prudent, godly manner, and that – albeit in diverse forms – Christian characteristics of piety and a serious endeavor in living according to the gospel and traditional Christian values have remained alive up to our time. Salvation is conveyed in different ways in the various phases of God's plan of salvation, partly outside the activity of the apostle ministry (i.e. the kingdom of peace).

In the first sense, the Holy Spirit is active everywhere, i.e. also outside the New Apostolic Church. Dispensing the sacrament of Holy Sealing is reserved to apostleship and is inseparably linked with the essential task given to apostles: to gather and prepare Christ's bride for the return of her Lord. In doing so, the apostles' activity corresponds to the Holy Spirit's activity, which is focused on the completion of God's work: *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"* (Revelation 22:17).

The question as to who will be accepted on the Day of the Lord and whether there will be any exceptions is left to God's sovereign decision.

Taken from NAKI Position Paper *The Salvation, Exclusiveness, Apostle Ministry, Following*, as well as *The Holy Spirit and its diverse ways of activity* - NAKI 2006

There are three sacraments (1 John 5:6-8): Holy Baptism, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion. They have been instituted by Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> [cf. *Matthew 28:19-20; John 3:5; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:53-58; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; concerning the distinction between Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing, see Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6.*]

**8** The phrase *apostolic relationship* means in reference to or relation to the apostle ministry.

**9** *They have been instituted by Jesus Christ.* All sacraments have their foundation in the Christ event; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The acts, as Jesus performed them or as they were performed on Him, were not yet sacraments, but they were the foundation for what would become the sacraments. We believe that all sacraments have their source in Jesus. For example, some other churches have marriage as a sacrament, but Jesus was not married, so they have a different understanding of sacraments than we do. We believe every sacrament reflects His story, and as Christians, when we engage in the sacraments, we pursue the path of Jesus.

Taken from *Holy Sealing – Theology Workshop 2015*

For more information, reference page 272 of the Catechism – Section 6.4.4 ***The church of Jesus Christ and the sacraments***

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SACRAMENTS

The triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – is the source of all sacraments and blessings. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is present in acts of blessing, and above all, in the dispensing of sacraments.

In Holy Baptism, it is the Holy Spirit who consecrates the water and calls the soul out of their state of remoteness from God to come to Him and believe in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that encourages the soul to enter the church of Christ and to become part of the body of Christ. He provides the Christian the strength needed to fight the battle against sin.

Through Holy Baptism with water, a human being enters into his first close relationship with God<sup>10</sup> - he becomes a Christian, and through his faith and profession to Christ belongs to the church (*see 8.1*). Through Holy Sealing, God grants the baptized the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is why our relationship with the Holy Spirit is vital.

For Holy Communion, when bread and wine are consecrated by an authorized minister, it is the power of the Holy Spirit who brings about the divine reality of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus. It is that real presence that allows us to share in Jesus' nature – His perfect strength to overcome the world – allowing us to live in Christ.

In the sacrament of Holy Sealing, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. A distinction should be drawn between the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit as a gift and strength of God, which is dispensed to a person through the sacrament of Holy Sealing (See comments on CNAC 8.3.9, *infra*).

Taken from June 2019 SMG Session and *The Holy Spirit and its diverse ways of activity* - NAKI 2006

Also reference page 159 of the Catechism – Section 3.5.5.2 ***The activity of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments***

**10** *...first close relationship...* All humans begin life distant from God and nothing we do can bring us closer to God. We cannot change this ourselves, we need God to act. Through baptism, the relationship between God and a person is fundamentally changed. This does not mean that a person does not or cannot know or love God before their baptism.

In the context of our doctrine today, *the phrase "first close relationship" should be used sparingly*. If it is used at all, it must be made clear that the desire to be baptized already means a kind of relationship with and acceptance of the triune God. The washing away of original sin is not the only essential function of baptism. Baptism also means fellowship with Jesus Christ (*see CNAC 8.1.6*).

Both sacraments together comprise the rebirth out of water and the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Through this rebirth, a human being becomes a child of God and is called to be numbered among the firstlings

at the return of Christ (*see 8.3*). Holy Communion preserves a human being in the intimate fellowship of life with Jesus Christ. To this end, this sacrament must be received repeatedly in faith (*see 8.2*).

This shows that through baptism, a new kind of relationship, an irreversible closeness, comes into being between God and man. God is the One who initiates this change in the relationship, and the person is expected to react to this gift and implement it in daily life. Fellowship with Jesus Christ includes being buried with Him and being raised to life with Him: this signifies the end of remoteness from God and the beginning of life in Christ.

Taken from *Thoughts about baptism* - DSG Workshop 2014

**11** *Both sacraments together comprise the rebirth of water and Spirit.* In the New Testament, baptism is often understood as consisting of two parts: baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17, 10:44-47). Baptism with water and baptism with the spirit are therefore *interdependent*. Holy Sealing is the completion of the grace received at baptism.

Taken from *Thoughts about baptism* - DSG Workshop 2014

## REBIRTH OF WATER AND SPIRIT:

Other denominations believe that the rebirth of water and spirit is completed in just one sacrament – baptism. However, we are not the only denomination that separates baptism into two parts; this doctrine binds us with older, pre-Reformation churches that existed before the 1500s (Catholic, Orthodox, etc.). The oldest is the Apostolic Church of Armenia, which was established in 305AD and celebrates two kinds of baptism that work together – water and spirit. Tertullian, an early theologian (160-220 AD), declared that persons to be baptized do not receive the Holy Spirit through the water, but are only being prepared for it. Conveyance of the spirit only takes place through the subsequent laying on of hands by a minister.

In Acts, specifically Acts 8:12 and 19:1, the acts of baptism with water (Holy Baptism) and spirit (Holy Sealing) are clearly distinguished from one another. In both of these references, the act of imparting the gift of the Holy Spirit is also done by an apostle. These verses support our separation and dispensation of the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing.

Taken from *Holy Sealing* - Theology Workshop 2015 and *The Concept of Baptism and Holy Sealing in the New Apostolic Church* (2006)

The sacraments are also dispensed upon children<sup>12</sup> (Matthew 19:14).

## SUMMARY

Sacraments are fundamental acts of God's grace.

Salvation in the sacraments is founded upon the incarnation, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as in the sending and activity of the Holy Spirit. The proper dispensation of the sacraments is the responsibility of the Apostles sent by Christ.

A sacrament comes into being through the union of a visible element with a word that refers to a reality behind this word.

A sacrament comes into being through four interrelated variables: sign, content, dispenser, and faith.

Faith is the prerequisite for a sacrament to unfold to its full salvific effect.

Jesus Christ instituted three sacraments: Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion.

**12** *The sacraments are also dispensed upon children.* The statement of Jesus: *Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God* (Mark 10:14), indicates that the blessings of God should also be made accessible to children. This includes the sacraments. See also verse 16 – *And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.*

The New Testament attests that entire households were baptized together: *And immediately he and all his family were baptized...* (Acts 16:33, cf. also 16:15). Households and families include children. From this the Christian tradition of baptizing children has developed.

Moreover, when children are baptized, those who raise them profess their belief in Jesus Christ on their behalf and take responsibility for the religious education for their children in the sense of the gospel.

We believe baptism is God acting on a human being. While the parents make a profession of faith, we understand the sacrament to be an *act of grace* on the child, a gift from God. In this way, we believe children can also be baptized.

Also reference Catechism Q&A: #489 ***Why can children be baptized?***





## 8.1 Holy Baptism with water

Holy Baptism with water is the first and fundamental act of grace of the triune God bestowed on a human being who believes in Jesus Christ. Through it, original sin is washed away and the believer is led out of his position of remoteness from God. Nevertheless, his inclination to sin (concupiscence) remains.

Through Holy Baptism with water, the baptized shares in the merit<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ acquired for mankind through His sacrificial death.

Thereby a human being is led into his first close relationship with God - he becomes a Christian. Thereby he is also incorporated into the church, that is into the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord.

Accordingly the Sixth Article of Faith<sup>2</sup> states: “I believe that the Holy Baptism with water is the first step to a renewal of a human being in the Holy Spirit, and that the person baptized is adopted into the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord.”

### 8.1.1 Definition of the term

The term “baptism” is a translation of the Greek word *baptizein* = “to immerse”. In early Christian times, baptisms were primarily performed by immersion in water.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.1.2 The biblical basis for Holy Baptism with water

The ritual washings referenced in various passages of the Mosaic Law can be regarded as precursors to baptism with water. They led to a ritual cleansing of persons who, due to their physical conditions, were considered unclean. However, these washings did not have a covenantal character.

#### 8.1.2.1 Old Testament references to Holy Baptism with water<sup>4</sup>

As with the other sacraments, references to Holy Baptism with water can be found in the Old Testament.

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**1** *Merit* can be understood as *worth or being in a state of deserving*. Through His sacrifice, death, and victory, Jesus put us in His place of honor, instead of condemnation. *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world... In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins* (1 John 2:2, 4:10).

**2** Reference page 69 of the Catechism for an explanation of the Sixth article (2.4.6).

**3** See the article on the next page, *A Commentary on Immersion and Sprinkling*

**4** Reference pages 252-254 of the Catechism – Section 6.2.1 *Old Testament references to the church of Jesus Christ*



## A COMMENTARY ON IMMERSION AND SPRINKLING

The New Testament contains only two references that describe the act of baptism:

1. Matthew 3:16 (baptism of Jesus Christ by John): *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately **from the water**...* See also Mark 1:10.
2. Acts 8:36, 38-39 (baptism of the eunuch from Ethiopia by Philip): *Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down **into the water**, and he baptized him. Now when they came **up out of the water** the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away...*

Although both passages reference entering into, or emerging from, the water, the passages do not precisely define the procedure. In no other passages of the New Testament in which we read of baptism is there a description of the baptismal ritual. However, the external circumstances and conditions of the baptisms mentioned allow us to conclude that the act of baptism was not always performed by submersion into a body of water (i.e. baptism of the jailer in Philippi). Nor does Scripture tell us the quantity of water used. Nonetheless, in all cases of baptism, the important fact is that the person being baptized came into contact with water.

In the post-apostolic period, the baptism was initiated by a recitation of the creed, a renunciation of the devil, and a pledge to Christ. This was followed by a threefold submersion in water with the Trinitarian formula. Under special circumstances, it was sufficient to pour water over the head three times instead of submersion.

Since Holy Scripture does not explicitly describe how the ritual of baptism was performed, Christian churches came to define the practical act of baptism according to their own particular conceptions of baptism.

- The form of baptism common in early Christianity – complete submersion – is practiced by Orthodox Churches, Baptists, and other churches.
- The Roman Catholic Church performed baptism by submersion until about the 12th century. In the Middle Ages, pouring water over the person became more prevalent. Today, their baptism consists of submersing a person three times or pouring water over their head three times, while invoking the name of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The Protestant churches are a little more diverse depending on the region. The basic form is for water to be poured three times over the head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- The Orthodox Church baptizes with a threefold submersion in water, except in emergencies due to illness, where pouring is allowed.
- The Catholic Apostolic Church had a broader allowance. Their procedures from 1880 state: *The baptism is carried out by ample wetting of the body with water, either by sprinkling or by pouring onto the head or forehead, or by submersion of the complete body... Attention must be paid that water is really and amply in contact with the forehead...*

### In the New Apostolic Church:

One of the earliest reports comes from a liturgy book, from Hamburg in 1864, which states: *The priest takes the child and calls it by its name, and says, while submersing it once under water, or by pouring water over its head: I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

In 1916, the book of Questions and Answers states: *An apostle of Jesus Christ or a minister commissioned by him sprinkles or touches, with the consecrated water, the forehead of the person to be baptized...*

In the brochure, *The ministries and sacraments of the New Apostolic Church* from 1935, no specific statements concerning the procedure are made. It states: *...in the first time of the Church, the person to be baptized was submersed according to the example provided by John the Baptist...However, this certainly does not prove that submersion is essential; the act is more important than its form...That submersion of the person is certainly not essential can be seen from various examples... (remark: baptism of the jailer in Philippi).*

**Our current practice is described as follows:**

*Following the consecration of the water, the minister wets the forehead of the person to be baptized three times with the consecrated water, each time making the sign of the cross. The finger is dipped into the consecrated water each time. In addition, the triune name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is cited in succession with each cross...*

The water used to make the three crosses on one's forehead has to come in direct contact with the person, and should be visible to the congregation. Enough water should be used that the person being baptized needs a handkerchief to wipe off the water afterwards.

From the sources available to us, we cannot conclusively derive how current baptismal practice exactly developed from the former practice and what considerations were decisive.

But we do know that the current baptismal practice features the following points:

1. The moistening brings the person being baptized into contact with water. This format allows the authorized officiant to perform the

act regardless of the person's age and under most conceivable circumstances.

2. The water (visible sign of the sacrament) to be used requires *consecration* in order to elevate it out of the domain of the profane (normality) and into that of the holy.
3. The use of water brings to expression the meaning of water baptism: dying with Christ and rising to a new life of fellowship with Him (Romans 6:2-4).
4. During the act of baptism, through the water and the power of the word, God bestows validity upon the baptism.
5. The Trinitarian formula is used – **the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ in particular, expresses the decisive difference from the baptism of John the Baptist.** Christian baptism is associated with Christ and His gospel. The person baptized is commended to Christ.
6. In so doing, the sign of the cross is marked three times on the forehead of the person being baptized. This is an expression of the grace of the triune God. It symbolizes salvation in Christ through His sacrificial death and the redemption effected by the Holy Spirit for mankind.
7. In the format of the baptismal celebration, one can take into consideration the local conditions and specific circumstances as necessary.

Taken from *The Concept of Baptism and Holy Sealing in the NAC* – 2007



The deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark is regarded in 1 Peter 3:20-21 as an “anti-type of baptism”<sup>5</sup> and a reference to future salvation. In Christian tradition, the Israelites’ passage through the Red Sea - their deliverance from Egyptian captivity - is also understood as a reference to the deliverance that occurs through baptism with water.

The Mosaic Law strictly distinguishes between “clean” and “unclean”. Water

is one of the means used to bring about ritual purity. Persons who were unclean in a religious sense had to subject to a bath of purification (Leviticus 13-15).

Ezekiel 16:9<sup>6</sup> mentions a washing with water and an anointing with oil, through which Jerusalem was received into a covenant of salvation. This can also be understood as a reference to Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing.

**5** ...*anti-type of baptism*... Biblical definition of *anti-type* (noun); something that is foreshadowed by a type or symbol, as a New Testament event prefigured, or anticipated, in the Old Testament.

In 1 Peter 3, the author uses the flood during Noah's time as an image for baptism in the idea of dying and then being saved. The illustration portrayed is the feeling of being underwater and running out of air. It is in this struggle to breathe, emerge from the water, and gasp the first breath that we comprehend this image of drowning and being rescued. This image is harder to grasp because in our Church, we tend to only use minimal water. This is why some churches do immersion baptisms, to truly demonstrate the moment of being saved, of coming up for air.

**6** Besides Ezekiel 16:9, sacraments are also hinted at in chapter 36:

*And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hal-*

*lowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36:23-28).*

#### **Matthew Henry Commentary:**

God promises here that He will perform a good work on them. He will cleanse them from the defilement of sin (v.25): *I will sprinkle clean water on you*, which represents both the blood of Christ, sprinkled on the conscience to purify it and take away the sense of guilt, and the grace of the Spirit, sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping himself in

Likewise, the situation of the Aramaic commander Naaman can be related to baptism: at the instruction of the prophet Elisha, the leper washed himself by dipping his body seven times into the Jordan, and the disease abated (2 Kings 5:1-14). This can be understood as a symbol for the washing away of original sin through baptism.

### 8.1.2.2 Holy Baptism with water in the New Testament

In the New Testament “baptism” is often understood as having two parts, namely baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit (Acts 8:14 et seq.; 10:47; 19:1-6; Titus 3:5).

Holy Baptism with water and Holy Baptism with the Spirit are therefore interdependent.

Jesus Christ submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist in order to demonstrate how righteousness before God can be attained (Matthew 3:15). So it was that the baptism of repentance,<sup>7</sup> as practiced by John, led to Holy Baptism with water. The Son of God abased Himself and put Himself on the same level as the sinner (Philippians 2:7). Thereby Jesus Christ set an example for mankind mired in sin.

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the Jordan (2 Kings 5:14). *I will save you from all your uncleannesses* (v.29). He will give them a *new heart* (v.26), an inner disposition vastly different from what it was before. To replace their *heart of stone* (v.26), a heart that is insensitive and disinclined to receive divine influences and respond with heartfelt devotion, He will give a *heart of flesh*, a soft, tender, responsive heart, one that has spiritual senses exercised, submitting in everything to the will of God. Because, in addition to our inclination to sin, we are also negligent in our duty, *God will cause them to walk in His statutes* (v.27), and thoroughly supply them with the wisdom, the will, and the active powers they need for every good work. God promises here that He will take them into covenant with Himself. We have here the essence of the covenant of grace (v.28).

## 7 ...baptism of repentance...

Matthew 3:11 - *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Luke 3:16 - *John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Catechism Q&A Question: #485

### **Did Jesus have to be baptized?**

It was not necessary for Jesus Christ to be baptized. Nevertheless, He submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist and in so doing, He put Himself on the same level as sinners. He thereby led us in the way in which righteousness before God can be attained (cf. Matthew 3:15). The baptism of John was only a baptism unto repentance. It has its basis in the ritual cleansing baths that were customary in Jewish tradition. It is a reference to the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water, which is performed in the name of the triune God.

**Definition of the word baptism:** *an act, experience, or ordeal by which one is purified, sanctified, initiated, or named.* In Catholic baptisms, the naming of the child is also part of the sacrament, and perhaps came from the example of Jesus. Jesus' baptism starts His ministry and through it, God names and identifies Him: *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* In this act, through the words and act of God, Jesus begins His purpose, His mission on earth. We believe in the dual nature of Jesus Christ – He was true Man and true God. In His divine nature, He is in perfect oneness with God. But in His human nature, He needs the comfort and presence of the Holy Spirit as we do. We understand this because of the examples of Jesus praying to God. Through His prayers, He taught His disciples to pray, but He also treasured His connection with God.

At the same time, Jesus' true identity as the Son of God was clearly revealed at His baptism. The triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - was present. The mystery of the Trinity began to reveal itself. The fact that Jesus is the Son of God was proclaimed (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:10-11).

Jesus Christ also described His sacrificial death as "baptism".<sup>8</sup> The sacrifice on the cross and Holy Baptism with water are thereby linked to one another (Luke 12:50).

The great commission issued by the Risen One makes it clear that baptizing - in the form of baptism with water and the Spirit - is one of the tasks assigned to the Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Baptism therefore emanates from

the triune God. It is not a work of man, but an act of God's salvation upon a human being.

After the Pentecost sermon, the Apostles called on those who had come to believe: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). In this manner, those who believed were incorporated into the congregation (Acts 2:41).

### 8.1.3 The necessity of Holy Baptism with water for salvation<sup>9</sup>

Holy Baptism with water is indispensable for partaking in salvation. It is the first step on the way to complete redemption. Hence, Holy Baptism with water opens the way to eternal fellowship with the triune God.

**8** Another definition of baptism is a *trying or purifying experience*, unrelated to the act of God in water baptism. We see this in Jesus' comments in Mark 10:37-40: *They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."*

We also read this in Luke 12:49-50: *"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"*

We can understand these references to mean His suffering and death, and in each instance, as He continues speaking in the subsequent verses, also the suffering of His followers.

**9** We believe Holy Baptism should lead to Holy Sealing. As previously mentioned, they are the two parts of the rebirth - baptism with water and Spirit. In John 3:5, *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* They are interdependent.

### 8.1.3.1 Holy Baptism with water as an act of God

Holy Baptism with water is not a figurative or symbolic action, but rather a real act of God's loving care. Through this act, the relationship between a human being and God is fundamentally changed. The effect of Holy Baptism with water acts upon a person's entire being.

#### SUMMARY

Holy Baptism with water is the first and fundamental sacramental act of grace of the triune God upon a human being who believes in Jesus Christ. (8.1)

Through Holy Baptism with water the baptized enters into his first close relationship with God - he becomes a Christian and is thereby incorporated into the church. (8.1)

In the New Testament "baptism" is often understood as a two-part baptism with water and the Holy Spirit. Holy Baptism with water and Holy Baptism with the Spirit are therefore interdependent. (8.1.2.2)

Jesus Christ submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist in order to demonstrate how righteousness before God can be attained. (8.1.2.2)

The great commission issued by the Risen One makes it clear that baptizing - in the form of baptism with water and the Spirit - is one of the tasks assigned to the Apostles. Baptism is an act of God's salvation upon a human being. (8.1.2.2)

Holy Baptism with water is necessary for salvation. (8.1.3)

It is not a figurative or symbolic act, but is indeed an act of God's loving care that fundamentally changes the relationship between a human being and God. (8.1.3.1)

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## MOVING THE WATERS OF BAPTISM

**In the past, this phrase was used in prayers and sometimes discussed during the baptism address in our church. As mentioned below, this practice should certainly be discontinued.**

All of the benefits of Holy Baptism are described as being godly in origin, immediate in effect, and unchangeable. We believe that because God is acting in the sacrament of Holy Baptism, it does not have to be repeated or renewed. Holy Communion is different from Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing in that Jesus contemplated that it would be celebrated often; *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Thus, the phrase "moving the waters of baptism" is not appropriate. Perhaps it was derived from the moving of the water in the pool of Bethesda. That experience, however, is not relevant to Holy Baptism.

One particular risk is the use of this phrase as a defense against the weaknesses and tendencies of parents and earlier ancestors. Truly, parents pray for their families and ask God to stop their own tendencies and inclinations from encumbering the lives of their children. Nevertheless, children must develop the strength, through Christ, to struggle with their inherent weaknesses and their own failings. Holy Baptism gives them the power to fight these battles against sin and human weakness, and does not need to be renewed or "stirred up."



### 8.1.3.2 The washing away of original sin

“Original sin” <sup>10</sup> [*The doctrine of original sin was first formulated by Augustine based on biblical testimony. Original sin has its source in the primal sin of Adam and Eve. The biblical basis for the doctrine of original sin is Psalm 51:5 and Romans 5:12.*] refers to man’s state of separation from God, in other words, the remoteness from God that has come into being through the fall into sin.

Through disobedience, mankind has lost the permanent and direct fellowship with the Creator.

Since the fall into sin a fundamental state of sinfulness and remoteness from God has weighed upon every human being (Genesis 3:23-24; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:18-19). This means that, from the very beginning - before any deed or thought - every human being is a sinner, even if no individual sin has yet been committed. Through baptism, original sin is washed away. The image of washing brings to expression that God lifts the state of permanent separation and remoteness from Him: He grants human beings their first close relationship with Him as well as the opportunity to have fellowship with Him. Even after baptism, the human inclination to sin remains as a further consequence of the fall into sin.

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**10** **Original sin:** Original sin is not “inherited sin.” In Ezekiel 18, we can read that God does not hold sin from one generation to another, but judges each one individually.

The beginning of the chapter refers to an old proverb: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.* In the following verses, God refutes this proverb and declares: *Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine... The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*

Neither baptism nor the absolution can remove our inclination to sin (See article **Original Sin and the Inclination to Sin** beginning on page 25). We can, however, inherit various weaknesses from our parents.

This understanding means we should refrain from talking about anything that hints at either the good or bad of previous generations having an effect on the soul of the person or child being baptized.

The doctrine of original sin teaches that human beings are not sinners because they commit sin, but rather they commit sin because they are sinners. In Romans 3:23, Paul wrote, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... We understand that the sins we commit do not begin only with the things we do or say. Understanding our sin starts with who we are. We are not good people who sometimes sin. We are sinful people who sometimes do the right thing. Sin is a part of our innate nature.*

Holy Baptism with water dispensed in the triune name of God allows us to enter into a close relationship with Him. Through Holy Baptism, we become a Christian and part of the church of Christ. Baptism

with water is an act of God that He alone does and it **forever changes the relationship between God and a person**. It is a true expression of His love for us.

Through baptism, original sin is washed away. This image of “washing away” brings to expression that God has removed the **condition of permanent separation from Him that began with mankind’s fall into sin**. With original sin removed from us, we can enter into a relationship with God.

Our relationship with God is the greatest gift of His grace. Once the connection is made with Him through baptism, it can never be severed. His love for us is so deep that even if we turn away from Him or become unfaithful, the opportunity for a relationship with Him, created by our baptism, will remain. How comforting it is that God expresses His love for us in this way!

Taken from *What is sin?* article in Summer VISION 2018, *Original sin or Inherited sin?* article in the Spring VISION 2017, as well as LRK comments on baptism

## INHERITED SIN: REFERENCES IN EXODUS

Please note: with regard to the idea of “inherited sins,” one could be misled by verses from Exodus 34:6-7: *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children** and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.*

These verses actually refer back to Exodus 20:5-6 which read: *you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

It is often the case that **sons follow in the path of their fathers**, and as they continue to sin, God’s displeasure rests on them as well, especially in the case of idolatry

(which is the context of the original verse in Exodus 20:5). We can also see that the **consequences of sin** and rebellion in the parent affect their children. Even today, we see in the case of abuse or alcoholism, these sins affect children for the rest of their lives and are more likely to impact *their* children as well. Thus, the visiting of iniquity is not inherited through the generations, but simply the consequence of the sins of the parents that have latent effects through the generations.

Jesus taught that God has limitless love and compassion. An overwhelming number of verses in Jesus’ teaching, but also in the Old Testament, speak of the love of God and His willingness to forgive. Even the beginning of the Exodus 34 verses declare this – *the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...* Our belief must be based on these manifold descriptions of God’s grace.

## ORIGINAL SIN AND THE INCLINATION TO SIN

### Introduction

In Questions and Answers #195 we read the following about original sin: *“Linked to this sacrament [Holy Baptism] is the washing away of original sin, the sinfulness of mankind which was caused by the fall of Adam and Eve.”* Generally, in keeping with the Christian tradition, original sin is to be understood in two ways: For one, the sin passed on to every human being as a consequence of Adam and Eve’s Fall. This is washed away through baptism. And then there is the human’s propensity, the inclination, to sin. But this persists in spite of baptism and must be overcome every time anew. These statements, that original sin is washed away through Holy Baptism but the human’s propensity to sin persists, might be seen as being contradictory.

The following points will help us better distinguish between original sin and the inclination to sin.

## Statements in Holy Scripture

The term "original sin" does not appear in Holy Scripture. The Bible's notion that all humans are sinful not only suggests a doctrine of original sin but actually demands one. An example for this assessment of humans we find in Psalm 51:5: *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.* Statements by Apostle Paul are of central importance for formulating a doctrine of original sin:

- *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive* (1 Corinthians 15:21–22).
- *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned* (Romans 5:12; cf. also 3:9).
- *Therefore, as through one man's offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous* (Romans 5:18–19; cf. also 7:18–20).

## Significance of biblical findings

The biblical passages cited above do not yield a doctrine of original sin, but do reveal the basic principles of one. Especially Romans 5:18–19 clearly

contrasts the disaster emanating from Adam, and affecting all of mankind, with the salvation made accessible to all humans by Jesus Christ.

- Through the Fall, mankind became entangled in sin (cf. also Hebrews 12:1).
- The fellowship with God was severed and cannot be reinstated through man's own efforts.
- Only Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection enable mankind to achieve fellowship with God.

## The concept of the New Apostolic Church regarding the doctrine of original sin

Through disobedience and rebellion against the divine will, Adam and Eve abused their freedom. This led to permanent separation from God and thus to a state of remoteness from God. The Fall entailed another decisive change: ever since, it has been a basic fact of human nature that humans are sinful, that is they are incapable of leading a life without sin. One can therefore speak of the human's basic inclination to sin.

### *Original sin and baptism*

Through baptism, God opens to the person to be baptized the way to salvation in Christ and lastly to redemption. In this respect, the person to be baptized has a share in Christ's merit, namely in the power to overcome sin effected by His sacrificial death. When we speak of original sin being washed away through baptism, we mean that the state of remoteness from God is abolished and

## SUMMARY

“Original sin” refers to man’s state of separation from God, in other words the remoteness from God that has come into being through the fall into sin. Since the fall into sin, a fundamental state of sinfulness and remoteness from God has weighed upon all human beings. (8.1.3.2)

Through baptism with water original sin is washed away and the believer is led out of the state of remoteness from God. His inclination to sin (concupiscence)<sup>11</sup> remains. (8.1.3.2)

the sinner is led into a relationship with God. Original sin, according to our doctrine, is therefore only that sin which has as a consequence the complete separation from God. This separation is abolished through baptism.

### *The human’s inclination to sin (concupiscence)*

The inclination to sin remains even after Holy Baptism. It is not part of original sin. The consequences of the human’s propensity to sin are sinful thoughts and deeds, which require the forgiveness of God. On the day of the Lord, concupiscence will be removed for good in the firstlings.

### Summary

By original sin we understand only the general sinfulness of the human race, the loss of the capability of having fellowship with God, and the human situation of remoteness from God. Original sin is removed through Holy Baptism. The propensity to sin is distinguished from original sin. It is a consequence of the Fall, which cannot be removed through baptism with water.

Taken from a Special DSG, October 2008

**11 Defining *concupiscence*:** In our Catechism, you will see this word referenced as *the inclination to sin*.

It should be noted that the NAC Catechism was first written in German. The German definition of *concupiscence* is *sinfulness*, or a *lust to sin*, with no strong sexual connotation. However, in English, the word is defined as *sexual appetite*, or *intense sexual desire*. The confluence of these two meanings is credited to Augustine, who coined the term, in his doctrine of original sin, which pointed to uncontrollable sexual urges and desires as one of the consequences of the Fall.

Because of its philosophical background, the German language uses *concupiscence* to mean a general sinfulness or inclination to sin. Biblically, this word is used in the English language to mean something similar, but has not entirely lost its sexual implication. In the KJV of the Bible, *concupiscence* is actually used as an English translation for the Greek work *epithymia* in three places (Romans 7:8, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:5). In other verses, *epithymia* is translated as *lust* or *desire* and can also be defined as *desiring what is forbidden*.

In summary, in the Christian community, when *concupiscence* is used it means **the inclination or propensity to sin**. It would be most expedient for us to use these phrases in place of the word *concupiscence*, so as not to create confusion.

### 8.1.4 The proper dispensation of Holy Baptism with water

The elements of the three sacraments have been prescribed by God. The two essential elements of Holy Baptism with water are the water and the Trinitarian formula: "I baptize you in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." When performed in this fashion, Holy Baptism can unfold in its effect upon the believer.

The water, the outward sign of inner purification, requires consecration to lift it up out of the domain of the profane and into that of the holy. It is therefore consecrated in the name of the triune God prior to the act of baptism. The baptizing minister then uses the consecrated water to make the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the person being baptized, and - under laying on of hands - baptizes him in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The sign of the cross symbolizes salvation in

Christ and the redemption He effected through His sacrificial death. Making the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the person being baptized is a reference to the triune God.

### 8.1.5 Prerequisites for receiving Holy Baptism with water

Anyone can receive Holy Baptism with water. In the New Apostolic Church it is administered by an Apostle or priestly minister to both children and adults. The prerequisite is the believer's profession of faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

When children are baptized,<sup>12</sup> the parents, or persons responsible for the religious upbringing of the children, must profess their faith in Jesus Christ and vow to raise the baptized child in accordance with the gospel. The practice of baptizing children is based upon the insight that the blessings of God should be made available to them. They too require the grace of the Lord, and the kingdom of God is open to them (Mark 10:14).

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## 12 BAPTISM AND SEALING OF CHILDREN OF GUARDIANS OF MIXED DENOMINATIONS

### Introduction

In January 2006, our church began to recognize the properly performed (*de rite*) baptisms of other churches. Since that time, the question has arisen as to whether it is appropriate to offer - or allow - parents or guardians of different denominations who wish to have their child sealed, the option of first having their child baptized in the church of the non-New Apostolic partner.

### Basic Principle

The following applies concerning the sacraments in general: *"The proper administration of the sacraments is incumbent upon the apostles. They have been commissioned by Christ to make the sacraments accessible in proper fashion. Although not all sacraments need to be dispensed by the apostles or those commissioned by them, sacraments nevertheless exist in apostolic relationship"* (CNAC 8).

For New Apostolic Christians it is thus desirable to have the sacraments dispensed by the apostle or a minister commissioned by him, even though the properly performed baptisms of other churches are fully valid.

**If parents intend to have the child baptized in another church and then sealed in the New Apostolic Church, it is best to advise against this approach.**

The background to this should be carefully discussed with the parents. All involved in these discussions should focus first and foremost on the wellbeing of the child, and put their own interest and ideas aside. The question of which parent or other individual(s) (for example, grandparents) should bear principal responsibility for the religious upbringing of the child should be collectively determined. The denominational affiliation of the child should also be chosen accordingly.

If it is likely that the child will be primarily raised by the non-New Apostolic parent and raised according to that parent's faith, it is best to advise against Holy Sealing. According to CNAC 8.3.7, the prerequisite for children to receive Holy Sealing is that *"their parents - or those responsible for the religious upbringing of the children - must profess the required belief on their behalf and vow to raise the children in the New Apostolic faith."*

If, on the other hand, the child is to be raised in the New Apostolic faith, then it is advisable to have both the baptism and sealing performed in the New Apostolic Church.

**Instructions for a pastoral care discussion**

Most of the time, parents are not familiar with all aspects when it comes to making a decision concerning baptism and sealing. Preparatory discussions are necessary before baptism and sealing. If, in the course of these discussions, parents of mixed denominations express the desire to have their child sealed in the NAC, but have the baptism performed in the denomination of the non-New Apostolic parent, the minister is to suggest - with empathy and understanding for their situation - that they weigh this decision carefully. Here the minister is to clearly explain the various aspects, however, **he cannot make the decision** in the place of the parties concerned.

This discussion about baptism should first of all create an awareness of that which binds all Christians together. Holy Baptism with water represents a binding element among Christians: *"Through Holy Baptism, a person who believes in Jesus Christ and professes Him is incorporated into the church of Christ and thereby has fellowship with Jesus Christ. Holy Baptism with water performed in the name of the Trinity is a binding element among Christians"* (CNAC 8.1.6). Like Holy Scripture and the creeds of the early church, it represents a unifying link between all Christians (CNAC 2.3).

Differing interpretations of theological positions and traditions must not be concealed here, however. In order for both parties to take one another's doctrinal interpretations seriously, they must also be honest when it comes to dealing with doctrinal differences.

**Baptism - denominational differences**

Every denomination has its own format of divine service (liturgy, music, etc.) and religious education (teaching) in practice, which has a defining impact on the religious development of its members. Another function of baptism is to integrate the baptized into the local congregation. For this reason it does not appear appropriate to have children baptized in one particular church with the intention of pursuing their religious socialization in another church.

Baptism also incorporates a profession to the doctrine of the particular church in question. It thus signifies agreement with the confessional texts or catechisms valid there. Holy Sealing implies agreement with the New Apostolic doctrine and the New Apostolic understanding of the gospel as it comes to expression in the Catechism.

Through baptism, the believer is incorporated into the invisible church of Christ. Properly performed baptisms have full validity. But to conclude from this that the church in which the baptism is performed is of no consequence fails to take into account that every baptism takes place in a particular denominational context. Among other things, this is revealed in the differing baptismal doctrines and liturgies.

The baptismal doctrines of the large Christian churches cannot be harmonized with belief in Holy Sealing:

- In the interpretation of the Protestant Churches, the Holy Spirit is already dispensed through the baptism of water. From this perspective, Holy Sealing cannot be recognized as a sacrament, but is rather viewed as a kind of “baptismal supplement”, which runs contrary to the Protestant faith.
- In the Orthodox Churches, baptism is immediately followed by *Chrismation*. This is understood as the “sealing with the Holy Spirit”. On the basis of this understanding, a sealing in the NAC cannot be recognized as the dispensation of the Spirit.
- According to the Catholic understanding, the grace of baptism is completed in confirmation. “This is the sacrament that imparts the Holy Spirit[...].” (Catechism of the Catholic Church § 1316). This doctrinal statement is not consistent with the New Apostolic understanding of Holy Sealing either.

### **Baptism and Holy Communion**

In a manner comparable to the practices in many other churches, those baptized in the NAC “are entitled to partake regularly in Holy Communion” (CNAC 8.1.6). Access to the celebration of Holy Communion is only offered to a limited degree to those baptized in another church: “Christians from other denominations who have been baptized in the proper manner

*[...] can partake of Holy Communion as guests”* (CNAC 8.2.21).

Adoption is performed in order to grant permanent access to Holy Communion. The prerequisite for this is profession of the New Apostolic faith (CNAC 12.1.11). The adoption can also be integrated into the Holy Sealing of a child.

### **Church membership - Dual membership**

While membership in the New Apostolic Church is granted through Holy Sealing, membership in most other churches already begins with Holy Baptism with water. When a child that has been baptized in another church is sealed thereafter, it is, legally speaking, a member of both churches. Such a dual membership is problematic and is not supported by other churches. The New Apostolic Church also advises against it.

However, in the case of children, the New Apostolic Church usually dispenses with the usual rule that only those who have terminated their membership in their former denomination are permitted to receive Holy Sealing.

Dual membership for children is not an enduring solution. It merely postpones the decision for one denomination and against the other. The child will then have to make a decision at the age of puberty or adolescence, which may not be easy.

If the child was baptized Catholic, the question of confirmation will come up between the ages of 11 and 14. The decision for or against confirmation also incorporates the decision of whether the

Christian in question will belong to the Catholic Church or the New Apostolic Church in the future. If the child was baptized Protestant, the question will likewise arise at the age of about 13 or 14 as to where the child will attend Confirmation instruction and be confirmed.

### **Baptismal age**

It is certainly possible that parents who become aware of the problematic nature of this situation will express the desire to postpone the decision and only have the child baptized when they are old enough to make a conscientious decision on their own. The New Apostolic Church advocates the position that infant baptism is a valuable asset, and advises parents to have their children baptized as early as possible (CNAC 8.1.5: *The practice of baptizing children is based upon the insight that the blessings of God should be made available to them...*).

### **Notes for parents who wish to have their child baptized in another church and then bring them to our Church for sealing**

Parents are to be advised to speak with the responsible authority in the church where the baptism will be performed. There they should openly address the fact that they intend to have their child sealed in the New Apostolic Church after baptism. Should the baptism be denied in that case, the decision remains as to whether to have the child baptized in the other church without Holy Sealing thereafter or to have the child baptized and sealed in the New Apostolic Church.

It would be dishonest toward both the other denomination and the New Apostolic Church for parents to conceal their intentions to have the child sealed when requesting its baptism, or to have the latter performed despite a previous declaration to the contrary.

It should be made clear to the parents or guardians that they will *vow to raise the children in the New Apostolic faith* (CNAC 8.3.7) when the children are sealed. This may also require a discussion with godparents in the other church.

### **Conclusions**

- The New Apostolic Church advocates that parents/guardians of mixed denominations have their children baptized and sealed in the New Apostolic Church.
- Should the religious education of the child not take place in the New Apostolic faith, parents are to be advised against Holy Sealing.
- The New Apostolic Church advises against dual membership. It also advises against waiting to have children baptized until they can make a conscientious decision for one or the other church on their own. It advocates infant baptism.
- Should parents or guardians insist on having their child baptized in another denomination and then having it sealed afterward, their wish will be respected provided they ensure the child will be raised in the New Apostolic faith.

### **See also these sections of the CNAC concerning the religious education of children:**

8.1.5 *Prerequisites for receiving Holy Baptism with water*

8.3.7 *Prerequisites for receiving Holy Sealing*

12.4.1 *Instruction of children*

13.3.4 *Parental responsibilities*

Taken from Special DSG, 2017



## SUMMARY

The two essential elements of Holy Baptism with water are the water and the word in the Trinitarian formula. The water is consecrated in the name of the triune God. Thereafter the baptizing minister uses the consecrated water to make the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the person being baptized, and baptizes in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (8.1.4)

Any human being can receive Holy Baptism with water. The prerequisite is profession of faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. (8.1.5)

When children are baptized, those who bear responsibility for their religious upbringing must profess their own faith in Jesus Christ and vow to raise the baptized child in accordance with the gospel. (8.1.5)

## 8.1.6 The effects of Holy Baptism with water <sup>13</sup>

Through Holy Baptism with water, a person who believes in Jesus Christ and professes Him is incorporated into the church of Christ and thereby has fellowship with Jesus Christ. Holy Baptism with water performed in the name of the Trinity is a binding element among Christians.

Holy Baptism with water - similar to circumcision in the old covenant - is a mark of the covenant. Through it, a human being is adopted into the new covenant and can then receive further marks of the covenant: access to Holy Sealing is open to those who are baptized. Those baptized in the New Apostolic Church are entitled to partake regularly in Holy Communion.

The baptized shares in the death of Jesus Christ and in His new life. Seen in

## 13 THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM:

Holy Baptism begins a **new harmonious relationship with God**, and the status of a person before God is **fundamentally changed**. We come close to Him in a way that is permanent and irreversible, even if the person later turns away from God.

We have made a **change of allegiance**. Holy Baptism is closely tied with our confirmation vow (which takes its wording from an old baptismal vow). **We renounce Satan and surrender ourselves to God.**

God accepts us in spite of our sinfulness if we accept and believe in Jesus Christ. He washes away the original sin that we share with all humanity because of the Fall.

A further consequence of the Fall is our **inclination to sin**. Our baptism helps us in our fight against sin because God provides His help and blessing for us.

Baptism is first a death: of the old Adam, our old life, our allegiance to the evil one. That's why the metaphor of the flood is used in 1 Peter to talk about baptism – the idea of almost drowning, but then being delivered. That is the significance of baptism – **we were lost and dead in our sin, but Christ raised us to life**. We are being made into a **new creation**, which should affect our entire being – *to become the person that God created us to be*.

With baptism, you **become a Christian!** This is a wonderful, yet serious event; a public profession of what you believe.

a spiritual sense, he partakes in the experience of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ died on the cross for the sins of mankind, so the baptized is to be “dead indeed to sin” by renouncing it. Baptism incorporates the believer into Christ’s activity of redemption such that Christ’s death on Golgotha also becomes the “death” of the baptized: this signifies the end of life in the condition of remoteness from God and the beginning of life in Christ. Baptism imparts powers to wage the battle against sin (Romans 6:3-8; Colossians 2:12-13).

Baptism is “putting on Christ”. With it, the first step on the path to renewal of the inner man has been taken: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). This image constitutes the basis for abandoning one’s old way of life and “putting on” the virtues of Christ. It describes that which comes to expression in the term “repentance”, namely the act of turning away from one’s old nature and turning to the Lord. This means that one must earnestly endeavor to lead one’s life in accordance with God’s will. The baptized person vows to conduct and organize his life under the regency of Christ.

### 8.1.7 Faith and Holy Baptism with water

Like all other sacraments, Holy Baptism with water is dispensed on the basis of faith. Sacrament and faith belong together: “He who believes and is baptized will be

saved” (Mark 16:16). A person’s faith is both a prerequisite for receiving the sacrament as well as his response to this act of God.

The unbelief into which a baptized person may fall cannot undo the validity of Holy Baptism with water. A validly dispensed Holy Baptism with water is not repeated.

### 8.1.8 Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing

Although Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing are interdependent, they are two distinct sacraments. The book of Acts relates that Holy Baptism with water and baptism with Holy Spirit were administered in two separate acts (Acts 2:38-39; 8:12-17, 10:44-48; 19:5-6).

The rebirth out of water and the Spirit occurs when a person receives both sacraments, namely Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing (John 3:5).

### 8.1.9 Holy Baptism with water and following Christ

During Holy Baptism with water, the believer vows to earnestly endeavor to avoid sin and to lead a life of following Christ. The kind of following to which the baptized are called consists of aligning themselves to the life and nature of Jesus, in accordance with His words: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).

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One professes their belief in Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and return. It’s important to note that we profess this each time we celebrate Holy Communion – *for as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.*

You commit to becoming a **disciple of Christ**: to imitate Him, grow in His nature, and allow Him to define your life, accept the teachings of His gospel, and share it with others. This is what it means to be a Christian, and this act of God continues to develop throughout your life.

You are also baptized into a church – you become part of an **assembly of Christians**. Christ gave us the church; we need each other. *Our new life is actualized in and with others*, and we foster this fellowship in Holy Communion.

Just as God the Father is in fellowship with the Son and the Spirit, so we were created to exist in fellowship with each other as well. We cannot become part of the church of Christ without a connection to a congregation or assembly of Christians. To fulfill Christ’s commandments, we need a neighbor!

Taken from DA Kolb 2020 National Priest Conference presentation

### 8.1.10 Holy Baptism with water and the Apostle ministry

In Matthew 28:18-20, the Risen One gives His Apostles the commission to baptize. The administration of the sacraments is inseparably linked to the Apostle ministry. While Holy Sealing - according to the testimony of the Scriptures - was only dispensed by Apostles, there are several biblical references indicating that Holy Baptism with water was not exclusively performed by Apostles (Acts 8:38). Priestly ministers in the New Apostolic Church also have the authority to baptize with water.

However the Holy Baptism with water administered by the Apostles and ministers ordained by them is not the only valid one: since it has been entrusted to the church as a whole,<sup>14</sup> properly performed baptisms in other churches are also valid (*see 6.4.4*).

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## 14 BAPTISMAL RECOGNITION:

When assessing the question of whether a baptism performed in another Christian denomination should be recognized, the New Apostolic Church uses the same criteria as the other large Christian churches. The decisive criteria for recognizing a baptism are as follows:

- It must have been performed with water.
- It must have been performed in the name of the Trinity, that is to say, in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this baptism, belief in the one God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - is professed.

Wherever it cannot be guaranteed that the aforementioned prerequisites have been met, the baptism cannot be recognized. The same applies to baptisms performed in churches that do not profess belief in the Trinity.

Among those baptisms that are not recognized are those of

- the Mormons, because they do not believe in one God (monotheism), but rather regard the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct gods (polytheism).
- the Jehovah's Witnesses, because they deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and deny that Jesus Christ is God. Beyond that, they do not use any baptismal formula.
- the Christian Community Church. The Trinitarian baptismal formula is not used in their baptisms. In addition to water, they also use ashes and salt in the baptismal ritual. Beyond that, the image of God in the Christian Community has anthroposophical leanings.

The baptisms of most Christian churches are recognized. In cases of uncertainty, the apostle should be consulted.

Taken from Special DSG, 2017

## SUMMARY

Holy Baptism performed in the name of the Trinity is a binding element among Christians. (8.1.6)

Baptism is a covenantal mark, whereby a human being is accepted into the new covenant. It is the first step on the path to renewal of the inner being. The baptized individual shares in the death of Jesus Christ as well as in His new life. (8.1.6)

A properly dispensed Holy Baptism is not repeated. (8.1.7)

Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing are two interdependent yet distinct sacraments. The rebirth out of water and the Spirit occurs by receiving both of them. (8.1.8)

The Risen One issued the commission to baptize to His Apostles. In the New Apostolic Church, Apostles have the authority to baptize and can also issue this authority to the priestly ministries. (8.1.10)

Since Holy Baptism with water has been entrusted to the church as a whole properly performed baptisms in other churches are also valid. (8.1.10)

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## LEGAL ASPECTS OF HOLY BAPTISM

Holy Baptism always has a direct relationship with the profession and constitution of the church in which it is administered. In other words, one is baptized into an assembly of Christians. In contrast to the New Apostolic Church, baptism with water in other Christian denominations generally establishes an individual's membership in that particular church. This naturally also applies to children. At the time of Holy Baptism, parents promise to raise their child in the faith of the denomination of which they are members.

Our recognition of a person's baptism – and thus of their Christianity – does not entitle them to regularly partake of Holy Communion in our Church, however. An adoption is the prerequisite for this.

***One must be cautious in extending a blanket invitation to all baptized guests to partake in the celebration of Holy Communion.*** As soon as it is possible or desired by guests, they should receive pastoral care from the congregational rector or another minister. Already in the early stages of their investigation of the New Apostolic faith, ***we must explain to guests that the celebration of Holy Communion also represents a fellowship of profession.*** They will only be entitled to partake of Holy Communion once they have declared their profession of the New Apostolic faith at their adoption.



## Holy Baptism with water

**Note:** The responsibility the parents assume at Holy Baptism should be discussed at a preliminary meeting between the parents and the officiant before the baptism takes place. The same preliminary meeting should also be conducted for adults being baptized.

### ***Liturgical position***

Holy Baptism with water takes place after the absolution and the Eucharistic prayer, and can be introduced with a piece of music. If several acts are planned before Holy Communion, they are to be performed in the following order:

- Holy Baptism with water
- Adoption
- Holy Sealing
- Confirmation

### ***Execution***

The dispensation of Holy Baptism with water is performed by a priestly minister or an apostle. The holy act takes place in front of the altar.

### ***Address***

The following content is recommended.

### ***Baptism of children***

In the event that persons other than the parents are to assume responsibility for the religious upbringing of the child, the following address should be directed to these guardians.

- Children are a gift from God and should be valued as such ([Psalm 127:3](#)).
- Parents bear responsibility for the child's upbringing in the Christian faith - as it is proclaimed in the New Apostolic Church.
- Holy Baptism with water is the first and fundamental act of grace of the triune God bestowed upon a human being ([Mark 16:16](#)).
- Through baptism, original sin is washed away ([1 Peter 3:21](#)).
- The person being baptized will now be incorporated into the church of Christ.

### ***Baptism of adults***

This also includes older children who take on responsibility for themselves. In this case, the child's legal guardians must have declared their consent in writing beforehand.

- Holy Baptism with water is the first and fundamental act of grace of the triune God bestowed upon a human being ([Mark 16:16](#)).
- Through baptism, original sin is washed away ([1 Peter 3:21](#)).
- The person being baptized will now be incorporated into the church of Christ.

- The prerequisite for receiving Holy Baptism with water is profession of the New Apostolic belief in
  - the triune God;
  - the death, resurrection, and the return of Jesus Christ;
  - the effectiveness of the apostle ministry in
    - o dispensing the sacraments,
    - o proclaiming the word of God,
    - o preparing for the return of Jesus Christ to take home His bride.

### ***The baptismal vow***

The officiant asks the congregation to rise.

#### ***Baptism of children***

*“Dear parents, I now ask you before God and the congregation: Do you believe in Jesus Christ and is it your wish*

- to raise your child in the New Apostolic faith (if both parents are New Apostolic) alternatively:
- to raise your child in the New Apostolic faith and support his/her spiritual upbringing in this faith (if only one parent is New Apostolic)

*and to teach him/her to remain faithful to the Lord? Then vow this with a clear ‘Yes.’”*

#### ***Baptism of adults***

*“I now ask you before God and the congregation: Do you profess the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it your wish to follow Jesus Christ and allow yourself to be prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the word of God? Then vow this with a clear ‘Yes.’”*

### ***Prayer following the vow***

#### ***Baptism of children***

The prayer should contain the following elements:

- God has heard the vow of the parents, who have requested that their child receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water;
- the plea for God’s blessing upon this vow;
- the plea that the parents may have the strength and the ability to keep their vow;

#### ***Baptism of adults***

The prayer should contain the following elements:

- God has heard this vow and the request for the dispensation of the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water;
- the plea for God’s blessing upon this vow;
- the plea for strength and the ability to keep this vow;

The prayer is concluded with “*Amen.*”

## **Consecration of the baptismal water**

The minister holds his hand over the water to be used in the baptism and consecrates it with the following words: *“In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate this water and dedicate it for the act of Holy Baptism. Amen.”*

## **Act of baptism**

Following is the trinitarian baptismal formula: *“(In the case of children, this is to be preceded by the child’s first name) ..., I baptize you in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

As the officiant speaks the words of the baptismal formula, he makes the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the person being baptized, after having dipped his fingers into the consecrated water each time. The officiant should make sure that he uses enough water.

The aforementioned baptismal formula and corresponding actions are repeated for each person being baptized.

The officiant then places his hand on the forehead of the person being baptized and states the following: *“Through this holy act, God washes away original sin. You are now incorporated into the body of Christ and thus into the church of Christ.”*

This is immediately followed by the baptismal blessing.

## **Baptismal blessing**

The baptismal blessing is dispensed under laying on of hands. The following content is recommended.

God, the Father

- imparts to you His grace and leads you upon the path to salvation and complete redemption.
- accepts you in His love.

Jesus Christ

- has sacrificed His life for you.
- grants you access to Holy Communion and all the blessings in the house of God.
- grants you His peace.

The Holy Spirit

- desires to form and shape you in accordance with the nature of Christ.
- protect you on your path of life and faith.

## **Mandatory conclusion**

The baptismal blessing is concluded with the following formula:

*“May the blessing of God accompany you. The peace of the Risen One be with you. Amen!”*

After the officiant has offered his congratulations to the baptized/the parents, they return to their seats.

## **Introduction of Holy Communion**

If no other acts or musical contributions are planned, the congregation remains standing, and the celebration of Holy Communion follows.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR HOLY BAPTISM

Meet with the person(s) to be baptized well in advance, and discuss the following points. At the conclusion of your discussion, be sure to walk through the steps of the liturgy and placement of the sacrament in the divine service so they are comfortable with what will take place.

### For an adult baptism:

1. Holy Baptism begins a **new harmonious relationship with God**, and your status as a person before God is **fundamentally changed**.
2. You make a **change of allegiance. You will renounce Satan and surrender yourself to God**.
3. God accepts you in spite of your sinfulness if you accept and believe in Jesus Christ. He washes away the **original sin** that you share with all humanity because of the fall into sin of Adam and Eve.
4. A further consequence of the Fall is your **inclination to sin**. Baptism helps you in your fight against sin because God provides His help and blessing.
5. Baptism is first a death: of the old Adam, the old life, your allegiance to the evil one. That is the significance of baptism – **you were lost and dead in your sin, but Christ raised you to life**.
6. You are being made into a **new creation**, which should affect your entire being – *to become the person that God created you to be*.
7. With baptism, **you become a Christian!** This is a wonderful, yet serious event; a public profession of what you believe. You profess your belief in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return.
8. You commit to becoming a **disciple of Christ**: to imitate Him, grow in His nature, and allow Him to define your life, accept the teachings of His gospel, and share it with others. This is what it means to be a Christian, and this act of God continues to develop throughout your life.
9. You are also baptized into a Church – you become part of the church of Christ and this **assembly of Christians**. Christ gave us the church; we need each other. *Your new life is actualized in and with others*, and we foster this fellowship in Holy Communion. Just as God the Father is in fellowship with the Son and the Spirit, so we were created to exist in fellowship with each other as well. You cannot become part of the church of Christ without a connection to a congregation or assembly of Christians.
10. Are you ready to take this step?

**For a child's baptism:**

1. You recognize your child as a **gift from God**.
2. You are accepting the responsibility to **raise your child in the Christian faith**, as expressed by the New Apostolic Church, until the day of their confirmation when they profess their decision to renounce Satan and surrender to the triune God.
3. Your child's **relationship with God will fundamentally and irrevocably change** through their baptism.
4. You agree to cultivate the **new creation** that the Holy Spirit works within them, being an example by growing in your own relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. Your child is welcomed into the church of Christ and this **assembly of Christians**.

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A **new member welcome package and baptism certificate** should be requested at least **3 weeks ahead** from the Admin Office to give to them on the day of their baptism.

**For adults**, this includes a welcome package, a Bible, an Apocrypha, and a card that can be signed by the rector or a member that has been walking with them on this journey, along with the official baptismal certificate.

**For children**, along with the baptismal certificate request, an age-appropriate Bible can be ordered from the church if one has not already been given through Sunday school classes (available for order on [ndi.nac-usa.org](http://ndi.nac-usa.org) under RESOURCES, *Order Resources*). The congregation could also contribute to this special day by putting together the **936 Penny Challenge**. Find more information on [ndi.nac-usa.org](http://ndi.nac-usa.org) under *Families and Parenting*.

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## 8.2 Holy Communion

The Seventh Article<sup>1</sup> of the New Apostolic Creed states: “I believe that Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Himself in memory of the once brought, fully valid sacrifice, and bitter suffering and death of Christ. The worthy partaking of Holy Communion establishes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is celebrated with unleavened bread and wine; both must be consecrated and dispensed by a minister authorized by an Apostle.”

Of the three sacraments, Holy Communion is the one which is repeatedly made available and dispensed to a human being. The content and significance of Holy Communion cannot be fully grasped in rational or doctrinal terms. It is closely associated with the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ.

In Holy Communion, the reality of God and His devotion to mankind can be directly experienced.<sup>2</sup> Holy Communion is the central event of the divine service.

It also takes on a significant position in the consciousness and life of the faithful.

### 8.2.1 Designations for the sacrament

There are various designations for the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, which emphasize different aspects of the sacrament:

- “Holy Communion” refers to the sacrament’s historical institution by Jesus Christ in fellowship with His Apostles on the evening before His crucifixion.
- The term “Eucharist”<sup>3</sup> derives from the Greek *eucharistein*, meaning “to give thanks”. Jesus Christ gave thanks to God when He instituted Holy Communion (Luke 22:19). The giving of thanks in Holy Communion calls believers to an all-encompassing gratitude, in particular for the sacrifice and merit of Jesus Christ, but also for redemption and sanctification.

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**1** Reference page 70 of the Catechism for an explanation of the Seventh article (2.4.7).

**2** *In Holy Communion, the reality of God and His devotion to mankind can be directly experienced.* Chief Apostle Schneider, Democratic Republic of Congo, July 2015: “What happens in a divine service? God proclaims His love. In every divine service, we can celebrate Holy Communion. Jesus draws near to us and says, ‘Listen, believe Me: I love you. I died for you’” (Community 2016, Edition 1).

**3** The term “Eucharist”...

We recognize the term “Eucharist” for Holy Communion and call the prayer in which we “give thanks” for Christ’s sacrifice the *Eucharistic prayer*. This prayer follows the absolution and leads into the celebration of Holy Communion. The points of emphasis of the Eucharistic prayer include praise and thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Thanks should be expressed, for example, for sins that have been forgiven, for the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for the apostle ministry, and for the promise of Christ’s return. This expression of thanks for the forgiveness of sins is closely related to the petition that God may preserve His people through His grace, and continue to help them.

- “Lord’s Supper” is a designation for Holy Communion which draws attention to the fact that Jesus is the Lord (*see 3.4.6.2*) and that, in this capacity, He has instituted it and invites us to celebrate it.
- “Breaking of bread” refers to the Passover meal which Jesus Christ celebrated when He instituted Holy Communion (Matthew 26:26). That the breaking of bread was an identifying feature of Jesus can be seen from the fact that the disciples traveling to Emmaus thereby recognized the Risen One (Luke 24:13-31). The early Christians referred to their meal fellowships as “breaking of bread”, through which their unity and fellowship was brought to expression (Acts 2:42, 46).

### 8.2.2 Old Testament references to Holy Communion

The Old Testament not only makes frequent references to the Son of God, His suffering, and His sacrifice, but also relates many events that have a certain affiliation with Holy Communion. In retrospect, they can be understood as references to the sacrament established by Jesus Christ. From them it is clear just how closely the old and the new covenants are interrelated.

Genesis 14:18-20 describes Abram’s encounter with the royal Priest Melchizedek. Melchizedek - whom the epistle to the Hebrews interprets as a reference to

Jesus Christ - blessed Abram and also brought him bread and wine (verse 18). “Bread and wine” are reminiscent of the elements of Holy Communion. This relationship becomes even clearer in Hebrews 5:10, where Jesus Christ is called a “High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek”.

Another important Old Testament reference to Holy Communion can be seen in the feeding of the Israelites with manna as they wandered in the wilderness (Exodus 16:4-36). Manna is described as “bread from heaven” (verse 4). According to John 6:35, Jesus Christ called Himself “the bread of life”. This manna held the promise of something greater, as it were, namely a food which would not only strengthen the body, but also one’s entire being, and serve for salvation.

### 8.2.3 Jesus’ miracles of feeding and Holy Communion

The gospels attest that Jesus Christ ate and drank with sinners. In contrast to the Pharisees and scribes, He had table fellowship with those who, in accordance with the Mosaic Law, were considered unclean and who were therefore excluded from association with the righteous (Mark 2:13-17).

Not only did Jesus eat with others, the gospels also relate that He provided food for them. His miracles of feeding - for example, the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15), the feeding of the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-38), but also

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### **Eucharist continued...**

The sacrifice of Christ cannot in any way be compared or related to our own offerings and sacrifices. ***Thus, the petition for God to accept the monetary offerings should not be mentioned here.***

***Likewise, intercessions should be included in either the opening or closing prayer, and not referred to in this prayer.***

The Eucharistic prayer is reserved for God’s activity of salvation, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

the miracle of transforming water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11) - are all signs of the kingdom of God which has drawn near to mankind in Jesus Christ. Beyond the satisfaction of physical hunger, these earthly meals are also a reference to salvation in Christ. This becomes clear in the words of the Lord when He linked the feeding of the five thousand with the statement: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:26-51).

#### 8.2.4 The Passover meal

At the Lord's command, the Israelites celebrated their first Passover on the night before their exodus from Egypt. Lambs without blemish were killed and prepared. With the lamb, the Israelites ate unleavened bread. The blood of the lamb, which was painted on the doorposts, was the sign that would spare the Israelites from the tenth plague to come upon Egypt, namely the death of the firstborn (Exodus 12).

God commanded that the Passover should be celebrated every year in commemoration of the liberation from Egypt.

The similarities between the Passover meal and Holy Communion are quite apparent:<sup>4</sup> both are meals of commemoration in which bread is an indispensable component. The cup of wine which is drunk at the end of the Passover meal symbolizes the joy resulting from the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian captivity. The blood of the Passover lamb effected deliverance for the firstborn of the Israelites. This is a reference to Jesus Christ as the "Lamb of God" who was sacrificed: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:19).

The Passover meal is a commemoration of the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian captivity. Holy Communion refers to deliverance in a much broader sense, namely to the redemption of mankind from the bondage of sin through the sacrifice of Christ, and to deliverance from eternal death.

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## 4 JESUS THE PASSOVER LAMB

Each year as we approach Lent and the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, we should always dive a little deeper into some of the events of Holy Week to make it come alive for us. There are always new meanings and understandings to be discovered through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Attention is called to the anti-typical relationship of the Passover Feast and the Last Supper. When Jesus and His disciples gathered at the Last Supper, they were together to celebrate Passover. However, it is more than just a coincidence that the Last Supper happened to be during Passover. We can look to Exodus 12 for the institution of the Passover Feast and further understanding.

Passover was first established before the Israelites fled Egypt to escape slavery, as we can read in Exodus 12:11 where the Lord states the Passover meal should be eaten *in haste* and with all of their things ready so they could leave Egypt quickly. After this initial Passover Feast, it

was and still is celebrated by the Jewish people every year as a remembrance of their freedom.

The first and last portions of Exodus 12 are God's instructions to Moses and Aaron on how to celebrate the Passover meal. His specific directions reveal the connections to His Son, Jesus Christ.

In Exodus 12:3 and 4, the Lord instructs, "*On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.*" From these verses, we can see that the lamb is given great significance; it is to be shared as the main part of the Passover Feast among many people. Jesus is often referred to as the **Lamb of God**, as seen in John 1:29, and also as "*our Passover*" by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7. Lambs were meek and gentle, as was Christ. The lamb was also used as an offering of atonement and we understand that

### 8.2.5 The institution of Holy Communion by Jesus Christ

Already before Jesus Christ established Holy Communion in the presence of His Apostles, He said: "... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). "Flesh and blood" are a reference to Holy Communion, which, as the Lord hereby emphasized, is indispensable for salvation. Also significant here are the additional statements of the Lord: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life ... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him" (John 6:54, 56).

The Synoptic Gospels relate that Jesus Christ shared a meal together with His Apostles on the Feast of Passover. Matthew 26:26-29 describes how the Lord instituted Holy Communion: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom'" (Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).

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Jesus' sacrifice was the forgiveness of our sin. The Israelites' sacrifice needed to be repeated, but Jesus' sacrifice was *the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice*.

Isaiah paints a strong picture of the Messiah's sacrifice, further reinforcing the image of Jesus as the Lamb of God: "*He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent*" (Isaiah 53:7). **Jesus is the Lamb of God because He is both the sacrifice presented to God and the sacrifice provided by God, removing the world's sin and taking it on Himself alone.**

The Exodus verses also put a focus on the sharing of the lamb. The lamb is not meant for just a few people, it is meant to be divided by many, even sharing it with a neighbor's family. This is true of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb. He did not die for the sins of one person, but for the sins of all people in all times.

Continuing with God's instructions for the Passover Feast, Exodus 12:5 states that the "*lamb shall be without blemish.*" The Passover lamb's connection here to Jesus is more evident. While Jesus was fully man, He was also fully God and therefore, perfect. He was without sin and faithfully submitted to His Father's will. In verse 6, we're told that the Lord then says to Moses and Aaron, "*Now you shall keep [the lamb] until the fourteenth day of the same month.*" This indicates the lamb became part of the household for a period thereby creating a measure of grief with its sacrifice. This is a parallel feeling we should have when we think of the sacrifice of Christ; He is someone we know, who we love, and we can feel the loss of His death all the more for those reasons. Exodus 12:7 describes that after the lamb is killed, some of its blood should be put on the two doorposts and the lintel of the house where it was eaten. In verses 12 and 13 God says: "*For I will*

While the account in the gospel of Mark largely coincides with the account in the gospel of Matthew, we find the following additions in Luke: “Do this in remembrance of Me” and “this cup is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:19-20).

With the words: “Do this in remembrance of Me”, the Lord gave His Apostles the commission and authority to celebrate Holy Communion in the same way as He Himself had done.

### 8.2.6 Holy Communion in the first epistle to the Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-32 we find evidence of the celebration of Holy Communion and of Jesus’ words of institution which He spoke in the process. This text first of all attests that the celebration of Holy Communion was part of the religious practice of the early Christian congregations. Here Apostle Paul cited the words of institution for Holy Communion as practiced in Corinth. Here it becomes clear that a predetermined wording was prescribed: “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you.” This is followed by the words of institution: “The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’<sup>25</sup> In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as

often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

This text describes the situation in which Holy Communion was instituted and also relates the words spoken by Jesus. The commemoration of this unique event in the history of salvation also incorporates the words of institution. Wherever Holy Communion is celebrated, this night in which the Lord was betrayed is also commemorated.

Breaking of bread and giving thanks (Greek: *eucharistein*) to God also belong together. At the same time, Jesus’ interpretation of the bread and wine is repeated: the bread is not only the Passover bread, but rather “My body which is broken for you”. Likewise, the cup not only contains the customary wine of the Passover, but is “the new covenant in My blood”. The one cup of wine which was passed around during the celebration of Holy Communion calls to mind the death of Jesus upon which the new covenant was founded. Whoever drinks from this cup receives the blood of Jesus Christ, that is to say the Lord Himself. The conclusion of the text emphasizes the importance of the proclamation of the unique event of Christ’s death as well as the importance of His return. The significance of Holy Communion for fellowship of life with the Lord is also underlined: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are *one* bread and *one* body; for we all partake of that *one* bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

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*pass through the land of Egypt on that night... and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” Just as the lamb’s blood on the doorposts ultimately provided the Israelites their freedom, Jesus’ blood gives us freedom from the weight of our sins.*

One final example – just as they were instructed in Exodus 12:46 to not break any of the bones of the lamb, Jesus’ bones were also not broken during His crucifixion (John 19:31-37).

Jesus’ death as a counterpart to the Passover meal gives further clarity on the importance of His sacrifice and its vital role for us: *the Lamb of God gave His life to give us life.*

Taken from Spring VISION Newsletter 2017

## 5 THIS IS MY BODY BROKEN FOR YOU; DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

*In the night, when Jesus is betrayed by His own friend... We have the feeling, God has made Himself human now; He’s in this night. He puts Himself in the environment and He’s even betrayed by His own friend. He suffers. The almighty, omnipotent, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent God suffers like a man, like us. Then He took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”*

*Later on He says, this cup is the new covenant in My blood – [drink it].*

### 8.2.7 The significance of bread and wine

The elements of bread and wine which constitute the sacrament belong to the domain of sustenance, of celebration, and of Israelite divine service.

Bread is a symbol for human sustenance in general. The meals of bread and the related miracles of the Old and New Testaments demonstrate that God is concerned with the human being as a whole, not only in part - that is not only the body, and not only the soul. Even within the divine service, bread had been assigned an important function by the Mosaic Law: twelve loaves of showbread ("Bread of the Presence") were placed on a table in front of the veil to the Most Holy Place. On each Sabbath, they were eaten by the priests and replaced with new loaves (Exodus 25:30).

In general, wine is also a reference to the primal and creaturely dependence of

human beings on sustenance. In ancient Israel, wine was one of the beverages consumed at feasts. In Israel, wine was also a symbol of joy and of future salvation (Isaiah 55:1).

#### SUMMARY

Holy Communion is the sacrament which is dispensed to a human being again and again. It is the central event of the divine service. (8.2)

Holy Communion is also known as the "Eucharist" ("giving thanks"), the "Lord's Supper", and the "breaking of bread". (8.2.1)

Already the Old Testament contained references to Holy Communion. (8.2.2)

Both the Passover meal and Holy Communion are meals of remembrance of which bread is an indispensable component. The Passover meal commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt.

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*Eat My body and drink My blood. Who can say that? It meant that His death was imminent. It was as though it was already happening. This event of the Last Supper is the beginning of His Passion and already He talks as though it's already happening, "I am dying." Here He took the bread and broke it. Consider the feeling of being broken. Man is broken from the fall of sin. We are sinful beings, we have a sinful nature, we are broken. And now, the almighty God, He not only suffers as a man, but He allows Himself to be broken. We are broken from sin; He, by Himself, by self-abasement. He's not broken from sin. He allows Himself to be broken.*

*And then He says, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." What is the remembrance? It really means to take something from the past and make it alive again in this moment. This is what happens in the celebration of Holy Communion, when in a sense, we stand at the cross of Christ. We witness it again in our soul. Inwardly, we must create this feeling of grief in the souls that gather for communion. Whether it's a big congregation or whether it's four or five of us. God, our Father, He suffers, He has broken Himself, and He dies for us. This is the feeling that Paul is trying to tell the congregation.*

*Taken from National Priest Conference divine service - 8 Sept 2019 / 1 Corinthians 11:29*

Holy Communion points to liberation in a much more comprehensive sense, namely to the redemption of mankind from the servitude of sin. (8.2.4)

On the occasion of the Passover feast, Jesus Christ shared in a meal with His Apostles. In the process He instituted Holy Communion. (8.2.5)

The oldest evidence of the celebration of Holy Communion and the words of institution which Jesus spoke at that time can be found in 1 Corinthians 11. This also recalls the situation in which Holy Communion was instituted. (8.2.6)

The sacrament is constituted by the elements of bread and wine. (8.2.7)

Bread is a symbol for human sustenance in general. Wine is also a reference to the human dependency on sustenance. In Israel, wine is also a symbol of joy and of future salvation. (8.2.7)

### 8.2.8 Holy Communion as a meal of remembrance <sup>6</sup>

Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance because it first of all commemorates the death of Jesus Christ as a unique event which is valid for all times. The remembrance of this event is important because it emphasizes that Jesus Christ is true Man who had to suffer real death. It also recalls the situation at the institution of Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles. This highlights the importance

of the Apostles for the proper administration of Holy Communion. However, this remembrance extends even further, namely to the resurrection of the Lord (which is why Holy Communion is also an Easter meal) and to His ascension into heaven. Everyone who celebrates Holy Communion partakes in this commemoration and its proclamation until Christ returns.

This is not only a matter of remembrance directed toward the past, but rather also a reminder of the certainty of Christ's current presence and His future kingdom.

### 8.2.9 Holy Communion as a meal of profession

Holy Communion is a meal of profession, as is clear from the words: "You proclaim the Lord's death ..." (1 Corinthians 11:26). The profession of the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ is part of the fundamental profession of the Christian faith. This profession is required of all those who wish to partake of Holy Communion for salvation.

Those who regularly partake of Holy Communion in the New Apostolic Church should be aware that they are thereby publicly professing their faith in the activity and authority of the Apostles of Jesus at work today (*see 2.4 and 8.2.21*).

The emphasis on the confessional nature of the holy meal also serves to counteract thoughtless or purely habitual partaking in the sacrament.

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## 6 HOLY COMMUNION AS FOUR MEALS:

In our Catechism, the sacrament of Holy Communion is explained using an analogy of four meals.

It is simultaneously a meal of:

- *Remembrance*
- *Fellowship*
- *The Future*
- *Profession*

All of this in one moment during the divine service! How can this be? Perhaps it would be helpful to further expand the analogy. During the holiday season, we often partake of large festive meals with many courses. Each course is different but complementary. Each course builds upon

the previous one and adds to the joy and satisfaction of the total experience. Such a feast can't be rushed. Time and attention must be taken to fully savor each course. Likewise, much preparation is necessary in advance.

So let us now take a journey together of greater understanding. Both in moments of personal introspection and in discussions with one another, let us explore this feast in deeper detail and discover a more satisfying, inspiring and joyous Holy Communion with Christ in every divine service.

**A meal of Remembrance:** Here we acknowledge that Christ has paid the ultimate price for our salvation. His innocent death stands forever as a unique and ever valid event.

## 8.2.10 Holy Communion as a meal of fellowship<sup>7</sup>

Holy Communion is a meal of fellowship in a threefold sense:

- First of all, the incarnate and glorified Son of God enters into fellowship with His Apostles in the celebration of Holy Communion. Thereby the original situation at the institution of Holy Communion is repeated.
- However, in the celebration of Holy Communion the Risen One also has fellowship with those believers who partake of the Lord's Supper worthily for their salvation.
- Moreover, those assembled in the congregation for divine service also have fellowship with one another in Holy Communion.

*Contemplation:* In every divine service, do we visualize the suffering and death of Christ and stand in awe of this moment of Holy Communion?

**A meal of Fellowship:** This meal is not merely *about* Christ; it is *with* Christ and He is present. It is also experienced together with the family of God, our brothers and sisters.

*Contemplation:* As we prepare in advance of divine service, do we visualize going to church or meeting our Savior? Prior to divine service do we invite Him to be in our midst? During Holy Communion, do we feel His presence, and His love? Likewise, do we feel love for our brothers and sisters that surround us?

**An eschatological (future) meal:** Each celebration of Holy Communion is a foreshadowing of what is to come. There will be an ultimate moment of communion with the triune God. We will be transformed into the image of Christ. Our joy will be amplified by our reunion with our loved ones who have preceded us and will no longer be tempered by sin, remorse, sickness or sorrow. God will wipe away all tears.

*Contemplation:* Does our personal faith contain a hope and an expectation of an eternal blessed future with the triune God? Do we strive that each celebration of Holy Communion be transformational on our journey to this day? Do we sense a change within us from the old nature of Adam to the new creation in Christ?

**A meal of Profession:** To profess is to declare our belief publicly. *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes* (1 Corinthians 11:26). In this one sentence we profess our firm belief in the death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ.

*Contemplation:* Are we completely aware of and do we firmly embrace this public commitment of faith when we partake of the bread and the wine? At times do we perform this ritual without fully considering what our actions mean?

## 7 A MEAL OF FELLOWSHIP

*"Man was created to have fellowship with God."*

*As a result of the fall into sin, man had to leave this fellowship. But the sacrifice of Christ has opened up the possibility*

## 8.2.11 Holy Communion as an eschatological meal

Holy Communion has an eschatological - end-time - character because it is closely linked to the marriage supper in heaven. In Jesus Christ the kingdom of God has drawn near. In accordance with His statement: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18), the congregation joined in Holy Communion awaits the fulfillment of the promise announced to them in this Communion fellowship. Until the future and ultimate unification of the bride with the bridegroom (*see 10.2*), the congregation experiences its most intimate fellowship with the Lord through Holy Communion.

### SUMMARY

Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance: it commemorates the death of Jesus Christ as a unique event that is valid for all time. This commemoration extends beyond the resurrection and ascension of the Lord and also incorporates the current presence of Christ as well as His future kingdom. (8.2.8)

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*of restoring this fellowship, and the gospel points the way.* (The strategies of the Adversary – <http://nac.today/en/158033/340603>)

This meal of fellowship is evident as we prepare for Holy Communion in the divine service:

- In the hymn of repentance, the congregation **together** reflects on and confesses its sin and guilt before God.
- In the Lord's Prayer, the congregation **collectively** pleads for forgiveness and grace.
- **Together**, each member of the congregation can hear the words of forgiveness spoken over their neighbor, and rejoice that not only their sins, but also the sins of their neighbor have been forgiven.
- In Holy Communion, as we share the body and blood of Christ, we experience the fullness of fellowship with Him and with each other.

Taken from *Thoughts on forgiveness of sins* – Theology Seminar 2015

Holy Communion is a profession of the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ. This profession is required of all who wish to partake of it. (8.2.9)

Those who regularly partake in Holy Communion in the New Apostolic Church should be aware that they are thereby also professing belief in the Apostles of Jesus active today. (8.2.9)

In Holy Communion Jesus Christ joins in fellowship, first with His Apostles, and then with the believers. The congregation gathered for divine service also has fellowship among one another in Holy Communion. (8.2.10)

Holy Communion also has an eschatological character: it is closely associated with the marriage feast in heaven. Until the ultimate reunion of the bride and bridegroom, the congregation experiences its most intimate fellowship with Him in Holy Communion. (8.2.11)

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## TRUE FELLOWSHIP: A RELATIONSHIP, NOT AN ACTIVITY

Let us examine the word *fellowship* in the context of the New Testament. The Greek word in the Bible for fellowship is *koinonia*, which is most commonly translated into English as "communion" and "sharing a common life." This gives us a different understanding of fellowship than the common definition. True fellowship goes much deeper than being friendly or spending time with those who like what we like. **It is a relationship, not an activity.** It denotes participation or sharing rather than simply an association with others. In the German Bible, the word used for fellowship is translated as "many sharing life" or "many sharing a purpose." Here we find the true intention of the word. Fellowship means sharing life and sharing purpose.

**For Christians, fellowship means sharing in the life of Christ!** He, alone, gives us a shared purpose and a shared goal. Recognizing our dependence on Christ deepens our experience of communion with Him, which in turn establishes and enriches our fellowship with one another.

As we begin to understand the wonder of Christ's love and His desire to share His life with us, it inspires us to connect with, commune, and understand each other. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others* (Philippians 2:1-4 NIV).

The triune God embodies perfect unity and fellowship. He created us to be in relationship and invites us into the fellowship of the Trinity. In 1 Corinthians 1:9, we read: *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Through the sacrament of baptism, God brings us into His nearness. He also establishes us into a community of believers, the Church. One can only be a Christian in a collective sense; there can be no "individual" Christian. God created us to be in community. We need each other to learn to love one another the way Christ taught us to love, and in so doing, experience His kingdom already now.

As Christians, we are united in fellowship with Christ. The believer is united to Christ in such a way that they participate in all the virtue and power of the risen and glorified Lord! We share in the very

life of Christ Himself. He is the vine, and we are the branches. He is the head, and we are the body. We are spiritually a part of Him, for we are members of His body. This is the common life that we share as believers - the life of Jesus Christ. **Christ is the basis and the essence of our fellowship!** He is what connects us; there is no fellowship without Him.

**True fellowship is communion with Christ.** No other moments compare with this one; it is the purest form of fellowship that we can experience on this earth. The bread and wine are not merely metaphors or symbols for the body and blood of Christ. Instead, the body and blood of Christ are joined to the bread and the wine and Christ becomes truly present in Holy Communion. Every time we partake of Holy Communion, it is a visible expression of our sharing in the life of Christ.

We can see the significance of the sacrament in this verse from Paul: *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread* (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Chief Apostle Schneider said, *"When we come together and celebrate Holy Communion, our fellowship with God is strengthened, and our fellowship with one another is strengthened. Our fellowship with God is strengthened because we realize that we are dependent on Him. We also share in the merit of Christ. We weren't victorious over sin, Christ was.*

## 8.2.12 The real presence of the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion

The elements of bread and wine are not transformed in their substance through the consecration and pronouncement of the words of institution. Rather, the substance of Christ's body and blood is joined to them (consubstantiation). There is thus no transformation of the substances (transubstantiation).

There is a close connection between Holy Communion and the fact that Jesus Christ has both a human and a divine nature, both of which exist unadulterated and indivisible in Him (*see 3.4*). It is in this sense that the relationship between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ is to be understood: after the consecration, a parallel exists between the "bread and wine" - which corresponds

to the human nature of Christ - and the "body and blood" - which corresponds to the divine nature of Christ.

In Holy Communion, bread and wine correspond to the human nature of Christ, while the body and blood correspond to His divine nature. Accordingly, there can be no transubstantiation of the bread and wine. Rather, even after consecration, the bread and wine retain their natural substance. Yet the bread and wine are not merely metaphors or symbols for the body and blood of Christ. Rather, the body and blood of Christ are truly present (real presence). Through the words of consecration spoken by an Apostle or a priestly minister commissioned by him, the substance of the body and blood of Christ is joined to the substance of the bread and wine.

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*Yet He allows us to share in His victory. This brings us closer to Him.*" In Holy Communion, Jesus has fellowship with His apostles and with the believers, and, moreover, the believers have fellowship with each other (CNAC 8.2.10). Holy Communion is a meal of direct and intimate fellowship with the Savior, and we share in it together.

What a gratuitous, undeserved gift from God! In Holy Communion, we have the experience that St. Augustine noted: *He loves each of us as if there were only one of us*. Each child of God has the privilege of enjoying intimate fellowship with Christ as if they were the sole object of His affections. This is most personally experienced in Holy Communion when we hear the words, *The body and blood of Jesus given for you*. Jesus' closest disciples were able to experience this true fellowship with the Lord first-hand when He instituted Holy Communion during the Last Supper, and they were forever changed.

In the transformative moments of Holy Communion, we are given the strength to "put on" the virtues of Christ: *tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another...but above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection* (Colossians 3:12-14). That which we freely receive in Christ, we are to share with others freely. Thus, Holy Communion inspires our relationships

with one another. Our fellowship in Christ unifies us; it is what makes us Christians! Holy Communion also gives us the strength to *walk in the newness of life*, which does not make us sinless, but as we overcome our will with God's, it will help us sin less.

As mentioned earlier, fellowship means a shared life, purpose, and goal, which we find in Christ and with His believers, and which inevitably overflows into our thoughts and actions.

Our fellowship with Christ also inspires us to serve the Lord together, to share our spiritual gifts and material possessions, and to join our voices in song and prayer.

Intentionally pursuing this true fellowship with Christ and with each other is critical for our spiritual growth and health as individuals and the growth and health of the church. Deep, abiding fellowship with the Lord and with one another *edifies, sustains, and is rich in substance, giving us a foretaste* of the intimate and eternal fellowship that we hope to experience in God's kingdom to come.

Taken from Summer VISION Newsletter 2020



The outward form (accidence) of the elements of Holy Communion is not changed by this act. Just as the Man Jesus was visible during His life on earth, so also the bread and wine are visible in Holy Communion. After their consecration, however, the elements of Holy Communion constitute a dual substance - like the two natures of Jesus Christ - namely that of bread and wine and that of the body and blood of Christ. The Son of God is then truly present in the elements of Holy Communion: in His divinity and in His humanity.

However, as regards the elements of Communion it is not the case that the bread alone corresponds to the body of Christ and that the wine alone corresponds to the blood of Christ. Rather, the body and blood of Christ is completely present in each of the two elements, both the bread *and* the wine.

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## **8 The real presence of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ...**

The substitutionary death of Jesus – *not His resurrection* – has redeemed us from the power of sin. **His death is the saving event**; when He gained the victory over evil. It is for this reason that Apostle Paul always equates the proclamation of the gospel with the “message of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:18). In His encounter with the disciples of Emmaus, the Risen One underlines the fact that His suffering was necessary for salvation history (Luke 24:26). In this context, the resurrection is a legitimation and a reinforcement of that which took place on the cross, confirmation that death and sin have been defeated, and opens the door that we can also resurrect and enter His kingdom. Christ’s sacrifice is present in Holy Communion. When we

The body and blood of Christ remain present in the consecrated wafer until it has reached its designated recipient.

After the divine service, the wafers that were not dispensed are treated with reverence and care.

### **8.2.13 The real presence of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion**

In Holy Communion, it is not only the body and blood of Christ, but also His sacrifice itself, that are truly present.<sup>8</sup> However, this sacrifice has only been brought once and is not repeated in Holy Communion. Neither is Holy Communion merely a reminder of the sacrifice. Rather, during the celebration of Holy Communion, Jesus Christ is in the midst of the congregation as the crucified, risen, and returning Lord.

celebrate this sacrament, it is as if we are standing at the foot of the cross during Christ’s sacrifice and witnessing His death first-hand. This moment of experiencing Christ’s sacrifice and death is emphasized by the words we hear in the consecration, *the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ*, and that we *proclaim the Lord's death till He comes*. In the celebration of Holy Communion, we are visualizing the past and bringing it into the present. In faith, each Christian is a contemporary of Jesus. In faith, there is no difference between us and those who walked and talked with Him. Christ’s crucifixion is not just in the past – it’s here and now. Standing in front of the altar, as if we are standing around the cross, allows us to proclaim His sacrifice with conviction.

Taken from *Holy Communion - DSG Workshop 2011 and Holy Sealing – Theology Workshop 2015*

Thus His once-brought sacrifice is also present in that its effect grants the individual access to salvation. In this way, the celebration of Holy Communion causes the partakers to repeatedly envision the sacrificial death of the Lord, which enables them to proclaim it with conviction (1 Corinthians 11:26).

## SUMMARY

The bread and wine are not changed in their substance through the consecration or the speaking of the words of institution. Rather the substance of the body and blood of Jesus is joined to them (consubstantiation). (8.2.12)

In Holy Communion the bread and wine correspond to the human nature of Christ, while the body and blood correspond to His divine nature. (8.2.12)

Bread and wine are not merely metaphors or symbols for the body and blood of Christ. Rather the body and blood of Christ are truly present (real presence). (8.2.12)

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is also present in Holy Communion. (8.2.13)

## 8.2.14 The relationship between forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion

The forgiveness of sins<sup>9</sup> and Holy Communion are closely related to one another. Both the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion have their foundation in Christ's sacrifice (Acts 13:37-38). Jesus Christ instituted Holy Communion on the basis of His sacrifice: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). At the same time, these words of the Lord make it clear that He brought His sacrifice in order to redeem mankind from sin.

Christ authorized His Apostles to proclaim the forgiveness of sins (see 7.6.2) and to celebrate Holy Communion as He Himself had done with them (Luke 22:19).

Although the sacrifice of Christ becomes present in Holy Communion, Holy Communion does not in itself effect forgiveness of sins. Rather, the forgiveness of sins proclaimed before the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion also enables believers to worthily partake of Holy Communion.

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**9** Starting in 2012 in the paper, ***Our current conception of the apostle ministry***, the following is noted: *The apostles proclaim the forgiveness of sins by commission of Christ, but there is also forgiveness of sins without it being imparted by the apostle ministry.*

## ABSOLUTION (CNAC 12.1.8)

The term "absolution" is from the Latin word *absolvo*, which means *to set free*. When a person is absolved of their sins, they are truly a free person and become one whom no one can make an accusation of sin against.

The absolution, or the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, is not Holy Communion, and it is not a sacrament. Holy Communion is not a "receipt" for having your sins forgiven.

The absolution is a part of our divine services as an assurance to believers that their sins have been forgiven by God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through the petition and expression in the Lord's Prayer that the

Lord *forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors*, it is understood that just as God is willing to absolve a penitent person of their sin, the person, in turn, is willing to absolve their neighbor of any wrong committed against them. (CNAC 12.1.8 ***Forgiveness of sins in the divine service***, CNAC 12.1.8.7 ***Proclamation and authority***, CNAC 12.1.8.8 ***Effects of the forgiveness of sins***)

The absolution assures us that Jesus has forgiven our repented sin and grants us the peace of the Risen One. Jesus assures us of His love and that He has not rejected us despite our sinfulness. He assures us that He has overcome evil, and that even though Satan has the power to make us fall, he cannot separate us from the love of God. In this moment of forgiveness and peace, we can make a new start.

*Taken from Thoughts on forgiveness of sins – Theology Seminar 2015*



## Chief Apostle Schneider:

What is God trying to tell us? He wants to remind us: Holy Communion is an act of grace, which I gift to you. We are not entitled to it...*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord* (Job 1:21). As long as it is God's will that we cannot celebrate Holy Communion, He will provide us with whatever we need...But we can receive forgiveness of sins today. This is not a sacrament. Here, too, Jesus has given some conditions: if we are remorseful, if we are longing for the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, if we have the sincere intention to also forgive our neighbor, if we believe in the authority of the apostle ministry, which Jesus Himself gave, then we can be...assured: Christ makes me free from my sins!

Taken from Easter Sunday webcast service, April 2020

## I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Belief in the forgiveness of sins (also known as *absolution*) is one of the essential elements of Christian faith: it is explicitly mentioned in the early church creeds and repeated in the third article of our creed. (Note: the word *absolution* means forgiveness, or the proclamation of forgiveness, as we use it in our liturgy.)

The forgiveness of sins is made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. The fundamental liberation from the rule of sin occurs through Holy Baptism with water, in which original sin is washed away. In every divine service, the apostle or minister authorized by the apostle

ministry proclaims the absolution in the name of Jesus. When received in faith, this ultimately erases individual sin and guilt before God. Nevertheless, neither Holy Baptism nor the absolution can liberate us from the predisposition to sin (concupiscence). No sooner have we been absolved of our latest sins, and despite all our efforts, we sin once again.

Although not a sacrament, the forgiveness of sins in the divine service is of great significance for our preparation to worthily receive Holy Communion and thus also for the return of the Lord.

The forgiveness of our sins requires intensive preparation. We must:

- Undertake a thorough self-examination and become aware of our mistakes.
- Confess our sins before God. This not only means that we must recognize our mistakes, but also acknowledge our guilt.
- Feel remorse and bring to expression our resolve to do better.
- Resolutely pursue the path of reconciliation with our neighbor.

*Done regularly, this spiritual work undoubtedly contributes to our sanctification.*

The absolution not only erases our sins, **it also assures us of the peace of the Risen One.**

- Thereby the Lord confirms that He has not rejected us despite our sins, and that His love for us remains unchanged.

- Jesus Christ reminds us that He has overcome evil. Although Satan may succeed in causing us to fail, he cannot separate us from the love of God.
- We can dare to make a new start.

Furthermore, the forgiveness of sins in the divine service helps bring the children of God closer to one another and *strengthens the unity desired by the Lord.*

- By the singing or contemplation of the hymn of repentance and by praying the Lord's Prayer prior to the absolution, the congregation confesses its sins – *Forgive us our sins...* - each one publicly confesses their sin and concedes that they are not better than their neighbor.
- This shared confession is accompanied by a shared plea: *And deliver us from the evil one.* This highlights the solidarity of the congregation in its fight against sin: *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed* (James 5:16).
- The absolution is proclaimed to all – everyone can hear the pardon granted to his neighbor and be glad in it.

The significance of forgiveness of sins derives from its direct relationship to the celebration of Holy Communion. The worthy partaking of Holy Communion is indispensable for a life in Christ. Forgiveness of sins itself is indispensable for receiving Holy Communion worthily, for several reasons:

- We need to be purified and cleansed in order to have sacramental fellowship with Christ.
- Partaking in Holy Communion is reserved for those who have been baptized, that is to say, for those who endeavor to turn away from evil to follow Christ. By repenting in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, we demonstrate that we, despite our sins, are firmly resolved to keep the promise we made at our baptism. (When a child is baptized, this promise to believe in Jesus Christ and live in accordance with

the gospel is given by the parents and later reinforced by the young Christians in their confirmation vow.)

- In Holy Communion the members of the congregation commune with one another (this *communion* is fellowship with Christ and the members of the congregation among one another). True fellowship is only possible if all have forgiven one another.

We need forgiveness of sins in order to partake worthily in Holy Communion.

### **I believe that Jesus sends His apostles with the commission, in His name, to forgive sins.**

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ gave His disciples the commission to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name: *As the Father has sent Me, I also send you... If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained* (John 20:21, 23). The Fourth Article of our creed refers to this passage. The Catechism explains how we understand this biblical reference: *A further task incumbent on the apostolate is to...bindingly proclaim forgiveness to human beings on the basis of the sacrifice and merit of Jesus Christ* (CNAAC 2.4.4).

The fact that two of the Articles of Faith in our creed mention forgiveness of sins is of special significance.

- The **Third Article of Faith** speaks of forgiveness as an act of God: only the triune God can wash away sins and He can do so at any time. Jesus, the Son of God, stated that He Himself had the power to forgive sins (cf. Mark 2:10), and even did so before bringing His sacrifice on the cross.
- The **Fourth Article of Faith** goes into greater detail, and references Jesus' activity in His church. In the church of Christ, those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, can receive the grace of baptism and thus experience the washing away of original sin. Within the church, the apostles have the commission to bindingly proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

**The apostle proclaims forgiveness, but it is God who forgives.** The authority of the apostles with respect to the forgiveness of sins is not automatic. The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through an apostle alone will not suffice in order to wash away sins. Forgiveness only takes effect when the sinner is repentant and willing to reconcile.

The authority with which the apostles proclaim forgiveness of sins is primarily founded on their commission to properly proclaim the gospel and to properly dispense the sacraments. If they trust in the authority of the apostle ministry in faith, sinners have the certainty that their sins have indeed been forgiven.

The apostles act as messengers of Christ: through them, Jesus Christ Himself proclaims the absolution to believers. The forgiveness proclaimed by the apostle is authoritative, irrespective of the opinions or agreement of other human beings. Sinners can receive forgiveness from God even if others continue to accuse them.

***Does the commission to proclaim forgiveness of sins entrusted to the apostles rule out any possibility of receiving forgiveness outside of the apostolate?***

Let us first remember that the commission of the apostles is limited in duration, since it primarily consists of proclaiming the return of Christ and preparing believers for this event. When the Lord returns, both the living and the dead who are prepared for His coming will resurrect. They will receive a glorified

body and will enter into eternal fellowship with God. Since these are all sinners, they will also need forgiveness of sins in order to be with God. This forgiveness will not be proclaimed by the apostles, but granted directly by God. The same will apply to the martyrs who will resurrect after the great tribulation. At the Last Judgment it will be God Himself who will grant grace to those who will be permitted to enter into the new creation.

Our doctrine thus explicitly mentions the possibility of receiving forgiveness of sins even after the end of the apostles' activity on earth. With regard to the time prior to the renewed occupation of the apostle ministry, our Catechism explains: *It is conceivable that – even in this time – God showed His grace of forgiveness to those who believed (CNAC 6.4.2.2).*

How is it in our time? The Catechism also brings a fundamental truth to expression in this respect: *God in His omnipotence has always been able to forgive sins (CNAC 12.1.8.1).* Thus we cannot exclude that forgiveness of sins is possible without the involvement of an apostle or a minister commissioned by him.

For this reason we should not claim that it is impossible for God to forgive the sins of any believer today, even if he does not believe in the apostles at work in the New Apostolic Church. **God can also forgive sins completely and quite independently of ministry and church!** However, those who have received the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through the apostolate can be certain that their sins have truly been forgiven.

In the past, the importance of the apostle ministry was often associated with the commission to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. This view was based on the premise that forgiveness of sins was impossible without the apostle ministry, without ever calling that view into question. At that time, the emphasis was on the forgiveness of sins, and Holy Communion was merely a kind of accessory to the absolution. In a way, it was considered a sort of confirmation of, or receipt for, forgiveness of sins.

***Today, we understand Holy Communion as the central event of the divine service and forgiveness of sins as the essential prerequisite for this celebration.***

We believe that Holy Communion is an important means of preparation for the return of the Lord, and that the administration of this sacrament is entrusted to the apostles. Our doctrine clearly stresses that the apostle ministry is indispensable for the preparing souls for the return of the Lord because it alone can dispense the sacrament of Holy Sealing (whereby the calling to become a firstling is effected) and that of Holy Communion in all of its aspects (that is to say, the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and the realization of the sacrifice of Christ).

We understand that God can grant forgiveness to a believer that does not recognize working apostles in the New Apostolic Church. If we would maintain that the apostle ministry is the only path we would restrict God's will to save and create unnecessary exclusivity in our church.

As children of God, we have the responsibility to make people aware of the activity of living apostles. We can only do this if we are an epistle of Christ that can be recognized and read by others (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:2). The activity of the apostle ministry is to be clearly recognized in each and every one of us and in our congregations!

Let us remember the commission of the apostolate, as described by Paul: *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (2*

*Corinthians 5:20)*. Chief Apostle Leber showed us the importance of repentance. Let us heed this message. Let us proclaim the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! Let us preach repentance, and lead by example!

Let us also profess that the apostles have the authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins! Let us show the world that New Apostolic Christians:

- Have the courage to examine themselves and resolve to change;
- Are prepared to forgive and reconcile;
- Strive for unity among one another.

Such an attitude will bring us the blessing of God and increase interest of our fellow human beings in the apostolic cause.

Taken from Spiritual Part DAMI – March 2015, Zurich and Special Edition DSG – *Thoughts concerning the forgiveness of sins*

## **REPENTANCE LEADS TO FORGIVENESS**

Repentance starts with **awareness**. We must be aware of and reflect on our sinful actions and thoughts, but a deeper recognition must take place: that we are perpetually sinful beings. Realizing how far we actually are from God allows us to take steps to move closer to Him. We are often running in the wrong direction and need to turn back. Awareness leads to **remorse**. Our broken relationship with God brings us grief and sadness, especially when compared to the goodness and love that He offers.

As we experience this inner turmoil and pain, we **confess** our sins to God. Apostle John reminds us that *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). This is a prayer that we can practice daily, continually exposing our souls to God in confession and finally asking for His forgiveness and His strength to help us in our **resolve** to change. Having received forgiveness ourselves prompts us to go down the path of forgiveness and **reconciliation** with our brother, sister, or neighbor, as we pray together

in the Lord's Prayer – *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*. Cultivating a repentant heart towards God and seeking His forgiveness are not things that only happen on Sunday; rather, we should wrestle daily, in thought, in prayer, and in reconciling conversations with those we love.

Recognizing that God forgives our sins when we approach Him in repentance, remorse, and confession – let's explore the purpose and importance of the absolution that we hear every Sunday. In the divine service, before the sacrament of Holy Communion, we hear these words, known as the absolution: *I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven. The peace of the Risen One abide with you. Amen.*

These words are the **assurance** of God's forgiveness – they remind us of His willingness to give us a fresh start by the merit of Christ's sacrifice, and the promise that the Lord loves us and accepts us, no matter how many times we fail. **Jesus is the One who forgives our sins, not the minister.** But the opportunity to hear those words spoken to us is something that we cannot take for granted. These are comforting words to a repentant sinner.

Let me use two familiar characters to illustrate: Peter and Judas. Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of the soldiers, which led to His arrest and crucifixion. While Jesus was being tried and beaten, Peter denied knowing Him three times.

Peter denied Jesus, yet experienced the joy and life of Easter. Judas betrayed Jesus, but chose death in a field, alone (Matthew 27:3-10). Both were remorseful: we read in the gospels that after his denial, Peter wept bitterly (Matthew 26:69-75 / Luke 22:54-62), and Judas was filled with guilt. However, Judas did not get to see the wounds of the resurrected Jesus, or hear Him say, *"Peace be unto you"* in the presence of the disciples, or eat breakfast with Him on the shore, or experience the joy and wonder of Pentecost. He is known as the villain of the story, while Peter became the rock on which the church was built. What is the difference between Judas and Peter? Peter repented and turned back to the circle of the disciples. Judas regretted his actions and fled.

In isolation, Judas could not experience the grace of God. Ashamed, he withdrew from the community in which he could hear and experience words of forgiveness. He could not create for himself God's word of grace, and neither can we. We need to hear it said over us, like balm on our brokenness. As Paul says, *faith comes through hearing* (Romans 10:17), and in order for us to believe that we are forgiven, we need someone to say it to us. And this is what Jesus gave His apostles the authority to do – to proclaim forgiveness, to preach forgiveness, in His name.

It's through **hearing** that we are assured of forgiveness, love, and the peace of Christ. By accepting and believing those words, we can prepare ourselves to have communion with Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Taken from Spring 2020 VISION Newsletter

### 8.2.15 Holy Communion and the Apostle ministry

Jesus Christ instituted Holy Communion in the circle of His Apostles and entrusted it to them. He commissioned them to proclaim the gospel and to dispense the sacraments. The epistle to the Hebrews illustrates that Jesus Christ is the true High Priest who offers Himself up as a sacrifice. Whenever an Apostle or a priestly minister commissioned by Him performs the consecration, this occurs by the commission and authority of Jesus Christ. Here it is the Holy Spirit who effects the real presence of the Son of God, His body and blood, in Holy Communion.<sup>10</sup> It is also in this sense that the Apostles of Jesus are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Where the Holy Spirit is active through the ministry established and authorized by Jesus Christ, this sacramental reality comes into being.

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**10** *Here it is the Holy Spirit who effects the real presence of the Son of God, His body and blood, in Holy Communion.*

**Chief Apostle Schneider, Lusaka, Zambia – Pentecost 2015:** We can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in Holy Communion. The Holy Spirit calls us through Holy Communion, “Come and enter the fellowship of the Risen One!” When the congregation celebrates Holy Communion, the power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible that Jesus Christ is truly present in the elements of Holy Communion. This power is not dependent on where Holy Communion is celebrated or under which circumstances. We can experience the presence of Christ in Holy Communion in a home, in a refugee camp, as well as in one of our beautiful churches. One can experience the presence of Christ in Holy Communion in a small congregation in Australia and in a big one in Zambia. The power of the Holy Spirit is not dependent on the number of people gathering. Whenever children of God celebrate Holy Communion, Jesus is present through the Holy Spirit. That is the foundation of our joy in Christ.

Taken from Community 2015, Edition 3

### SUMMARY

The forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion are closely related to one another. Both are founded upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Although the sacrifice of Christ is present in Holy Communion, forgiveness of sins is not effected at the same time in the sacrament. (8.2.14)

The forgiveness of sins also enables believers to worthily partake of Holy Communion. (8.2.14)

Jesus Christ instituted Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles and entrusted it to them. (8.2.15)

Where the Holy Spirit is at work through the ministry established and authorized by Jesus Christ, this sacramental reality comes into being. (8.2.15)

### Chief Apostle Schneider:

When Jesus established Holy Communion with His Apostles He gave them some bread. Then He took a cup of wine and gave it to the first one and said, “*Drink out of it all of you.*” There was one cup so that the first one had to give the cup to the second one, the second to the third, and this cup was circulating in the circle of the disciples. Jesus said, “*This is My blood, the blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins.*” That is a nice image. This cup with the wine, the blood of Jesus, circulating in the circle of the disciples like the blood is circulating in the body. That is the deep meaning of it. The cup circulates with the wine as the blood circulates in the body. One blood, one body. When we celebrate Holy Communion this blood of Jesus circulates into the congregation. That means that we are aware that all of us need to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood needs to circulate into the whole congregation. All of us need to be cleansed. We need to be purified by the blood of the Son. Every part of the body is dependent on the blood circulation. All of us are fully dependent on the blood of Jesus Christ.

Taken from Chief Apostle webcast service from Calgary, January 2022

## 8.2.16 The words of consecration in Holy Communion

For the consecration<sup>11</sup> of Holy Communion, the authorized minister speaks a liturgically fixed text based on 1 Corinthians 11:23 et seq. and Matthew 26:26 et seq. as follows:

“In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks and said: ‘This is My body which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Amen!”

**11 CONSECRATION:** Prior to the celebration of Holy Communion, the communion wafers are consecrated, meaning they are set apart and made holy for the service of God. As stated in the Catechism, “consecration” or “consecrating” means *setting apart* bread and wine from their normal use. (CNAC 2.4.7 – *The Seventh Article of Faith*, CNAC 3.5.5.2 – *The activity of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments*)

**Definition of "consecrated":** *Person or things being separated to or belonging to God; holy or sacred; set apart for the service of God.* The Hebrew *qadesh* and Greek *hagiazō* are translated to several different English words: *holy, consecrate, hallow, sanctify, dedicate.*

**Old Testament** – God said to be *qadesh* or “holy.” When persons or things were consecrated, they were separated to or belonged to God. *You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy* (Leviticus 19:2 NASB). *You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Exodus 19:6 NASB). When persons were consecrated, they were set apart to live according to God’s demands and in His service.

In the Old Testament, the ordination of persons to the service of God is indicated by the phrase *to fill the hand*. This phrase is usually translated *consecrate* or *ordain*. Numbers 6:1-21 sets forth the vow of the Nazirite. *Nazir*, from which Nazirite is derived, means *to separate* and is translated *consecrate* in Numbers 6:7, 9, and 12.

### THE CONSECRATION TEXT

The liturgical text states: *“In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion, and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks, and said: ‘This is My body, which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant, which is given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Amen!”*

The consecration text covers all of the fundamental aspects of Holy Communion (see below), and is connected to the

words of Jesus from **Matthew 26** and to Paul's sharing of what he was given from the Lord in **1 Corinthians 11**.

The consecration text contains all the fundamental elements of Holy Communion, namely:

- the **presence** of the sacrifice of Christ;
- a **reminder** of the events that transpired at the time;
- a **meal of remembrance**, which recalls Christ's bitter suffering as well as His promise;
- a **meal of fellowship** that is to be celebrated again and again;
- a **meal of profession**, to profess the death of the Lord;
- an **eschatological meal**, a reference to His return.

(Catechism 8.2)

The text from 1 Corinthians is the oldest evidence that Holy Communion was celebrated in the early Christian congregations. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written long before the Gospels, namely in the fifth decade of the first century AD. As one of the oldest texts in the canon of the New Testament, it thus also contains an authentic testimony of what transpired during the first communion celebration of Jesus. Apostle Paul even underlines this fact by prefacing the words of institution for Holy Communion with the note: *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you"* (1 Corinthians 11:23). The consecration formula pronounced in our celebration of Holy Communion is based upon this ancient text recorded by Apostle Paul. That our formula diverges from the text in 1 Corinthians in certain places is due to the fact that other New Testament evidence of Holy Communion was also taken into account (the invitation to *eat and drink* is taken from Matthew 26:26 and references the forgiveness of sins as recorded in Matthew 26:28).

### **Commentary on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He*

*was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

Verses 23-25: *"I received from the Lord"* most likely means Paul was given this information by reliable witnesses who passed it along. This was the work of the Holy Spirit – He is One who keeps it alive. Christ's selflessness in giving His life for others stood in stark contrast to the Corinthians' selfishness during their celebration of the Lord's Supper.

*...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed...* This gives us the context in which these events were occurring. In ancient times, night had a different connotation than what we experience today. It was dark, unknown, mysterious, overwhelming, dangerous. The statement is also important because it begins with the *Lord Jesus*. In Greek, the word "Lord" is *Kyrios*, a title reserved for God. What this phrase means is, *Jesus – who is God*. Jesus is God - a statement of profession. *He was betrayed* – this is unsettling. Jesus was betrayed by His friend on this night. This truth, as well as the setting of night, gives a feeling of impending darkness. It is the beginning of the Passion of Christ.

*Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you...* This does not symbolize Jesus' body as a metaphor. We believe that when we take the bread (communion wafer) we share in the body of Christ itself. *Broken for you* – this is in reference to His sacrificial death.

*Do this in remembrance of Me.* This means that it is imperative that you repeat this – right from the beginning it's bound to a tradition. In your remembrance, you bring the events of the sacrifice back into the present. It's not just remembering the events in history, but bringing those events to us in the present moment.

Verse 26: The phrase *as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup* emphasizes that the solemn remembrance

of Christ's death is a corporate declaration of *Jesus Christ and Him crucified* until He comes again. *As often* – there is no theological reasoning on how often communion should be celebrated. That is a canonical issue, decided by the church. The important thing is the intensity of the experience.

*You proclaim the Lord's death till He comes;* the Lord's Supper looks back to Christ's death and forward to His second coming (see Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). Paul makes clear that Holy Communion must be celebrated until His return.

Why do we proclaim Jesus' death and not His resurrection? The death is the salvific event, it is the center of the gospel. The resurrection is rooted in His death, and underlines that Jesus is Lord. But it is His death that allows us to live.

### **Commentary on Matthew 26:26-29**

*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

Verse 26: *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."* The Passover meal was rich with symbolic meaning. Jews ate lamb to commemorate the

lamb whose blood protected firstborn Israelites from the death plague before the exodus. Bitter herbs were reminiscent of their enslavement. Unleavened bread symbolized the haste of their departure from Egypt. Jesus filled the meal with new symbolism: the unleavened bread symbolized His own body, which would be torn and broken by scourging and crucifixion. His sacrifice would begin a new exodus in which people were liberated from the slavery of sin.

Verses 27-28: *Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."*

The making of a covenant was normally accompanied by an act of sacrifice. The slaughter of the animal signified the consequences that would befall anyone who broke the covenant. The old covenant was sealed by such a sacrifice. Now, Jesus' sacrifice enacted the new covenant that had been promised in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34). In this covenant, God vowed to forgive and forget His people's sins. He also promised to write His law on the hearts of His people so that they would fulfill His righteous demands.

Verse 29: *"But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* Many Jews expected the Messiah to begin His reign by sharing a great banquet with His subjects. The final cup of the meal anticipated that great messianic feast and encouraged Jesus' disciples to eagerly wait *until He comes*.

## Walking through the consecration

*In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion, and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks, and said: 'This is My body, which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant, which is given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Amen!*

The first sentence of the consecration text begins with an express reference to the name in which Holy Communion is consecrated and celebrated, namely: ***"In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."*** Like the other two sacraments, Holy Communion thus always exists in reference to the Trinity. Holy Communion is a gift of the triune God and has its source in Him.

This is followed by a reference to the priestly activity that transpires by the commission and authority of God – ***"I consecrate..."*** The first sentence goes on to name the natural substances of bread and wine, in other words, the visible elements of the sacrament. Priestly authority has been conferred upon the apostle ministry by Jesus Christ, thus sharing in the high priesthood of Christ. All other ministries exercise this authority by commission of the apostle (Catechism 8.2.12).

The first sentence of the consecration formula concludes by calling to mind the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He brought on Golgotha, ***"... and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ."*** Holy Communion thus also signifies the presence of the sacrifice of Christ (Catechism 8.2.13). The second sentence of the consecration formula introduces the words and actions of Jesus. It begins by recollecting the institution of Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday, ***For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks and said...*** With these words, it becomes clear that Holy Communion is a commemoration and remembrance of the Last

Supper. It is also here that a reference to the Passover Feast comes to expression, in which thanksgiving for God's deliverance from captivity in Egypt plays a large role.

We then hear Jesus' words, ***"This is My body which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins."*** Hearing this, we understand that we are participating in the life of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice is present and it is the basis for the forgiveness of our sins.

The words of the Lord Jesus within the consecration formula come to an end with the invitation: ***"Eat and drink!"*** Jesus thus invites us to share in His body and His blood. When we accept this invitation, we thereby commemorate Jesus Christ and the meal established by Him. The words, ***"Do this in remembrance of Me,"*** signify a remembrance of His bitter death on the cross and the promise of His resurrection and ascension.

Like the introduction, the concluding sentence in the consecration formula incorporates words that were not spoken directly by Jesus. These words, however, clearly explain the deeper meaning of Holy Communion. We are invited to celebrate this meal of fellowship again and again with the words, ***"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine..."*** Therefore, it has not only taken place once, but transpires repeatedly – by commission of Jesus.

At the end of the consecration, the focus on the congregation becomes more clear: the celebration of Holy Communion is an act of profession... ***"you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."*** Those who celebrate Holy Communion profess that the death of Jesus is of fundamental significance for the salvation of mankind. There is no such thing as redemption without the death of Jesus Christ. With these words, we understand that Holy Communion is also a meal of eschatology – it points us towards our future with Jesus Christ. We end with ***"Amen"*** to confirm and confess our agreement with what has just been said as the congregation.

Taken from Special DSG, January 2014

### 8.2.17 The celebration and receiving of Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion is administered by dispensing the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the consecrated wafer with the words: “The body and blood of Jesus given for you.” Hence the designation “Holy Communion” is used primarily in reference to the consecrated and dispensed communion wafer (bread and wine as sacramental elements).

Since both the consecration of the communion wafer and its dispensation are part of the sacrament, the term “Holy Communion” is used, in the broader sense, as the designation for the complete act of consecration and dispensation (sacramental act).

Owing to its great importance, the congregation is called upon to celebrate Holy Communion<sup>12</sup> in reverence, faith, and complete devotion to Christ.

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### **12** *Do this in remembrance of Me - Celebrating Holy Communion:*

Why do we continue to celebrate Holy Communion during our divine services today? Simply, Jesus Himself is the origin of it; He is its focus and content, and He commanded that it be continued. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room, an element of this institution was His command to repeat this supper: “*Do this in remembrance of Me*” (Luke 22:19). The Apostle Paul reiterated this point and expounded upon it when writing to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul says,

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, **as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**” **For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death **till He comes.*****

Notice the command being repeated – *do this in remembrance of Me.* And then the repetition of the words, as often, indicating that this celebration wasn’t just to be a one-time event. *You proclaim* indicates that this meal is a moment of professing our faith. And finally, *till He comes* tells us that we are to continue remembering what He has done through His death until He fulfills His promise to return.

It is clear from Scripture that we should continually celebrate Holy Communion, but the New Testament doesn’t dictate how often we are to celebrate it. In the New Apostolic Church, we have the opportunity to participate in Holy Communion every time we come together for a divine service. While that opens the way for us to share in fellowship with Jesus each week, it may also open the possibility for our celebrations to become routine, and for us to become dulled to the moment.

Holy Communion is an integral part of our life with Christ, and is a moment that we should **look forward to, prepare ourselves for, and be fully present in.**

To celebrate Holy Communion properly, we must intentionally set aside time to remember what Jesus has done on our behalf. This act of remembering cannot just be done in the moments immediately preceding Holy Communion. Time must be spent throughout the week and through inner reflection during the sermon to remember and contemplate the boundless grace of Jesus.

### **Considerations in preparing for Holy Communion:**

- Keep your focus on Jesus Christ.
- Consider what it means to be forgiven.
- Examine yourself prior to coming to the table (1 Corinthians 11:28).
- Recognize that you have not earned your place at the table by your works and good deeds, but that your place was secured by the grace of Jesus Christ and that you have the opportunity to take your place only by faith, in humility and repentance.

Holy Communion is one of the most precious gifts Christ has given to His church. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, it is the closest we come to the living Christ and receive the benefits of communing with the Bread of heaven. This should never be taken lightly, and we encourage each other to celebrate Holy Communion with the proper preparedness, reverence, and sensitivity.

Taken from Spring VISION Newsletter 2018

## **THOUGHTS FOR PREPARING THE CONGREGATION TO CELEBRATE HOLY COMMUNION**

### **"In remembrance of Me."**

We celebrate Holy Communion to remember what Jesus Christ accomplished for us through His suffering and death on the cross. He took on the sin of the world in order that we might have forgiveness and be reconciled with God. With the words, *the body and blood of Jesus given for you*, we are reminded each time that Christ gave His life so that we could have new life in Him.

## **Transitioning from the Sermon Message**

What did the body of the message teach us about Jesus? If it taught about how Jesus helps us in times of temptation, then connect that to how He withstood temptation on His journey to the cross. If the sermon taught about prayer, then a transition to Holy Communion could be the confidence we have to pray in Jesus' name because of how true and loving He is, as demonstrated throughout His life on earth.

As you come to the end of your sermon preparation, don't stop until you've thought about how you will prepare for the sacramental part of the service. Focus your attention to identify the connection between the message of the service and Holy Communion. How does the message help us remember what Jesus has done?

### **Think about the Lord's Prayer**

As a congregation, we pray the Lord's Prayer prior to the celebration of Holy Communion. From time to time, you may find that one part of this prayer relates directly to the sermon message. Take those words from the prayer and build your preparation. We pray the Lord's Prayer to worship our God, to humbly bow before Him and ask for His help, and to praise the One who hears our prayer and cares for our needs.

### **Connect to the Hymn of Repentance**

This Holy Communion preparation requires that you know what the hymn of repentance will be prior to the service. You can utilize the words of the hymn as you come to your concluding thoughts in preparation for Holy Communion.

You can encourage the congregation, while the hymn is played, to take a few moments to reflect personally on the saving grace of God, and how the work of Jesus has had a profound, eternal impact on their lives. One could also reflect on where they have lost their focus and fallen into sin, and use this time to repent and turn back to God.

## Continually Remind Yourself

What does Christ's sacrifice mean to you? When we take the time to remind ourselves of the incredible grace, mercy, and love God has demonstrated in our own lives, we can prepare the congregation to celebrate Holy Communion from an **authentic position**. You have been forgiven by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and have been invited into an amazing fellowship with God.

## Repentance

When we realize our sinfulness, we should not be overwhelmed with regret but moved to repent. Repentance means to change your mind which leads to a change of heart. It is the act of being aware of one's sinfulness, being remorseful, turning away from this sin, moving toward God, and resolving not to return to that behavior.

Repentance comes with a certain amount of suffering where we feel the weight and pain of our sin. When we contemplate that Jesus carried the weight of our sin to the cross, we feel remorse. With the realization that every sin separates us further from God, we recognize the need for His grace and the necessity of repentance to receive forgiveness, so we repent and run back to Him. In 2 Timothy 2:25-26, we read: *...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses...* Therefore, we can appreciate repentance as a gift from God, which opens the way to forgiveness and a close relationship with Him.

Acts 3:19 reads, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..."* Embrace the gift of repentance and experience the refreshing time that comes from the Lord.

## The Greeting of Peace

*The peace of the risen one abide with you! Amen.*

The greeting of peace that concludes the absolution is a reminder that even a sinful Christian remains in relationship with God. Christ is saying to us: *Calm down, be at peace, you are loved, I am with you, your sin is washed away, and you can start again anew.* The assurance of the absolution, that our sins have been forgiven, settles our heart and soul so that the peace of God can reign within us and help us to remain focused on Him and our calling.

## Continual Learning

Read:

- the biblical accounts of Jesus instituting Holy Communion
- the biblical accounts of Jesus' suffering and sacrifice (even the references from the Old Testament)
- Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians
- about the connection between Holy Communion and Passover
- Section 8.2 of the Catechism

## WHAT IS SIN?

*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19).*

Sin is a turning away from God. Every word or action that disorients us from God's will makes a mark on us that continually pushes us away from Him and warps us into a being He did not intend us to be.

In Romans 3:23, Paul wrote, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...* We need to understand that the sins we commit do not begin with just the things we do or say. Understanding our sin starts with who we are. It is a part of our nature. When we become aware of how much we fall short, we begin to comprehend our dependence on our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is through Him that this divide can be mended.

Only the power and freedom from sin we have through Christ gives us the ability to overcome our nature and transform into His image. It's not about doing something, it's about becoming a new person in Christ.

Following Christ means we struggle so that our sinful nature dies daily, as Paul said, *I die daily* (1 Corinthians 15:31). Until His Spirit wholly consumes our old nature and we are re-joined with God, we will be sinners. Because of this, let us always humbly and joyfully embrace God's gift of repentance. (See also **CNAC 4.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.2**)

Taken from Summer VISION 2018

## WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoeo*, which means, "rethinking." This evokes the idea of completely re-evaluating a matter, which then results in a change of one's direction, condition, or behavior. Repentance is the act of being remorseful for what you have done, turning away from sin, turning towards God, and resolving not to return to that behavior.

In the pre-Reformation church, *metanoeo* was translated as "penance," rather than "repentance." Penance is an

act of self-abasement or devotion performed to show sorrow or repentance for a sin. This interpretation implies that we are to pay retribution in some way in order to be in right standing with God. The concept of "penance" leads to the false understanding that when we do good works, we can attain some degree of righteousness before God; this is a dangerous path of thinking. Because of our sinful nature, there is **nothing** we can do to be worthy or righteous in God's eyes. Only Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and His payment for our sins avails us of the grace to be righteous before God.

Yet, repentance comes with a certain amount of suffering; we feel the weight and pain of our sin. When we contemplate that Jesus carried the weight of our sin to the cross, we feel remorse. With the realization that every sin separates us further from God, we recognize the need for His grace and the necessity of repentance to receive forgiveness, so we repent and run back to Him.

In 2 Timothy 2:25-26, we read: **...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.**

Therefore, we can appreciate repentance as a gift from God, which opens the way to forgiveness and a close relationship with Him. As we "rethink" and change our minds through repentance, we are led out of darkness, and, with God's help, we allow the new nature of Jesus to unfold within us.

Repentance starts with **awareness**. Often, our sinful nature is not apparent to us. We must stop and take time, perhaps at the end of the day, to meditate, reflect, and examine our thoughts, words, and actions. It's important to explore the underlying reasons for sinful words or actions. Maybe anger or bitterness causes us to speak or act in a way that is hurtful to others. Perhaps fear or doubt causes mistrust or jealousy, or envy leads to hostility, or selfishness creates apathy. We should compare ourselves to the example of Jesus in the Scriptures and notice where we do not align with His nature. Self-examining in this way

permits space for God to enlighten us to our sin, so that we become mindful of the sin and its effects on those around us. Only by realizing how far away we actually are from God can we take the steps to move closer to Him.

We find two examples of this God-inspired assessment in Genesis. In chapter 3, after Adam and Eve sin, the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9), and then in chapter 4, when God asks Cain, "What have you done?" to call attention to the terrible deed that Cain, in his self-righteousness, could not recognize. As human beings, we are sinners and therefore enemies of God and His righteousness. We are perpetually sinful; alone, we cannot climb out of this condition. As He questioned Cain, God questions why we have rebelled and fought against Him. Why have we again allied ourselves to the evil one after our Father has continually approached us with love and compassion? It is an act of grace that He questions us, so that we can see the true perspective of our being and recognize that we are far from Him. God is waiting to forgive us, but we must first see our true state so that we understand our dependence on His grace. We are running in the wrong direction and we need to turn back.

The intended result of the awareness of our sin is **remorsefulness**. Once we come to this understanding, we suffer because the relationship with our God and Father has been disturbed. We sink down into the realization of our sinfulness and distance from God, as David did (2 Samuel 12). We are humbled because we realize that we

deserve nothing. We deeply mourn our sinfulness as it is juxtaposed with God's goodness and benevolence.

In this state of unrest and turbulence in our souls, we **confess** our sins to God. Confession is the natural progression as we come to the awareness of and remorsefulness for our sin. Apostle John wrote, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). This confession does not just happen in the moments of the Lord's Prayer in the divine service, but needs to be wrestled with daily in our prayers.

At our baptism or confirmation, we promised to renounce the evil one and surrender ourselves to the triune God. Remembrance of this promise inspires our **resolution** to keep fighting against sin. Our old nature resists this, but we fight on because we want the new life of Christ to emerge in us and extinguish the old nature that continually drives us away from the One we love. His love inspires a longing and willingness to change and evolve. Even though we may have resolved a hundred or thousand times before, we resolve once again because we know that God will not remember the sins He forgives.

As we experience God's everlasting love for us through the gift of repentance and forgiveness, we come to understand His wish for us to also **forgive others**. If we want to be close to God, we cannot let pride or self-righteousness stand in our way. Jesus clearly stated in Matthew 6:14-15: *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also*

## 8.2.18 The prerequisites for partaking in Holy Communion

The fundamental prerequisites for partaking worthily of Holy Communion are belief and a repentant heart filled with longing for salvation. Although unbelief does not render the sacrament invalid, faith is the prerequisite for it to serve for blessing and salvation.

*forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Although we may have suffered an injustice or terrible offense from our brother, sister, or neighbor, we are resolved to journey down the path toward forgiveness and seek reconciliation. We realize that if God forgives our many sins against Him, then surely, we can strive to forgive the transgressions of others.*

*Joined with all of our brothers and sisters, with anxious hearts, we express our confessions, feelings, and resolutions to the almighty God, our Father, in the Lord's Prayer. He, alone, is able to restore us and set us on the right path for His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever!*

*With a deep longing, we wait for the comfort we find in the absolution. This is the assurance of God's forgiveness and His willingness to always give us a fresh start by the merit of Christ's sacrifice. This greeting of peace gives us the confidence that He will never forsake us, no matter how many times we fall. The words, "The peace of the Risen One be with you all," are like balsam that washes over our troubled souls, and, released from sin, we rest securely in the assurance that the Lord loves and accepts us once again.*

Martin Luther, in his 95 theses, said,

***When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent," He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.***

The daily journey of realizing our sin and coming to repentance creates a tension in us because the old nature

Unbelief in receiving the sacrament can be related to the words in 1 Corinthians 11: 29: "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Those who are indifferent to the suffering and death of Christ or who merely make a habit of the celebration of the sacrament, and partake of Holy Communion in this manner, run the risk of doing so unworthily.<sup>13</sup>

**must be slain and supplanted by the new life of Christ. For this newness to grow, it is necessary for us to continually embrace God's gift of repentance.**

Taken from Autumn VISION Newsletter 2018

**13** **Worthily partaking:** The words *worthy* and *worthily* are both linked to worship in the sense that they all are rooted in the word "worth".

Let's inspect the two sentences below:

Chief Apostle Schneider: *Holy Communion is a sacrament that was directly instituted by Jesus Himself. He is present in the consecrated wafer. He thus determines how we can celebrate Holy Communion in a **worthy way**.*

The Seventh Article of our Creed: *The **worthy partaking** of Holy Communion establishes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

In both sentences, the word **worthy** is an adjective to *way* and *partaking* (or *way* and *method*, in a sense) and is not referring to the worthiness of the person taking the sacrament. This word describes the *manner* in which we take the Holy Communion, i.e. dignified, respectful, honorably, humbly – all synonyms of *worthy*.

Our New Apostolic doctrine states that we believe the body and blood of Jesus is joined to the bread and wine of the wafer and that His real sacrifice is present in Holy Communion. When we decide to partake in Holy Communion in front of the altar, it is as if we are standing in front of the cross during Christ's sacrifice and are witnessing His death for our sins. If this idea is central to

what we believe about Holy Communion, who then could actually stand worthily before the Lord?

Because we are *unentitled* and *undeserving* and it is the highest gift given by Christ to us here, the issue is really about our self-preparation so that we can partake of it in a *worthy manner*. This manner or preparedness was specified by Jesus and the first Apostles (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Therefore, in that sense, no, we are not worthy, but the way in which we have prepared ourselves, the holiness that we attribute to Holy Communion, even the procedure of how it is received can be accounted as worthy, but only by Christ. And as such, it establishes our relationship with Him.

We can see a similarity to *being faithful* – only the Lord knows who is faithful in their inner soul.

We can use the word worthy because it reflects on His gift and only He knows if we received it in a worthy manner. Because one realizes the high value of the gift, one strives to accept it in a worthy manner, *worthy of its worth*. Truly the word worthy as a description of someone only fits with Jesus Christ, as stated in Revelation 5:12: *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!*

Taken from DA Kolb correspondence

## OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOLY COMMUNION

The question sometimes arises... *"Should I go up for Holy Communion if I haven't*

*completely forgiven someone or if I still harbor negative feelings towards my neighbor?"*

Our admittance to Holy Communion is grounded on the relationship that was created with God in our baptism – through the sacrament, we (or our parents) vowed faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ. This sacrament is also connected with the forgiveness of sins, although the absolution itself is not a sacrament. We believe the proclamation of the absolution assures us that our sins are forgiven. While this is true, there is no way we can have knowledge of every sin we have committed or every lingering negative feeling we may have towards one another. And sometimes we simply struggle to forgive because the action committed against us is so great.

Already some years ago, the Chief Apostle expressed a vital key to this situation that if one wants to forgive, but struggles to do so, and fervently seeks the strength from Jesus to do it, then they should participate in Holy Communion.

Deciding to partake in Holy Communion is a highly personal decision. It is something that requires a deep faith in the victory of Christ, a heart that is humble, and the *willingness to repent*. It is important to remember that the experience of Holy Communion brings us the closest we can come to Jesus Christ on the earth and this communion with Him is an essential part of our salvation.

Taken from Summer 2016 VISION Newsletter – based on the Catechism and theology presentation by R. Kiefer

### 8.2.19 The manner in which Holy Communion is received

Holy Communion is received both by the ministers and the congregation in both forms, namely bread and wine.<sup>14</sup>

As of 1917, the New Apostolic Church has dispensed both elements of Holy Communion together in the form of a communion wafer sprinkled with wine.

### 8.2.20 The effects of Holy Communion

Those who partake worthily of Holy Communion share in the merit acquired by Jesus Christ through His sacrifice. The believer's share in the new covenant and in the merit of Christ - which is founded upon Holy Baptism with water - is continually reinforced by partaking in Holy Communion.

Furthermore, Holy Communion guarantees fellowship of life with the Son of God. It is a visible expression and a reinforcement of life with Jesus Christ. Through His body and blood, Christ shares His nature with the believer - a nature which is distinguished by perfect strength to overcome—thereby allowing the believer to live in Christ.

On account of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, the worthy partaking of Holy Communion establishes true fellowship with the Lord and thereby the unity of the believers, both the living and the dead, with one another (John 17:20-21). This is also expressed in 1 Corinthians 10:17: "For we, though many, are *one* bread and *one* body; for we all partake of that *one* bread." This unity of the faithful created through Holy Communion is

the unity with Jesus Christ, the Apostles sent by Him, and all those who have been reborn of water and the Spirit. In this fellowship of the Lord's Supper the true nature and true form of the church of Christ are thus clearly revealed (*see 6.5*).

At the same time, Holy Communion is an essential means of preparing for the day of Christ's return.

### SUMMARY

When consecrating Holy Communion, the authorized minister speaks a liturgically fixed text based on 1 Corinthians 11:23 et seq. and Matthew 26:26 et seq. (8.2.16)

The body and blood of Jesus Christ is dispensed in the consecrated wafer. (8.2.17)

The basic prerequisites for partaking worthily of Holy Communion are a longing for salvation, willingness to repent, and faith. (8.2.18)

In the New Apostolic Church bread and wine are dispensed in the form of a wafer sprinkled with wine. (8.2.19)

The believer's share in the merit of Christ - which is founded upon Holy Baptism with water - is continually reinforced by partaking in Holy Communion. Holy Communion assures the fellowship of life with the Son of God and establishes the unity of the believers among one another. (8.2.20)

Holy Communion is an essential means of preparation for the return of Christ. (8.2.20)

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## 14 EXPLANATIONS CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

The administration of all the sacraments has been entrusted to the apostle ministry (CNAC 6.4.4). This also incorporates a mandate to ensure that the sacraments are properly dispensed. It is an important task of the apostles and the priestly ministers to see to it that the liturgical form of the celebration of Holy Communion unfolds in a manner appropriate to the holiness of the sacrament. This applies to the divine services as well as to celebrations of Holy Communion that take place outside of the divine service.

The District Apostle Meeting has repeatedly concerned itself with the following Holy Communion practices:

- in the divine service,
- house visits by priestly ministers and apostles,
- word services conducted by Deacons where Holy Communion is received by the participants,
- pastoral care letters containing wafers (formerly known as "bread letters"),
- transmissions of divine services by internet and telephone for those with long-term illnesses.

After exhaustive debate, a resolution was passed stating that no additional Holy Communion practices should be added to the aforementioned.

The following thoughts are intended as an aid in assessing the various practices from a theological perspective.

## 1 - FORMS OF CELEBRATING AND RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

### **Divine Service**

The celebration of Holy Communion always occupies a central place in the divine service. This has to do with the fact that Holy Communion has an effect for salvation: Those who partake worthily of Holy Communion share in the merit acquired by Jesus Christ through His sacrifice. The believer's share in the new covenant and in the merit of Christ - which is founded upon Holy Baptism with water - is continually reinforced by partaking in Holy Communion. Furthermore, Holy Communion guarantees fellowship of life with the Son of God. It is a visible expression and a reinforcement of life with Jesus Christ. Through His body and blood, Christ shares His nature with the believer - a nature which is distinguished by perfect strength to overcome - thereby allowing the believer to live in Christ (CNAC 8.2.20).

The Catechism makes it clear that Holy Communion not only has an effect for salvation, but that it is also an essential component of salvation imparted to the believer. This assessment did not simply result from the publication of the

Catechism, but has always been among the most important elements of the New Apostolic faith. No New Apostolic Christian would, or should, abstain from Holy Communion and the strength associated with it for very long.

### **House Visits**

It is also customary for a priestly minister or an apostle to visit the sick, either at home or in a hospital, in order to celebrate Holy Communion ("ministration visit"). *This is a celebration of Holy Communion that incorporates the full liturgy*, in which the wafers are consecrated and dispensed by a minister authorized to do so. "A principle of the ministration visit is that it is carried out as far as possible in the sequence usual in divine services" (Liturgy of the Divine Services in the New Apostolic Church, Volume 2: Special Types of Divine Service. Frankfurt February 2013, pp. 18-19). If it is not possible to perform the complete Holy Communion liturgy in a hospital room, the liturgy can also be shortened. Suggestions on how to do so can be found in the remarks on special liturgical formats. (If a dignified celebration of Holy Communion is not possible because of the environment, for example - a hospital room, the opening prayer can be directly followed by the absolution, and a previously consecrated wafer can be served with the normal wording. The closing prayer and benediction then complete the ministration visit. If, because of the setting, it is not even possible to pray, the sacramental part of the ministration visit can be limited to proclamation of the absolution and

serving of the consecrated wafer. Consecrated wafers can be taken for such cases from the open chalices after Holy Communion in a divine service, or can be separately consecrated for this purpose.)

### **“Bread letters” – for Linked Members**

Another way of receiving Holy Communion, which was derived on the basis of the principle that no New Apostolic Christian should have to do without Holy Communion for an overly long period of time, is the pastoral care letter (formerly called “bread letter”). Its origins can be traced back to the First World War, when New Apostolic soldiers had no opportunity to partake in New Apostolic communion celebrations. The practice of sending consecrated wafers began around 1917 in order to allow these soldiers to celebrate Holy Communion whenever they had a suitable opportunity. Over the course of time, this practice continued to develop further, and has been preserved to this day: members who reside in locations that are far away from a New Apostolic congregation - either permanently or for long periods at a time - and thus have no opportunity to attend divine services, are sent a consecrated wafer along with the absolution in written form.

### **Word Services**

This practice also applies to word services in which the participants receive Holy Communion. “If it can be expected that divine services will not take place over a longer period, and that only word services can be held by deacons, the apostle can decree that receipt of Holy Communion can be made possible for the participants at appropriate intervals. This is applied if there are no other possibilities for the celebration of New Apostolic Holy Communion. Such services with receipt of Holy Communion are conducted based on the practice of soulcare letters. The forgiveness of sins and the celebration of Holy Communion are effective. In this case we primarily trust in God, in His omnipotence and grace. Furthermore, this can be found in the authority assigned to the apostle ministry by Jesus Christ.

The origin must always be the apostle who is responsible for the forgiveness of sins and arranges this celebration of Holy Communion” (Liturgy of the Divine Services of the New Apostolic Church, Volume 2: Special Types of Divine Service. Ibid. p. 23).

Pastoral care letters (containing wafers) to individuals or even entire congregations gathered for a word service have their basis in the Church’s endeavor to alleviate a concrete pastoral or divine service exigency. It is also in this context that the following statement from the Catechism is to be understood: “The body and blood of Christ remain present in the consecrated wafer until it has reached its designated recipient” (CNAC 8.2.12).

## **2 - THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF CELEBRATING AND RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION**

In order to properly assess the various forms of celebrating and receiving Holy Communion as described, it is necessary to first recall the most essential statements concerning the doctrine of Holy Communion. Here it is important to stress that Jesus Christ is the source and Lord of the sacraments. He has entrusted the apostles with the proper administration and dispensation of the sacraments. *Thus the idea of dealing with the sacraments in a purely pragmatic way must be ruled out from the start.*

### **2.1 Important statements concerning Holy Communion doctrine**

“Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance because it first of all commemorates the death of Jesus Christ as a unique event which is valid for all times” (CNAC 8.2.8).

“Holy Communion is a meal of profession, as is clear from the words: You proclaim the Lord’s death... (1 Corinthians 11: 26). The profession of the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ is part of the fundamental profession of the Christian faith” (CNAC 8.2.9).

“Holy Communion is a meal of fellowship in a threefold sense. First of all, the incarnate and glorified Son of God enters into fellowship with His apostles in the celebration of Holy Communion. Thereby the original situation at the institution of Holy Communion is repeated. However, in the celebration of Holy Communion the Risen One also has fellowship with those believers who partake of the Lord’s Supper worthily for their salvation. Moreover, those assembled in the congregation for divine service also have fellowship with one another in Holy Communion” (CNAC 8.2.10).

The central mystery of Holy Communion is the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the natural elements of bread and wine: “...the bread and wine are not merely metaphors or symbols for the body and blood of Christ. Rather, the body and blood of Christ are truly present (real presence). Through the words of consecration spoken by an apostle or a priestly minister commissioned by him, the substance of the body and blood of Christ is joined to the substance of the bread and wine” (CNAC 8.2.12).

“In Holy Communion, it is not only the body and blood of Christ, but also His sacrifice itself, that are truly present. However, this sacrifice has only been brought once and is not repeated in Holy Communion. ... In this way, the celebration of Holy Communion causes the partakers to repeatedly envision the sacrificial death of the Lord, which enables them to proclaim it with conviction (1 Corinthians 11: 26)” (CNAC 8.2.13).

“Whenever an apostle or a priestly minister commissioned by him performs the consecration, this occurs by the commission and authority of Jesus Christ. *Here it is the Holy Spirit who effects the real presence of the Son of God, His body and blood, in Holy Communion.* It is also in this sense that the apostles of Jesus are stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4: 1). Where the Holy Spirit is active through the ministry established and authorized by Jesus Christ, this sacramental reality comes into being” (CNAC 8.2.15).

## **2.2 Theological assessment**

To begin with, a terminological complication needs to be pointed out: on the one hand, the term “Holy Communion” refers to the actual celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and on the other hand, it also refers to the consecrated host. This tendency to equate the celebration and the wafer itself indicates that the celebration and the consecrated wafer belong together. Correspondingly, the Catechism states the following: “Since both the consecration of the communion wafer and its dispensation are part of the sacrament, the term ‘Holy Communion’ is used, in the broader sense, as the designation for the complete act of consecration and dispensation (sacramental act)” (CNAC 8.2.17). Separating the celebration of Holy Communion from its reception would therefore pose a problem, for within the New Testament context any such separation would not have been possible.

The fact that the celebration of the meal and the partaking of the wafer (the bread and wine being the means of the sacrament) belong together also comes to expression in the statements of the Catechism on Holy Communion. A certain degree of collective activity is envisioned in each. *If the concept of the celebration of Holy Communion is to be taken seriously, it will require the presence of several people, who gather around the altar and partake in the sacramental act: together* they will commemorate the death of Jesus as the central event of salvation, *will profess before one another and the world that Jesus has died and resurrected, and that He is risen and will return.* It is in this manner that Holy Communion is celebrated as a meal of fellowship, remembrance, and profession.

Beyond that, the Catechism links the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, as well as the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - that is, the two central mysteries of Holy Communion - with the concrete presence of the authorized minister, who performs the sacramental act. Therefore, the sacrament's effect for salvation does not come into being through the consecrated wafer alone. Rather it is the celebration of Holy Communion as a whole that is intended to impart salvation and make it accessible to the believer.

*The theological validity of the celebration of Holy Communion in a divine service and in a regular ministration visit is very straightforward, because both of these incorporate the key supporting elements of the celebration of Holy Communion.*

All the essential elements of a valid celebration of Holy Communion are also present in divine services that are transmitted by satellite or internet. There is no deficiency in receiving congregations where the authorized ministry is present in each location. Thus the normal Holy Communion practice can be maintained for transmission services, as the Holy Communion is consecrated locally.

There are certain practices that have developed from the pastoral care letter containing wafers that can cause problems, however.

Word services in which Holy Communion is received do indeed incorporate a fellowship of remembrance and profession among the faithful in Christ, and there is also fellowship among the faithful themselves, however, the *presence of an authorized minister* - through whose words of consecration the presence of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can come into being - *is lacking.* Beyond that, *the congregation does not participate in the consecration of the communion elements, which is how the real presence of the body and blood of Christ comes into being.*

In the case of pastoral care letters and in the event a consecrated wafer is provided to someone for Holy Communion who listens to a divine service over the telephone or watches it over the internet, there is no concrete fellowship of remembrance or profession, nor is there even any fellowship of the faithful among one another - despite the fact that the subjective impression of fellowship and direct participation might well be awakened on the part of the listener.

### **2.3 Conclusion and recommendations**

For the aforementioned reasons, the pastoral care letter containing wafers - and all forms of Holy Communion celebration derived from it - appear problematic. Therefore ministers should make it clear to members that every New Apostolic Christian who is in a position to do so should endeavor to actually attend divine services in order to be able to celebrate Holy Communion there. Those for whom it is impossible to participate in a divine service can find comfort in the knowledge that *the triune God looks with favor upon longing individuals and will not deny them the necessary gifts of salvation.*

For this reason, we will proceed as follows.

**Pastoral care letters containing wafers are not a full substitute for the celebration of Holy Communion in the congregation,** however, the practice of sending them will be maintained for reasons of pastoral care. The same applies to word services where Holy Communion is received in the absence of an authorized minister.

### 8.2.21 Eligibility for partaking in Holy Communion

All those who have been baptized, adopted, or sealed in the New Apostolic Church are entitled to regularly partake in Holy Communion. These individuals profess the content of the New Apostolic Creed (*see 2.4*).

An essential prerequisite for receiving Holy Communion is Holy Baptism with water. Only those who have been baptized should partake in Holy Communion.

Although usually only New Apostolic Christians receive Holy Communion, Christians from other denominations who have been baptized in the proper manner (*see 8.1.4*) can partake of Holy Communion as guests. It should be made clear to them that Holy Communion is a meal of profession of the Son of God who died, resurrected from the dead, and will come again.

Secession or excommunication from the New Apostolic Church also voids admission to Holy Communion. Upon readmission to the New Apostolic Church, the believer is once again granted access to Holy Communion.

### 8.2.22 Communion celebrations of the churches

Where the authorized Apostle ministry is active, the body and blood of Jesus is joined to the bread and wine in Holy Communion. The celebrations of other churches also contain important elements of Holy Communion, since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are also commemorated with belief and gratitude there.

New Apostolic Christians should bear in mind that by regularly partaking in the Communion celebration of another church they are in principle professing that church's doctrine.

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However, they can be offered from time to time for pastoral care reasons.

When divine services are transmitted by telephone or internet, they should be supplemented by a pastoral visit. **At that time, the priestly minister should celebrate Holy Communion with the members they visit.** The District Apostle can make the corresponding regulations for his working area.

*Taken from January 2017 Special Edition DSG*



## ASPECTS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ - that is to say, the death of Jesus - is the essential foundation of Christian faith, life, and proclamation.

Concerning this we read as follows in the Catechism: "The core of the gospel is Jesus Christ who, through His death on the cross and His resurrection, created eternal salvation. Thus the cross of Christ became the epitome of God's reconciliatory actions toward sinful mankind. The words of Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:18 demonstrate a conflicting understanding of Christ's

## SUMMARY

Those who are baptized, adopted, or sealed in the New Apostolic Church are entitled to regularly partake in Holy Communion. The essential prerequisite is Holy Baptism with water. Properly baptized Christians can be admitted to Holy Communion as guests. (8.2.21)

Secession or excommunication from the New Apostolic Church invalidates the right to partake in Holy Communion. (8.2.21)

The Communion celebrations of other churches also contain important elements of Holy Communion. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are also commemorated with belief and gratitude there. (8.2.22)

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death on the cross: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Death on the cross was generally considered a defeat, the ignominious end of a despised person who had been cast out of human society. But here, according to the wisdom of God, the apparent defeat is really a victory which laid the foundation for an immeasurably great work of redemption.*

Through the resurrection, God acknowledged the Crucified One as the Christ (Acts 2:36). In Him alone eternal salvation is given (Catechism 3.4.9.9). Jesus' death on Golgotha established the new covenant into which both Jews and Gentiles can be incorporated through baptism with water. Salvation thus has its foundation in the sacrifice of Christ, which is granted to human beings in order to liberate them from remoteness from God. "Through the sacrifice of Christ, mankind's relationship with God has been set upon a new foundation. The merit Christ thereby acquired makes liberation from sin - and the undoing of permanent separation from God - possible: *Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)" (Catechism 4.4.2).

## The sacrificial death of Jesus and faith

In the context of his remarks concerning the relationship between faith and works, between the gospel and the law, Paul speaks of the expiatory character of Jesus' death. Paul emphasizes the importance of belief in Jesus Christ in order to attain righteousness before God. Righteousness signifies the experience of God's nearness and salvation. The Apostle writes as follows: *...[Jesus was] set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus* (Romans 3:25-26). That the death of Jesus has an expiatory character can only be recognized by faith and can only be accepted in faith. As transgressors against the law themselves, it is impossible for human beings to overcome or erase sin on their own. It is here that Jesus Christ intercedes for the sinner by taking his sins upon Himself in a substitutionary capacity, and dying the death to which the sinner has actually been condemned. Faith is thus the key to understanding, as well as an essential element of accepting the sacrifice of Christ, because it is only through faith that even the sacraments and the forgiveness of sins can develop their power and effect salvation.

## **The sacrificial death of Jesus and Holy Baptism with water**

The relationship between the crucifixion of Jesus and baptism is addressed in Romans 6:3-7. Apostle Paul states that the baptized are integrated into the death of Jesus; the Christian is directly united with the death of Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water. Here Paul writes, *Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin* (verses 3, 6, and 7).

The Catechism likewise elaborates on the relationship between Holy Baptism with water and the sacrificial death of Jesus in the context of Romans 6:3-8: "The baptized share in the death of Jesus Christ and in His new life. Seen in a spiritual sense, he partakes in the experience of Jesus Christ. Just as Christ died on the cross for the sins of mankind, so the baptized is to be *dead indeed to sin* by renouncing it. Baptism incorporates the believer into Christ's activity of redemption such that Christ's death on Golgotha also becomes the *death* of the baptized: this signifies the end of life in the condition of remoteness from God and the beginning of life in Christ. Baptism imparts powers to wage the battle against sin (Romans 6:3-8; Colossians 2:12-13). Baptism is *putting on Christ*. With it, the first step on the path to renewal of the inner man has

been taken: *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ* (Galatians 3:27). This image constitutes the basis for abandoning one's old way of life and putting on the virtues of Christ. It describes that which comes to expression in the term *repentance*, namely the act of turning away from one's old nature and turning to the Lord. This means that one must earnestly endeavor to lead one's life in accordance with God's will. The baptized person vows to conduct and organize his life under the regency of Christ" (Catechism 8.1.6). The apostles - and this is one of their most important tasks - preach the crucified Christ, in other words, *the message of the cross* (1 Corinthians 1:18). They spread awareness about the relevance of the cross for salvation and call out to all human beings: *"Be reconciled to God!"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

## **The sacrificial death of Jesus and Holy Communion**

The connection between Holy Communion and the sacrificial death of Jesus is also mentioned in the Catechism: "Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance because it first of all commemorates the death of Jesus Christ as a unique event which is valid for all times. The remembrance of this event is important because it emphasizes that Jesus Christ is true Man who had to suffer real death" (Catechism 8.2.8). That Holy Communion is also a remembrance of the death of Jesus and His continuing message is stated in first Corinthians: *For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death*

till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). Remembrance and proclamation of the sacrifice of Jesus occur wherever the Lord's Supper is celebrated and wherever its character as a meal of remembrance is preserved.

### **The sacrificial death of Jesus and forgiveness of sins**

Since the state of being a Christian - that is to say, of having acquired a completely new status before God - is itself rooted in the sacrificial death of Jesus, it is not appropriate to identify the sacrifice of Christ with the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the divine service. The sacrifice of Christ is indeed the basis upon which the forgiveness of sins can be pronounced and effected, however, the forgiveness of sins is only one product of this sacrifice - albeit an extremely important one. The Catechism makes it clear that the forgiveness of sins in general is closely related to the sacrifice of Christ: "The perfect sacrifice of Christ replaced the sacrificial service of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ led a life without sin. Through His sacrifice, the willing surrender of His life (John 10:17-18), He broke the power of Satan and conquered the Devil and all his works, namely sin and death (2 Corinthians 5:21). Since then the forgiveness of sins - in the sense of erasing - has become possible (Hebrews 10:18), as has redemption from sin and death (Romans 3:24)" (Catechism 12.1.8.3). Through His death, Jesus Christ has effected forgiveness of sins for all those who belong to Him. This can be directly experienced through the washing away of original sin in Holy Baptism with water. It is through this act that the sin which radically separates mankind from God and conditions the human state of remoteness from God is neutralized - in other words, washed away. It is for this reason that the Catechism states: "The fundamental liberation from the rule of sin occurs through Holy Baptism with water, in which original sin is washed away" (Catechism 2.4.3).

The Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople also points in this direction when it says: *We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.* Besides, the apostles received the commission from the Risen Lord to proclaim the

forgiveness of sins (John 20:23). This commission, which the apostles fulfill, serves to liberate the repentant sinner from the burden of sin, with which he has charged himself through his evil thoughts and deeds. Here the Catechism states: "Forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed. Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins upon individuals (Luke 7:48 int. al.). Forgiveness of sins occurs through the absolution, which is proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ by authorized ministers. It is generally proclaimed in the divine service to the congregation. However, it only has its effect on those who grasp it in faith and fulfill the corresponding prerequisites. The authority to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus is contained in the ministry of reconciliation, namely the apostle ministry (John 20:23)" (Catechism 12.1.8.7). The Catechism also expressly points out that the forgiveness of sins pronounced in the divine service does not occur automatically: "The absolution proclaimed in authority and in the name of Jesus, when grasped in faith, erases sin" (Catechism 12.1.8.8). The "forgiveness of sins proclaimed before the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion also enables believers to worthily partake of Holy Communion" (Catechism 8.2.14).

Believers who hear the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and accept it in faith receive the certainty that the grace and mercy of God will accompany them in their lives. God inclines Himself to the sinner and liberates him from his debts again and again.

Taken from Special DSG, January 2015



## Holy Communion

### ***Hymn of repentance***

Following preparatory words for the forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion, the congregation (or choir) sings an appropriate hymn, which the officiant announces at completion of the preparation. The hymn of repentance is an expression of the joint confession of sins before God and each other.

The congregation should preferably sing the hymn of repentance so that it associates better with the text and that everybody is actively involved. Appropriate hymns, or verses, are specified.

The congregation can remain seated during the hymn of repentance. The choir should stand up if it sings alone.

### ***“Lord’s Prayer”***

The officiant invites the congregation to pray the “Lord’s Prayer.” He can say the following words, or something similar: *“We want to stand up and pray the prayer which the Lord Jesus taught us.”*

The “Lord’s Prayer” is spoken by the whole congregation standing.

### ***Absolution***

The “Lord’s Prayer” is followed by the absolution with the following wording: *“In the commission of my sender the Apostle I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven. The peace of the Risen One abide with you! Amen.”*

The priestly ministry makes it clear that he has been commissioned by the apostle ministry to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. The absolution is not a prayer. Reading is permissible if the officiant feels unsure of the liturgical text. The congregation stands during the absolution.

### ***Eucharistic prayer***

The Eucharistic prayer includes praise and thanks for Christ’s sacrifice. It serves for the remembrance of Jesus Christ’s suffering and death. At the same time, it should be a reminder that Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion and called His disciples, the apostles, to proclaim the gospel in all the world. We bring our thanks for the mission of the apostles in the past and present.

Focal points of the Eucharistic prayer can therefore be:

- Thanks for the experienced grace in the forgiveness of sins
- Thanks for Jesus Christ’s sacrifice
- Thanks for the Holy Communion instituted by the Lord
- Petition for strength to prove ourselves worthy of His grace
- Petition for help in our efforts to become worthy

The Eucharistic prayer is concluded with “*Amen.*”

### ***Further sacraments and acts***

The dispensing of sacraments and acts, namely Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, adoption, or confirmation, is carried out following the absolution and the Eucharistic prayer, but prior to consecration of Holy Communion. The forgiveness of sins provides the sanctification required for receiving the sacraments and these acts. The sacraments and acts mentioned also represent a confession. This is associated with the permanent participation in Holy Communion.

The recipients of these acts receive Holy Communion together with the ministers and congregation and not directly following the act and separate from the others. This expresses that they are (now) part of the congregation. This underlines the fellowship characteristic of Holy Communion. The ministers and the congregation are included equally in celebration of this fellowship.

If appropriate, the recipients can be accompanied to the altar and back into the congregation again by a musical contribution.

### ***Introduction to Holy Communion***

Following the Eucharistic prayer (and the dispensing of sacraments and acts, if applicable), the officiant stands behind the altar and introduces Holy Communion with the words: *“And now we shall celebrate Holy Communion.”*

### ***Uncovering of the communion chalices***

The invitation to celebration of Holy Communion is followed by quiet moments. During this time, attention is called to the visible, perceivable uncovering of the communion chalices.

Only after the absolution is pronounced over the repentant and purified congregation should the uncovering of the chalices take place and the Holy Communion elements be presented openly for the actual celebration of communion.

It should be ensured that this part of the liturgy is carried out in complete silence. The congregation should experience it in complete awareness, and remains standing.

Uncovering of the chalices is not usually carried out by the officiant. If no other priestly ministries are present, Deacons can be used here. The person to uncover the chalices, as well as those assigned to serve Holy Communion, should be informed before the service. The officiant, if he is not the only minister and therefore has to open the chalices himself, remains in reverent silence during this time.

Once the ministers have uncovered the chalices and have returned to their places, the officiant subsequently announces to the congregation: *“And now the Lord’s table is prepared.”*

### ***Consecration***

Through consecration of bread and wine by the priestly ministry, the body and blood of Christ become present. During consecration of the elements, the officiant begins by extending his arms and “covering” the chalices with his hands. If chalices are only on one side of the altar, both arms can point in this direction.

Reading of the consecration text is permissible if the officiant feels unsure of the liturgical text.



Photo on left: The officiant extends his arms for the consecration. His hands “cover” the chalices.

Photo on right: Consecration gesture if chalices are only present on one side of the altar.

The consecration text is largely taken from [1 Corinthians 11:24-26](#). This is the oldest known consecration text. Here Apostle Paul cites the words of Jesus and describes the fundamental content of Holy Communion.

***Consecration text***

**In the name of God, the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

*Beginning of sacrament in triune  
name of God*

**I consecrate**

*Act*

**bread and wine for Holy Communion**

*Natural elements, the sacramental means,  
are named*

**and lay thereupon the once brought,  
eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ.**

*Current realization of Christ’s sacrifice*

**For the Lord**

***Remembrance of the event***

**took bread and wine,**

*Reference to natural elements*

**gave thanks and said:**

*Thanks to God – as with the feast of the Passover*

**This is My body which is broken for you.**

*Participation in His life*

**This is My blood of the new covenant**

***Presence of Christ’s sacrifice***

**given for many for the remission of sins.**

*Reference to Christ’s sacrifice as the basis for  
the forgiveness of sins (from Matthew 26:28)*

**Eat and drink!**

*Invitation to participate in Christ’s Body –  
act is remembrance of Christ and the supper  
instituted by Him*

**Do this in remembrance of Me.**

***Meal of remembrance,  
remembrance of His bitter  
suffering but also of His promise***

**For as often as you eat this bread  
and drink this wine,**

***The necessity of repeating this meal of  
fellowship***

you proclaim the Lord's death

*Meal of confession*

till He comes.

*Eschatological meal*

Amen!

*Confirmation of the previously said*

The consecration text covers all fundamental aspects of Holy Communion, namely:

- Remembrance of the event
- Presence of Christ's sacrifice
- Meal of remembrance - remembrance of His bitter suffering but also of His promise
- Meal of fellowship which should take place repeatedly
- Meal of confession - confession of the Lord's death
- Eschatological meal - reference to His return

### ***Serving of body and blood of Christ to officiant and ministers***

The officiant takes a chalice into his hand and serves himself Holy Communion.

The congregation remains standing until the ministers at the altar have received Holy Communion from the officiant. This also applies to those ministers who are not seated at the altar. This can be accompanied by the organ, a vocal piece, or instrumental. Adjustments may be necessary during larger services for pragmatic reasons. The organist should receive Holy Communion after the ministers.

That the ministers receive Holy Communion before the congregation is an expression of the presence of the apostle through the ministers commissioned by him. The element in the ministerial body that conveys salvation becomes evident.

### ***Announcement of musical contributions during celebration of Holy Communion***

Once the officiant has returned to the altar and replaced the chalice, the congregation sits down. The officiant then announces the musical contributions during the celebration of Holy Communion.

Silence should initially follow this announcement. The officiant waits with the further acts until the members are in anticipation of Holy Communion.

### ***Invitation to Holy Communion***

After the body and blood of Christ have been served to the ministers, the hymn announced, and a moment of silence, the congregation is invited with approximately the following words: *"The Lord now invites you to Holy Communion."* If appropriate, this can be followed in special divine services by an invitation to guests who wish to participate in Holy Communion. The following words can be used: *"Invited are all baptized souls who confess Jesus Christ as the Lord, His death, His resurrection, and His return."*

The officiant at the altar then hands over the chalices to the ministers who are to serve communion. The communion hymn or musical piece to accompany Holy Communion should only commence after the chalices have been handed out. It is also possible to play soft instrumental music while the congregation is receiving Holy Communion, and sing a song together once everyone is seated.

In divine services with many participants, handing out of the numerous chalices can be organized differently, e.g. accompanied by music.

Permanently authorized to participate are sealed members, adopted members, and those who have received the New Apostolic baptism. Guests baptized in accordance with the rites (with water and in the triune name of God) are permitted to participate. Those who have not been baptized have no access to Holy Communion. However, no one should be prevented from participating.

### ***Handing out the communion chalices***

The inner composure of the minister with regard to Holy Communion should also be reflected in the outer attitude. This also concerns the handling of the communion chalices. A chalice is not an ordinary vessel and must therefore be handled worthily. The priestly ministers should confer dignity to the act through the manner in which they handle the chalice.



Photo on left: Example of appropriate handing out of a chalice.

Photo on right: When serving communion, the chalice is held by its base.



Photo on left: Example of appropriate handing out of a flat chalice.

Photo on right: The flat chalice should be held by the minister in his flat hand.

The following photos show examples of how communion chalices should **not** be held.



## ***Serving of Holy Communion***

The wafers are served with the words: *“The body and blood of Jesus given for you!”*

Adults with small children who cannot take the wafer for themselves are served with the words: *“The body and blood of Jesus given for you and your child!”*

The manner in which the wafers are served should underline the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ. The wafer should therefore be served in awareness and accentuated. Holy Communion should be an extremely solemn feast.

Serving of the body and blood of Christ must never take place under time pressure. When serving Holy Communion, everything must be avoided which could disturb the receiver in their devotion or is contrary to the holiness of the sacrament.



Photos on left and right: The wafer is held between thumb and index finger.

The following photos show examples of how the wafer should **not** be served.



Both photos: The minister's hand or thumb hides the wafer when placing into the member's hand.

Both photos: Holding of the chalice (or the flat chalice) as shown is also inappropriate.

The altar should remain occupied by a minister (a deacon, if necessary) during celebration of Holy Communion since the personal presence of the apostle through the minister commissioned by him becomes visible. Serving of Holy Communion is only complete when the last member has received Holy Communion and has taken the wafer.

## ***Replacement of lids on the chalices***

The lids should only be replaced on the chalices by the minister standing at the altar when all of them have been returned to their position and all musical contributions during celebration of Holy Communion have been completed. Replacement of lids on the chalices is also an act perceivable for the congregation just like uncovering of the chalices. If communion for the departed also takes place, the chalices present on the altar remain open until the end of this act. Note that the chalices should be returned behind the altar to the minister standing there, and not across the altar.



# HOLY SEALING

## 8.3 Holy Sealing

Holy Sealing is the sacrament through which the believer, through the laying on of hands and the prayer of an Apostle,<sup>1</sup> receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God with the calling to become a firstling. Accordingly, the Eighth Article of Faith<sup>2</sup> states: “I believe that those baptized with water must, through an Apostle, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to attain the childhood in God and thereby the prerequisite for becoming a firstling.<sup>3</sup>”

**1** ...*the laying on of hands and the prayer of an apostle...* Holy Sealing is the sacrament that is solely assigned to the apostle ministry. Prerequisite for its reception is Holy Baptism with water. Only baptized or adopted persons should be sealed.

**2** Reference page 72 of the Catechism for an explanation of the Eighth Article of Faith (2.4.8).

### **3** Becoming a firstling...

Holy Sealing, on one hand completes the rebirth, but on the other is an eschatological symbol of salvation. Our Creed states that it is a *prerequisite for being a firstling*, which is a calling to spread the gospel in the kingdom of peace and also today. Herein we join in the Great Commission given to the first apostles to spread the gospel and point people to Christ.

What is a *firstling*? The word *firstling* in the Greek text is *firstfruits*, which describes those that will be received by Jesus Christ when He returns. This refers back to the

### 8.3.1 Concerning the term “sealing”

The term “sealing”<sup>4</sup> refers to the use of a seal. Important documents are certified and given authority by means of a seal. It documents authenticity. Confidential documents are closed with a seal. Owners designate their property with a seal. A seal is a guarantee that the authority behind it assures protection and integrity.

These aspects of the word’s meaning are also reflected in the designation for the sacrament of baptism with the Spirit. Furthermore, in the epistles of the New Testament, “being sealed” is understood to mean receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Old Testament laws of offering the first of the crop to God: *The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God* (Exodus 23:19). We understand that *firstfruits* simply means those that were harvested first, and are not different or better than others.

Holy Baptism brings the possibility of salvation, while Holy Sealing is an expression of accepting the calling to spread the gospel in the kingdom of peace. Hence, Holy Sealing is not necessary for salvation, but is necessary if one is called to be a firstling at the return of Christ.

### **4** The term “sealing”

In the ancient world, the seal was the symbol of ownership, of authenticity, and of authority. When a king sent out an edict or official communication of some kind, the document was sealed with a drop of hot wax, and then the king pressed his signet ring into the wax, giving it his mark or brand to prove its authenticity. In the same way, the gift of the spirit seals the believer, for God gives His Spirit to those who are His.



- “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
- “In Him [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13).<sup>5</sup>
- “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

The book of Revelation also contains references to sealing as a mark of ownership or as an eschatological sign of salvation (Revelation 7:3; 22:4).

## 5 Ephesians 1:13

On the feast of Pentecost, Apostle Peter promised that those who were baptized and repented for their sins would receive the Holy Spirit. We believe that God fulfills this promise through the ministry established by Christ – believers who are baptized receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the prayers and the laying on of the hands of the apostle.

Paul’s words in Ephesians 1:11-14 give us insight into what it means to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having*

### 8.3.2 The promise of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

In the time of the old covenant, the Holy Spirit was active in individual human beings chosen by God for specific tasks. Hence the prophets used the words “Thus says the Lord” to attest to their divine authority and instruction. The Spirit of God awakened in them the thoughts on which their proclamations of both judgment and salvation were based.

By commission of God, the prophets also anointed kings to rule the chosen people. Thus, for example, David was anointed king by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:12-13). With this act, David’s kingship was “sealed”, as it were. Furthermore, we read that the Spirit of God came upon David.

*believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

With our Holy Sealing we received a:

- **Seal** – the assurance we belong to God and He will always receive and accept us.
- **Guarantee** – the assurance that as long as we remain in an active, close relationship with God, He will provide all that we need to enter His kingdom, despite the weaknesses that exist in the visible church.
- **Promise** – the assurance that we will experience the resurrection of our body and enter the kingdom of God. This is the foundation of our hope for the future.

According to Psalm 51:11, the king prayed - after having committed a sin - that the Lord should not take His Holy Spirit from him.

Moreover, the Old Testament contains references to the future, when the Spirit of God would be poured out - no longer merely upon individuals, but upon many people: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). Comparable promises can be found in the words of other prophets, for example in Ezekiel 36:27: "I will put My Spirit within you." In his sermon on Pentecost, Apostle Peter pointed out that the promise of the prophet Joel had been fulfilled (Acts 2:15 et seq.).

### 8.3.3 Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit

Like the two other sacraments, Holy Sealing also has its foundation in the life and activity of Jesus Christ. Concerning Him - the Son of Man - John 6:27 states that "God the Father has set His seal on Him."

After Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan, John the Baptist also testified: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him." This was the identifying sign that God had promised John the Baptist, by which he was to know Him "who baptizes with the Holy Spirit ... this is the Son of God" (John 1:29-34).

This event is also described in Matthew 3:16: "When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him." The descending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus occurred after His baptism with water was complete. Two distinct acts can therefore be identified. The Holy Spirit and the voice of God proclaim the divine Sonship of Jesus. The anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit is a legitimation of His Messiahship, and is at the same time a reference to the later sacrament.

The understanding of the link between Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing is based - among other things - on these two events, namely baptism with water and anointing with the Holy Spirit. They belong together and are interrelated - and yet they are two distinct sacraments.

- **Pledge** – the assurance that we can already today receive part of our inheritance in experiencing a foretaste of the kingdom by going deeper into the knowledge of our Father in the divine word, feeling His presence in the sacraments, and growing in His unity in our fellowship.
- **Calling** – the task to praise and witness Jesus Christ to those around us and profess His gospel and His return.

In light of these wonderful assurances and tasks, let us keep the promises we have made to the Eternal One when we were baptized, sealed, and confirmed, and thus, prove our faithfulness to Christ. We live under His gracious benefits and spiritual blessings.

Taken from Summer VISION Newsletter 2018



## THE HOLY SPIRIT

Some distinctions to keep in mind as you study Holy Sealing:

***The Person of the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity is inseparably united and universal in all time.*** Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is true God. He is worshiped together with the Father and the Son. He has spoken through the prophets and enlightens the apostle ministry in proclaiming the gospel and interpreting Scripture in the proper manner. After Jesus' ascension, His activity was felt in various ways. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit revealed Himself by, among other things, filling the apostles with His power and thereby enabling them to spread the gospel without fear.

Christians experience the activity of God the Holy Spirit in that He...

- Grants them faith in Jesus Christ and strengthens their conscience.

That Holy Sealing has its example in the anointing of Jesus is also underlined in Acts 10: 37–38: “The word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.”

#### 8.3.4 The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost

In His farewell discourses, Jesus Christ repeatedly promised to send His Apos-

ties the Holy Spirit, for example in John 15:26: “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” This promise was fulfilled on Pentecost when the Apostles and disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

God acted directly in both of these fundamental events, and this symbolically prefigures the sacrament of Holy Sealing: He sealed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and testified that He was the Son of God. He

- Keeps the hope in the return of Christ – and the manifestation of the kingdom of God – alive within them.
- Fills them with courage and desire to approach their neighbor, whether friend or foe, in love, and to be prepared to forgive even in difficult situations.

***The gift of the Holy Spirit:*** imparted by God at Holy Sealing, it is His life and power that permanently abides in a child of God, dispensed through the apostle ministry (CNAC 2.4.8). This serves to complete and reinforce the baptism with water, and remains a permanent presence within the person who receives it. Those who receive the sacramental gift of the Holy Spirit, through Holy Sealing, in faith

- Are born again out of water and the Spirit into a childhood in God.
- Are called to enter into the kingdom of God as firstfruits in order to proclaim the gospel to both the living and the dead in the kingdom of peace.

***The spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit:*** the godly attributes or spiritual abilities revealed by the Holy Spirit in a member of the body of Christ in order to edify and strengthen the entire body. The members of the body of Christ are those baptized in Christ who follow and profess Him. The activity of the Holy Spirit allows for various gifts to be revealed in a person. The gifts of the Spirit are many and are listed at various places in Scripture (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-30, Ephesians 4:11-16). This diversity of gifts is not intended to divide the members of the congregation, but unites them because all can contribute to the wellness of the entire body (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). For this reason we should

- Engage our gifts for the benefit of all, and in so doing, give all honor and glory to God, the Giver of all good gifts.

Taken from supplement written for DSG, September 29, 2019

sealed the Apostles - and the believers who had fellowship with them - with the Holy Spirit.

After the Pentecost sermon, when those who had come to believe in Christ asked him what they should do, Peter answered: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). This shows that Holy Baptism is a prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit.

The centurion Cornelius was an exception: here God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit directly to non-baptized souls in order to show Apostle Peter that salvation was now also accessible to the Gentiles. Therefore, in this special case, Holy Baptism was only administered after the dispensation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10).

### 8.3.5 Further attestations of Holy Sealing in the New Testament

According to the testimony of Scripture, Holy Sealing is bound to the Apostle ministry. Philip had preached in Samaria and baptized those who believed in the gospel: “Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:12 et seq.). Simon the sorcerer “saw that through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given” (Acts 8:18). In this incident, the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing - that is the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit - are clearly distinguished from one another.

There is another event that serves to substantiate the distinction between baptism with water and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesus there were disciples who, having only received the baptism of John, were then

baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them” (Acts 19:1-6).

These accounts indicate that, apart from the exceptions mentioned,<sup>6</sup> the gift of the Holy Spirit was solely administered by Apostles. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit was dispensed only after baptism with water had been administered.

### 8.3.6 The proper dispensation of Holy Sealing

As the water in Holy Baptism and the bread and wine in Holy Communion, the gesture of laying on of hands of the Apostle is - according to the testimony of the New Testament - the visible element in Holy Sealing. The prayer of the Apostle is also part of the proper dispensation of this sacrament.

The sacrament of Holy Sealing, the baptism of the Spirit, is exclusively dispensed by Apostles.

### SUMMARY

In Holy Sealing believers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (8.3)

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus occurred after His baptism was complete. The anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit is a legitimation of His Messiahship and a reference to the sacrament of Holy Sealing. (8.3.3)

The sending of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus, was fulfilled on Pentecost. (8.3.4)

According to the testimony of Scripture, Holy Sealing is bound to the Apostle ministry. (8.3.5)

The gift of the Holy Spirit was only dispensed after baptism with water had been performed. (8.3.5)

The sacrament of Holy Sealing is dispensed exclusively by Apostles through the gesture of laying on of hands and a prayer. (8.3.6)

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**6** *These accounts indicate that, apart from the exceptions mentioned....*

The exceptions are mentioned in detail in the sections 8.3.3 and 8.3.4, namely, Jesus’ anointing, Pentecost, and Peter’s experience with the household of Cornelius.



### 8.3.7 Prerequisites for receiving Holy Sealing

Holy Sealing requires the recipient to believe in the triune God and the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ. Prior to this he must have been baptized with water in the proper manner (*see 8.1*). He must profess his faith and vow to follow Christ. In the Lord's work of redemption, he will then be prepared for the imminent return of Christ.

Holy Sealing is dispensed to both adults and children. When children receive Holy Sealing, their parents - or those responsible for the religious upbringing of the children - must profess the required belief on their behalf and vow to raise the children in the New Apostolic faith.

### 8.3.8 Holy Sealing as an act of God

Like Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing is also an act of God upon a human being. That which was begun

in Holy Baptism is completed in Holy Sealing, namely the rebirth out of water and Spirit. Both sacraments are acts of God's grace upon a human being and are only performed once. The life received thereby is nourished and preserved above all by regularly partaking of Holy Communion.

The new creation<sup>7</sup> (2 Corinthians 5:17) which comes into being through the rebirth is a reference to the sanctification and renewal which occurs through God, the Holy Spirit.

### 8.3.9 The effects of Holy Sealing

Through the sacrament of Holy Sealing, the baptized believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, with power from God (*see 3.5.2*).

Through Holy Sealing, the Spirit of God makes His permanent abode in a human being<sup>8</sup> - God Himself grants him a share in His nature: "... the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the

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## 7 An act of creation by the Creator...

Chief Apostle Schneider, in Germany, September 2016, quoted from a divine service based on Psalm 51:10 - *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*"Renew a steadfast spirit... That is not only a foreshadowing of the sending [of the Holy Spirit], but also of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is also an act of creation by the Creator, who has given us new life. We received this new life on the day of our sealing. It is a spirit of power, who always gives us the strength to overcome our old nature."*

Taken from Community 2017, Edition 2

## 8 The Spirit of God makes His permanent abode in a human being...

God Himself shares a part of His nature with us. The recipient of this sacrament does not receive the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Godhead. Rather, we receive God's power, His life, and His Spirit. As Romans 5:5 states, *...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*, which makes it possible for us to love more like God loves.

This verse highlights the confusion that exists between the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Godhead and the gift or power of the Holy Spirit. That confusion has its origin in the Greek texts of the New Testament.

Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). The initial relationship of proximity to God founded upon baptism with water now takes on a new quality in the childhood in God.

Through the rebirth out of water and Spirit, the believer is moreover called by God to become a firstling. With respect to the kingdom of God, the rebirth has both a present and future aspect (John 3:5).

The present effect of the rebirth - the childhood in God<sup>9</sup> - represents, as it were, an anticipation of being a firstling and part of the “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). In this sense, “childhood in God” thus refers to that condition of a human being before God which is characterized by having received all the sacraments, believing in the proper proclamation of the gospel, and aligning one’s life by the return of Christ.

The “Spirit of adoption” whose activity begins to unfold within a human being through Holy Sealing, confidently addresses God as “Abba, Father!”

The Holy Spirit testifies to those who have received Him that they are children of God (Romans 8:16). This occurs in the conscience (*see 4.2.1.3*) but also through the word proclaimed in the divine service.

At Holy Sealing the believer surrenders himself to the triune God, and God accepts him as His property. This means that the reborn believer becomes an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. He is called to suffer with Christ, and receives the promise that he will be glorified with Christ (Romans 8:15-18).

The surrender to Christ begun in Holy Baptism with water is completed in Holy Sealing. The believer thereby receives that spiritual revival which will lead him into fellowship with the returning Lord (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). Accordingly the believer now belongs to that group within the church whom God prepares through Apostles for the return of Christ and the marriage in heaven (Revelation 19:7-8).

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In those texts, sometimes the article “the” precedes “Holy Spirit,” and sometimes it does not. But remembering how the sacraments are conveyed gives us some guidance. The Holy Spirit, as part of the triune God, is ***the Giver of the sacrament***. He cannot be both the Giver of the gift and the gift Himself. The receiving of the Holy Spirit by the sacrament of Holy Sealing does not abolish the difference between God and man – we haven’t become God by virtue of having received the sacrament of Holy Sealing. The Holy Spirit, as a Person of the Trinity, does not become the “property” of man. Rather, the Spirit of God now dwells in man; in this sense, man “has” a portion of God’s Spirit. As Apostle Paul wrote, “*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Spirit of God dwells in us so that the new creation within us, resulting from our rebirth of water and spirit, can kill off our old nature and transform into the nature of Christ.

The Holy Spirit comes to give us strength and power to overcome. *...we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us* (Romans 8:37). The work of the Holy

Spirit complements the work of Christ. Christ came and strengthens us through His atoning death. The Spirit empowers us to live the life that Christ has called us to.

Taken from June 2019 SMG session – based off of *The Holy Spirit and its diverse ways of activity* – NAKI 2006

## **9 ...childhood in God.**

All human beings are, in a sense, children of God because they have been created by Him and have the opportunity to call Him Father (Acts 17:26-29). He made human beings in His image, to be in relationship with Him, and He loves and desires all to be saved. It is to this relationship that He calls us. However, not all people accept His call, and that is where the phrase ***childhood in God*** comes in. Perhaps a better way to think of it would be ***a citizen*** or heir who is adopted into His kingdom or house (Romans 8:14-17). The relationship of childhood in God is defined as recognizing God’s call, and our choosing to accept it, receiving the sacraments, believing in the gospel, and aligning our lives to the return of Christ.

Taken from *New Doctrinal Statements of the Church* – DSG Workshop / Buffalo 2012

The enduring presence of Holy Spirit within a human being also has profound and noticeable effects on one's earthly life: if the sealed believer gives the Holy Spirit room to unfold, divine virtues will develop,<sup>10</sup> which Apostle Paul figuratively describes as "fruit" of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Holy Spirit will then reveal Himself as a light that provides the believer with insight into divine interrelationships. He is a Comforter and Helper. The Holy Spirit also admonishes the sealed believer, sharpens his conscience, and provides orientation on the way to the goal of faith.

### SUMMARY

The prerequisites for receiving Holy Sealing are baptism with water, belief in

the triune God, as well as belief in the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ. (8.3.7)

The rebirth out of water and the Spirit, which was begun by God in Holy Baptism with water, is completed through Holy Sealing. The new creation that comes about through the rebirth is a reference to the sanctification and renewal that occurs through God, the Holy Spirit. (8.3.8)

At Holy Sealing a human being is enduringly filled with the Holy Spirit. (8.3.9)

The effect of the rebirth out of water and the Spirit is childhood in God as well as the calling to be a firstling. If the sealed soul gives the Holy Spirit room to unfold, divine virtues will develop. (8.3.9)

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## 10 Profound and noticeable effects...

Chief Apostle Schneider, Saskatoon, Canada, March 2017: "If we believe that it is enough to be baptized and sealed, remain faithful and come to every divine service, **we are in danger**. Our faith is not a tradition," the Chief Apostle Schneider said. "It is not a matter of repeating the same things over and over again. We must also develop and change and become a new creation."

Chief Apostle Schneider continued, "Being sealed is not enough to enter into the kingdom of God. It is only the beginning of a development." This means that after our baptism of water and Spirit, there is still growth that needs to happen so that we can develop according to the image of Jesus Christ. This journey of development, our discipleship in Jesus, is lifelong.

We are required to have a thirst for the knowledge found in the gospel, and then to share that knowledge with others. Our lives are to be evidence of the gospel and the effect that God's grace has on us.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In addition to the fruit of the Spirit, we also often talk about the spiritual gifts that we are given by God through the Spirit. These gifts are given to the church of Christ to empower the people of God to carry out the Great Commission, namely, to bear witness to Christ to the ends of the earth. Holy Sealing also calls us to a future work – to share the gospel in the kingdom of peace. (*See our Spiritual Gift Small Group resources for more information.*)

## THOUGHTS ON THE SACRAMENTS FOR THE DEPARTED

Our firm conviction is that God's love is so overpowering that death and the grave mean nothing to it. They aren't a barrier or a restriction to God's love at all. Because God's love overcomes death and the grave, God's will to save all souls still prevails. We believe that souls who have left their body still have the opportunity to progress in their relationship with Jesus Christ. They still have the opportunity to believe in Him, and see in Him their Savior and Redeemer. In 1 John 5:5 it states: *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

The Lord Jesus talked about His sheep; all those that want to come to Him. Jesus says in the Gospel of John 10:10, *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.* What is abundant life? An abundant life is not necessarily a healthy life; an abundant life is not necessarily a life filled with riches. An abundant life is a life that is filled with blessing and blessing is what draws us closer to God. An abundant life simply is eternal fellowship with God. That's what the Lord Jesus wants to give us and the invisible congregation.

How does abundant life come? Abundant life comes in part through the sacraments; the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the sacrament of Holy Sealing, and the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Lord Jesus Christ does not give up on any soul, neither does His Father, and neither does the Holy Spirit.

Beyond the grave and beyond death the Lord pursues the soul. Like He went into the mountain top, He goes into the realm to look for those souls because He loves them. He wants all souls to be saved. All souls really belong to Him because He created them. He wants them to come to Him.

We believe that souls who have been in the divine services, who have heard the word of God,

and have been touched by the word, now some of them want to come and receive the sacrament of baptism. The sacraments are not figurative and they are not ritualistic. They are real, they are God's "yes" to man. In the sacrament of Holy Baptism there is a new relationship established between the soul and God. The soul acknowledges their belief in the triune God. They see the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Redeemer. They come into a new relationship with Him. They die from their old way of living and they pursue the life of discipleship with Jesus Christ. That is what the sacrament of Holy Baptism is about. Death to sin and now they change; they seek to change their nature to a nature filled with a desire to live and believe and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe today some souls will come and they will receive that gift of Holy Baptism with water.

Other souls come having already received the gift of the sacrament of Holy Baptism and have entered into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. They now want to deepen and further their relationship and they seek the sacrament of Holy Sealing. They seek the spirit of God which is poured out into their soul when the Lord shares a part of His nature with them, so they can love the way the Lord Jesus loves. Those souls today will receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing. They will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Some who have received the sacrament of Holy Baptism and some who have received both the sacrament of baptism and sealing, they will come. They will come to the table that the Lord Jesus has prepared and they will have fellowship with Him, and they will have fellowship with us. They will remember, not only what the Lord Jesus said and did, but that He has promised to come and give them the ultimate abundant life, eternal fellowship with Him. They come to have fellowship with us believers, those who want the Lord to rule



and control their life, the ones that are dedicated to changing and becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, just like we dedicate ourselves to that very proposition.

Our Service for the Departed is nothing more than that. It's not a desire to know what goes on in the realms of the beyond and it's not a desire to contact souls in the beyond. Our Service for the Departed is simply an outreach from heaven to share the sacraments with those whose bodies have been separated from soul and spirit. The sole motivation for giving those sacraments is the love of God.

Taken from July 2016, Service for the Departed, Billings, MT – AP Buehner preparation for the Sacraments /See CNAC 12.1.13

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR HOLY SEALING FOR ADULTS

It is most important to meet with the member(s) to be sealed well in advance, and discuss the following points. After your discussion, be sure to walk through the steps of the liturgy (included below) and placement of the sacrament in the divine service so they are comfortable with what will take place.

### For an adult sealing:

1. **The term "sealing"**: in the ancient world, a seal was a symbol of ownership, authenticity, and authority (for example, a king's seal on a document). In the same way, the gift of the Spirit seals the believer, for God gives His Spirit to those who are His. This idea of God knowing you and calling you His is also tied to your name being written in the Book of Life. Revelation says *there shall by no means enter [the New Jerusalem]...only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life* (Revelation 21:27). This **seal** is the assurance that you belong to God, and He will always receive and accept you. It is an affirmation that Jesus Christ wants your salvation (see verses below from Ephesians).
2. With the sacrament of Holy Sealing, you will also receive (Ephesians 1:11-14):
  - a. A **guarantee** that as long as you remain in an active and close relationship with God, He will provide all you need to enter His kingdom, despite the weaknesses that exist in the visible (earthly) church.
  - b. A **promise** that you will experience the resurrection of your body and enter the kingdom of God, which gives hope and assurance for the future.
  - c. A **pledge** that you can already today receive part of your heavenly inheritance in experiencing a foretaste of the kingdom by going deeper into the knowledge of your Father in the divine word, feeling His presence in the sacraments, and growing in unity in the fellowship of the congregation. You have been made a citizen or heir who is adopted into His kingdom (Romans 8:14-17)
  - d. A **calling** to praise and proclaim Jesus Christ to those around you and profess His gospel and His return.

3. **God shares His nature with you** in the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is not the Person of the Trinity, but rather God's power, life, and love. Through this gift, the Holy Spirit gives you the strength to overcome sin, to continue growing into the new creature that was started at your baptism, and to live the life that Christ has called you to. Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in life leads to the growth of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the development and use of your spiritual gifts.
4. Holy Sealing **completes the rebirth of water and spirit and establishes your childhood in God.** This means you have received the sacraments and believe and profess Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His return.
5. With Holy Sealing, you **receive the prerequisite for becoming a firstling,** meaning that you desire to go with Jesus Christ when He returns to the earth, and participate in spreading the gospel during the kingdom of peace.

We believe that Holy Sealing is dispensed by the apostle ministry (see CNAC 8.3.5 for biblical references). The act will take place after the absolution and the Eucharistic prayer, but prior to the consecration of Holy Communion. After a brief address, the apostle will ask you the following:

*Do you profess the New Apostolic faith as it comes to expression **in the creed**, and is it your wish to follow Jesus Christ and be prepared for His return through word and sacrament?*

You should be prepared to answer this question with a "Yes."

(If necessary, take the time to walk through the New Apostolic Church's creed, the 10 Articles of Faith, which can be found in the THRIVE booklet, to make sure they are comfortable with and believe all the statements. See CNAC 2.4 or the *We Believe* small group series for further information.)

The apostle dispenses the gift of the Holy Spirit by laying his hands on your head and praying: *In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Further words of blessing will follow. This act is closed with an "amen." The apostle will congratulate you and welcome you into the congregation. You can then take your seat, and you will receive Holy Communion with the congregation. Celebrating communion with the assembly of believers underlines the fellowship characteristic of Holy Communion.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR HOLY SEALING FOR CHILDREN

It is most important to meet with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child(ren) to be sealed well in advance, and discuss the following points. After your discussion, be sure to walk through the steps of the liturgy (included below) and placement of the sacrament in the divine service so they are comfortable with what will take place.

**For a child's sealing** (see also, points in adult sealing):

1. You recognize your child as a **gift from God**.
2. You are accepting the responsibility to **raise your child in the Christian faith, as expressed by the New Apostolic Church**, until the day of their confirmation when they profess their decision to renounce Satan and surrender to the triune God.
3. **God shares His nature with your child** in the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is not the Person of the Trinity, but rather God's power, life, and love. Through this gift, the Holy Spirit gives them the strength to overcome sin, to continue growing into the new creature that was started at their baptism, and to live the life that Christ has called them to. Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide your child in life leads to the growth of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the development and use of their spiritual gifts.
4. Holy Sealing **completes the rebirth of water and spirit and establishes their childhood in God**. This means they have received the sacraments, and you will strive to raise them to believe and profess Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His return.

We believe that Holy Sealing is dispensed by the apostle ministry (see CNAC 8.3.5 for biblical references). The act will take place after the absolution and the Eucharistic prayer, but prior to the consecration of Holy Communion. After a brief address, the apostle will ask you the following:

*Is it your wish to raise your child in the New Apostolic faith as it comes to expression **in the creed**, and to teach your child to remain faithful to the Lord and be prepared for His return through word and sacrament?*

You should be prepared to answer this question with a "Yes."

(If necessary, take the time to walk through the New Apostolic Church's creed with the parent(s), the 10 Articles of Faith, which can be found in the THRIVE booklet, to make sure they are comfortable with all the statements. See CNAC 2.4 or the *We Believe* small group series for further information.)

The apostle dispenses the gift of the Holy Spirit by laying his hands on your child's head and praying: *In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Further words of blessing will follow. This act is closed with an "amen." The apostle will congratulate you and welcome your child into the congregation. You can then take your seat, and you will receive Holy Communion with the congregation. Celebrating communion with the assembly of believers underlines the fellowship characteristic of Holy Communion.

### 12.1.11 Acts of blessing in the sequence of the divine service

The act of adopting<sup>1</sup> guests - who have received a properly administered baptism with water in another church - into the congregation is to be understood as an act of blessing.

In it, the individuals being adopted profess the New Apostolic faith, and they are granted admittance to regular participation in Holy Communion. The adoption is performed prior to the celebration of Holy Communion and in the name of the triune God.

## 1 What is an adoption and in what circumstances are they performed?

Adoption is an act of blessing in the divine service in which Christians from other denominations are welcomed into the New Apostolic Church, and profess their faith in front of the congregation. This should be done in the first weeks and months that a guest is regularly coming to the divine service, especially if they show interest in or are taking Holy Communion.

It is important that a guest who has been baptized in another church be adopted *before* Holy Sealing and even *before* they begin to regularly participate in the celebration of Holy Communion.

From our Catechism we understand that *those who have been baptized in the New Apostolic Church, those who have been sealed, and those who have been adopted into the congregation are entitled to regularly partake of Holy Communion. Properly baptized Christians may also have access to Holy Communion as guests* (Catechism Q&A - Question #513).

The sacrament of Holy Communion represents a fellowship and meal of profession. From our Catechism: *The profession of the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ is part of the fundamental profession of the Christian faith. This profession is re-*

*quired of all those who wish to partake of Holy Communion for salvation. Those who regularly partake of Holy Communion in the New Apostolic Church should be aware that they are thereby publicly professing their faith in the activity and authority of the apostles of Jesus at work today.*

Further, those who regularly partake of Holy Communion in any assembly of Christians are professing their belief in the doctrine of that Church. Therefore, when a guest shows interest in taking Holy Communion, a conversation is necessary to discuss what we believe. Even in the case of an unadopted guest who has been attending for years already, and receiving Holy Communion, it is thus necessary to speak with them regarding this understanding.

It is incumbent upon us to explain the value of adoption and its necessity for Holy Communion since in taking this sacrament, you are professing the faith of the New Apostolic Church. However, if the person does not wish to be adopted, they are nevertheless not to be denied Holy Communion during the divine service.

## THE ACT OF ADOPTION

Once it has been determined that the guest is ready to be adopted (a previous baptism has been confirmed), following the guidelines of the liturgy, a priestly minister can give the



blessing in a divine service scheduled and agreed upon with the family/individual. The adoption takes place after the Eucharistic prayer and can be introduced by a musical contribution.

**Some notes for the address:**

- You are reconfirming your belief in the triune God and renouncement of Satan
- We are welcoming you into our congregation, and you are committing to follow Jesus in this assembly of Christians.
- You agree to continue learning about our faith, and prepare for the second step of your rebirth in Christ – Holy Sealing.
- You want to celebrate Holy Communion with us and understand it is a profession of your belief in the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ.

**Follow the liturgy in regards to the vow, prayer, and act.**

**A new member welcome package and adoption certificate** can be requested from the Admin Office to give to them on the day of their adoption which includes a welcome package, a Bible, an Apocrypha, and a card that can be signed by the rector or a member that has been walking with them on this journey, along with a certificate of adoption. These items should be requested at least three (3) weeks prior to the service when the adoption will take place.



## Adoption into the congregation

**Note:** Before the act of adoption, preparatory talks should take place in which the New Apostolic Creed is discussed and explained (THRIVE booklet, or *The Basics* or *We believe* small group curriculum could be used in addition).

### ***Liturgical position***

The adoption takes place after the absolution and the Eucharistic prayer, and can be introduced with a musical contribution. If several acts are planned before Holy Communion, they are to be performed in the following order:

- Holy Baptism with water
- Adoption
- Holy Sealing
- Confirmation

### ***Execution***

As a rule, adoptions are performed by priestly ministers. The act takes place in front of the altar.

### ***Address***

(Children who assume responsibility for themselves can also be adopted. In this case, their legal guardians should have declared their consent in writing beforehand.)

The following content is recommended.

- Holy Baptism with water is the first and fundamental act of grace of God.
- All people who are baptized, who believe in Christ, and who profess Him as their Lord are part of the church of Christ.
- The prerequisites for adoption are faith and the declaration of belief that
  - Jesus Christ will return to take home His bride.
  - The apostles have been sent in order to prepare the bridal congregation for the return of Christ.
  - The gift of the Holy Spirit is received through Holy Sealing.
- The adoption gives the believer permanent access to Holy Communion.

### ***The adoption vow***

The officiant asks the congregation to rise. *“I now ask you before God and the congregation: Do you profess the New Apostolic faith, and is it your wish to follow Jesus Christ and be prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the word of God? Then vow this with a clear ‘Yes.’”*

### ***Prayer following the vow***

The prayer should contain the following elements:

- God has heard the vow of this brother/sister who has asked to be adopted into the congregation.
- the plea for God's blessing upon this vow.
- the plea for the strength and ability to keep this vow.

The prayer is concluded with "*Amen.*"

### ***Act of adoption***

The officiant carries out this act with the following words: "*In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I adopt you into the fellowship of profession and communion of the New Apostolic Church. You now have permanent access to Holy Communion and the blessings of the house of God.*"

Further blessings may also be expressed.

- May the triune God strengthen your faith and keep you in following Jesus Christ.
- May the blessing of God accompany you, and the peace of the Risen One be with you.

The act is concluded with "*Amen.*"

After the officiant has offered his congratulations to the adopted members, they return to their seats.

### ***Introduction of Holy Communion***

If no other acts or musical contributions are planned, the congregation remains standing, and the celebration of Holy Communion follows.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR ADOPTION

Prior to adoption a priestly minister should have one or more conversations with the person requesting to be adopted. If a guest has been attending services regularly, even if that person doesn't request it, after some weeks, a minister should actively make inquiries into their interest. Depending on their personal situation and their wishes, the preparatory meeting for the adoption can take place either in their home or in the church. Such appointments should not be made if pressed for time on account of an already scheduled adoption in the congregation. The candidates must be given sufficient time to make a firm decision and clarify their relationship with their previous denomination. Nevertheless, this act should happen early, once they understand the main tenants of our faith and desire to practice their Christianity in our assembly.

**Begin the conversation by explaining that this act is more than merely a formal admission into an organization. Those who are adopted into the congregation are expected to give a clear profession of the New Apostolic faith. It should become clear that a decisive step into a new assembly of Christians is being taken.** That is the reason for this conversation.

In a few appropriate opening words the minister can express his thanks for the opportunity to meet and for the guest's willingness to have this conversation. Then the minister should begin the meeting in prayer.

### **The following questions should be included in this discussion:**

1. Have you been baptized in the name of the triune God in another church?
  - a. Do you believe in the triune God?
  - b. Do you have any documentation of the baptism (perhaps a baptism certificate)?
  - c. If not, can the baptism be confirmed by the previously attended Church?
  - d. *If they are unsure that their previous baptism was performed with water and in the name of the triune God, then they should be baptized in our Church if they wish to celebrate Holy Communion with us.*
  
2. Do you want to be part of and practice your faith in this assembly of Christians?
  - a. *Walk them through the THRIVE booklet to understand our beliefs, Mission and Vision, Creed, and membership expectations.*

- b. Emphasize the importance of aligning their lives in accordance with the **gospel** of Jesus Christ, **offering** monetarily to support the Church in fulfilling its purposes and expressing their thanks to God, cultivating their relationship with God through attending the **divine services** to hear His word, and speaking with Him in frequent **prayer**.
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is active in our Church?
  - a. Are you prepared to daily follow Christ and encourage others to do the same?
  - b. Do you feel the love and support of the congregation? *Encourage them to join a small group, or engage in other activities in the congregation.*
4. Do you believe that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are present in our Holy Communion?
  - a. *Review what we believe about Holy Communion (Christ and His sacrifice are truly present, He shares His life with us, His body and blood are joined together with the bread and wine, and in the moments of communion we are closest to our Savior).*
  - b. *Holy Communion is a profession of the life, death, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. It is also a profession of belief in the apostle ministry to celebrate and repeat the communion that the Lord Jesus established in their circle.*
  - c. *People desiring to be adopted must come to the understanding that the New Apostolic Church is God's work of redemption, in which the bride of the Lord is prepared through apostles. We believe the apostle ministry:*
    - has been commissioned by Christ to work until His return (cf. Matthew 28:19).
    - is building the church of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10).
    - is the guarantor of the true proclamation of the gospel (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:5).
    - is active in the capacity of ambassadors for Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20).
    - is the ministry of the Spirit and of reconciliation (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:8, 5:18).

If the person agrees to these tenets, an adoption should be scheduled. The minister should also review with the guest what will be said during the act of adoption that will take place in the service, specifically the questions that will be asked of them:

*I now ask you before God and the congregation: Do you profess the New Apostolic faith, and is it your wish to follow Jesus Christ and be prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the word of God?*

You should be prepared to answer this question with a "Yes."

Reassure them that although this question asks if they profess the New Apostolic faith, it is understandable if they do not understand our beliefs completely at this point. There will be opportunities for them to learn and grow in this understanding (present the guest with a Catechism Q&A, or if they desire it, a full Catechism).

**The important point is that they want to walk on their journey of being a disciple of Jesus Christ in our church.** The adoption should be followed up with the opportunity for them to learn more about our New Apostolic faith using the THRIVE or *We Believe* small group study, and for them to discuss the possibility of being sealed in the future.

The second part of the question leads to a discussion of *the rebirth out of water and the Holy Spirit*.

We should discuss our view of Holy Baptism and familiarize the person with it. Guests who would like to be adopted or baptized should come to understand that we believe the rebirth out of water and the Spirit is ultimately necessary in order to partake in the salvation offered by Christ. Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus that one must be born again out of water and Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God (cf. John 3:1-5). In our Church, this rebirth of water and Spirit takes place in two different sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing. It is the duty of all ministers to nurture the souls who have been adopted and prepare them for Holy Sealing.

***In the event that Holy Baptism has to be performed*** - please see the document pertaining to the points that need to be addressed in a preparatory meeting for Holy Baptism.

Taken from Special DSG, July 2009 / Taken from Special DSG, January 2009

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A **new member welcome package and adoption certificate** can be requested from the Admin Office to give to them on the day of their adoption which includes a welcome package, a Bible, an Apocrypha and a card that can be signed by the rector or a member that has been walking with them on this journey, along with a certificate of adoption. These items should be requested **at least three (3) weeks prior** to the service when the adoption will take place.

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