



FROM THE *Pastor's Desk*



Dear Friends in Christ,

One of the things I truly enjoy about being a pastor is teaching that first Communion class to children around the age of ten. It is a real delight to explain to them what a precious gift Communion is. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of confusion and controversy among Christians about Communion. Many Christians have tried to turn Communion into a work that we do to merit grace or to make ourselves more spiritual.

But Lutherans have been insistent that Communion is a gift of the Gospel and not a work of the Law. As Mark 10:45 says, Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to give his life as a gift to us, a gift that gives us forgiveness and worth and justification. Communion is the way that we come to personally receive that gift. When we take the bread as the Body of Christ and the cup as the Blood of Christ, we are receiving the gift that Jesus gave us in his death on the cross. We are accepting the ransom payment.

That is why I always tell those children, that when you receive the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ, it is NEVER appropriate to say "thank you" to the pastor or the Communion assistant. They didn't die for you. They are just doing what Jesus called them to do. If you want to say "thank you," be sure you say, "Thank you, Jesus." He is the one who gave his life for you. He is the one who is giving you his Body and Blood.

Or you may also say, "Amen," which means "So be it" or "Yah, sure you betcha" or "This is most certainly true." That is the traditional response to receiving the gifts of Jesus in Communion. Another response would be to say, "Hallelujah," which means "Praise be to God." If you truly believe you are receiving the gifts of Jesus, you should say something, whether, it is "Amen," or "Hallelujah," or "Thanks be to God," or "Thank you, Jesus." Just don't thank me. I am just doing my job.

Yours in Christ, Phil Nielsen