



Holy Communion
Սուրբ Հաղորդութիւն

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“Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves.” (John 6:53)

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Introduction

Holy communion is the seal of the new covenant, the union with the true body and blood of Christ, the remission of sins, the promise of eternal life, and this is a continuous process. It is done forever and ever in the kingdom of heaven by the hosts of heavenly angels surrounding the Lamb of God. It is something that they participate in eternally, but we require preparation to come to it. We must turn from worldly cares and pursuits and make sure that we are of clean body, mind, and spirit. This change of mind comes about through a confession of our sins and a confession of our faith in which we proclaim the suffering, death, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and remember him until he comes again.

The True Body and Blood of Christ

Christ said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5). When we go inside the Church or when we consider ourselves as members of the Body of Christ, we “abide in him.” When we put the Word of God into our minds and hearts and when we partake of his Body and Blood, then “he abides in us.”

Matthew — New Covenant, Remission of Sins

According to the Gospel of Matthew, “As they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is My body. And He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink all of it. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt 26:26-28). Jesus gives his body and blood as a seal of the new covenant, shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark — New Covenant, Poured out for Many

Mark gives almost the same account saying, “As they ate, Jesus took a loaf and blessed and broke it, and He gave to them and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And taking the cup, giving thanks, He gave to them. And they all drank out of it. And He said to them, This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mk 14:22-24). Jesus gives his body and blood as a seal of the new covenant which is for many.

Luke — New Covenant, Poured out for Many, Remember Me

Luke's account is again very similar saying, "He took bread and gave thanks, and He broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of Me. In the same way He took the cup, after having dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you" (Lk 22:19-20). However he tells the disciples "this do in remembrance of Me," which is a clear ordination of the apostles to imitate Jesus by continuing this sacrament in their communities and ordaining more apostles to do the same.

John — Living Food, Eternal Life, Union with God

John's gospel, especially chapter 6, is replete with references to Jesus being the bread of life. In reference to Exodus 16:15ff, Jesus says, "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he shall live forever. And truly the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Then the Jews argued with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus says to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. Whoever partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him" (John 6:51-56).

Paul — Do this in remembrance of me

Apostle Paul proclaims, "The Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; And giving thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also, after supping, saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; as often as you drink it, do this in remembrance of Me'" (1 Cor 11:23-25). In other words, when we "eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we proclaim His death, confess his resurrection, and remember Him until He comes." (1 Cor 11:26 and Holy Badarak).

Eternal, Heavenly Mystery

Have you ever wondered why we can enter the church whenever we want, light candles, read prayers, and miraculously God is present? Is God a genie that we can pull out of a hat? How is he present whenever we want? One answer lies in the Apostolic commissioning wherein Jesus says, "Truly, I say

to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:18-20). This revelation is an indication that God is always present.¹ More answers to the question are found in the first hymn of the Divine Liturgy or Soorp Badarak.

Eternal, Heavenly, Continuous Badarak

The profound song Deep Mystery Խորհորդ Խորհիւ² tells us that the Divine Liturgy is without beginning աւսկիզբն and without ending աւհաս.³ It has always been and always will be. It is infinite as if outside time itself.

We celebrate a mystery that is already being celebrated by the heavenly powers. The Պատարագ or Divine Liturgy is the court of holiness and dwelling of angels յարկ սրբութան եւ բնակարան հրեշտակաց. As we read in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4, the six-winged Seraphim covered with eyes without and within⁴ are singing in eternity, and we are joining them in spiritual song.

The church is filled with the heavenly host. The Badarak tells us that, “The angelic orders, O God, fill your church,” “Հրեշտակային կարգաւորութեամբ լցեր Աստուած զՔն սուրբ զեկեղեցի.” We pray that, “Today together with the heavenly powers we celebrate your resurrection,” “Այսօր ընդ զօրս երկնից տօնէմք զքն յարութիւնդ.”

The entire heavenly host is before the throne of God, “Հազարք հազարաց հրեշտակապետք կան առաջի Քն.” The heavenly host is focused on God. Jesus taught us that heaven and earth reflect one another. He said, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and “Whatsoever sins you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever sins you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.”⁵ Therefore, if “myriads of myriads of angels worship you Lord,” “բիրք բիրոց հրեշտակք պաշտեն զՔեզ Տէր,” then what should we here on earth be doing? We should be worshipping Him—every hour, minute, second.

¹We are the ones that are intermittent.

²Խորհորդ Խորհիւ was written by Խաչատուր Տարնաւաղի as an acrostic of his own name. Each verse begins successively with the letters Խ-Ս-Չ-Ա-Տ-Ո-Ի-Ը.

³The dictionary translates աւհաս as “inscrutable,” “inaccessible,” “unattainable,” or “unreachable;” in other words, “I cannot comprehend the Badarak.” However, the word also means, “not having matured,” or “not having arrived.” This latter definition expresses the infinity of the Badarak (1 Th 5:17, Ep 6:18, 2 Ti 1:3).

⁴Being covered with eyes means they are highly-intelligent, conscious, and self-aware. Unlike us with our two eyes, they are content to praise God eternally saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Hosts; Heaven and earth are full of Your Holy Glory!” How is it that we tire more easily than they?

⁵When ordaining the apostles, the first bishops (Mt 18:18, Jn 20:23).

Preparation is Required

If we are to come into unity with our creator and savior, we must be prepared. You may say, “I am not holy,” or “I am not prepared.” However, God requires that you be holy, for He is holy. As the Է says, “I am your God; therefore consecrate yourselves, and be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44). «Ես եմ Տէր Աստուածը. ուստի սրբեցէք անձերնիդ ու սուրբ եղէ՛ք, վասն զի ես սուրբ եմ» (Ղեւ 11.44):

You shall be holy for I am holy

Our teacher the Apostle Peter refers to this scripture in his universal epistle where he says, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:14-16). «Հնազանդ զաւակներու պէս, ո՛չ թէ ձեր սոգիտութեան ասեճնուան ցանկութիւններովը վարուելով, Հապա ձեզ կանչող Սուրբին պէս դուք ալ սուրբ եղէք ձեր բոլոր վարմունքներուն մէջ: Վասն զի գրուած է. Սո՛ւրբ եղէք, քանզի ես սուրբ եմ» (Ա. Պետրոս 1.14-16):

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

John the Baptist used these words (Mt 3:2) to let people know that Jesus was coming to the world. We should remember them before having the Word of God come into our minds by reading the Bible or having the Body and Blood of the Son come into our bodies by partaking in Holy Communion.

In order to participate in union with the body of Christ, I should examine myself. I should repent of my sins, reconcile with my neighbor, stop doing my sins, confess before a priest of God, and receive reconciliation from the Church before entering into union with the body of Christ. I should be of clean body, mind, and spirit. It is critical for me to realize that I am a sinner because, “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6), «Եթէ ըսենք թէ Անոր հետ հաղորդակից ենք ու խաւարի մէջ պտըտինք, սուտ կը խօսինք եւ ճշմարտութիւնը չենք ըսեր» (Ա. Յոհ 1.6), and “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9), «Եթէ ըսենք թէ. «Մենք մեղք մը չունինք», ինքզինքնիս կը խաբենք ու մեր մէջ ճշմարտութիւն չկայ: Եթէ խոստովանինք մեղքերնիս, հաւատարիմ ու արդար է անիկա մեր մեղքերուն թողութիւն տալու եւ մեզ ամէն անիրաւութենէ սրբելու» (Ա. Յոհ 1.8-9):

Consequences

If we are not prepared, we will be subject to *κρίμα*, դատաստան, condemnation, judgment, դատապարտութիւն (1 Cor 11:29).

The Word of God describes those who share in communion in an unworthy manner as guilty of the true Body and true Blood. People tend to believe they need expend no effort to come to God. However, Apostle Paul says that, “Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself; thus let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor 11:27-30). Ուստի ով որ այս հացը ուտէ կամ Տէրոջը գաւաթը խմէ անարժանաբար, պարտական պիտի ըլլայ Տէրոջը մարմնին եւ արիւնին: Ուրեմս թող մարդ իր անձը փորձէ ու այսպէս այն հացէն ուտէ եւ այն գաւաթէն խմէ: Վասն զի ան որ անարժանաբար կ’ուտէ ու կը խմէ, իր անձին դատապարտութիւնը կ’ուտէ ու կը խմէ, վասն զի Տէրոջը մարմնին իմաստը չորոշէր: Ասոր համար ձեր մէջ շատ հիւանդներ ու ցաւազարներ կան եւ շատեր ալ կը ննջեն (Ա. Կոր 11.27-30):

Conclusion

Holy Communion represents the union of man with the Body and Blood of Christ. But what fellowship can light have with darkness or what partnership can sin have with righteousness? Therefore, we must prepare ourselves through repentance to enter into this sacrament and receive this grace. How often should we partake? The heavenly hosts are around the throne of God partaking continuously. Christ calls us on earth to be a reflection of heaven. How often should we pray? We should turn from our worldly cares and carnal lusts and pray as often as we can. For “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death [and confess his resurrection and remember him] until he comes.” (1 Cor 11:26). «Որովհետեւ քանի անգամ որ այս հացը ուտէք ու այս գաւաթը խմէք, Տիրոջ մահը պիտի պատմէք, [իր յարութիւնը պիտի խոստովանէք, եւ պիտի յիշէք իրեն]՝ մինչեւ ինքը գայ» (Ա. Կոր 11.26):