



THE JAGGED WORD

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON

JW / April 6, 2021 / Dennis Matyas

The Triumph of the Common Cup



I came to communion late in the game. Oh, I took bread and wine for several years, but I mean actual communion. Around age ten or eleven, I went to a class at the church my family attended to learn about communion. The only thing I remember about the class was watching a video about forgiveness, then getting instructed by the pastor on how to hold my hands and where to walk when the time came.

Up the aisle. At the rail. A torn piece of pita bread. A shot of Manischewitz. Walk to the left, follow the stained glass. Behind the pews. Find your row. Pray by yourself.

I remember enjoying communion, knowing it was important somehow, but by the time I was in high school I thought its importance was primarily in the memorial of Jesus' death. I do not recall ever hearing that the bread and wine were the actual body and blood of Christ, and the "it's between you and Jesus" measure of faith that failed to discern the body was pounded into my head and heart from a very early age. The

19ineties were a golden age of self-expression, and you should let each to his own whilst Nirvana plays in the background.

So when I joined a hip X-er non-denom church in the city, it never once struck me as odd that they didn't have communion on a regular basis. Naturally when they did it was applied as a memorial, and up for grabs on an individual level. One day they had a big meal in the back (a "love feast") and while everyone was filling their plates, they placed a carafe of grape juice and an obnoxiously large loaf of bread on a bar table up front for anyone who wanted "real communion." My small group Bible study went up together, ripped off some hunks, dipped them in the juice, ate, then stood there in silence until it felt like enough time passed. Another time they passed out fun-sized Snickers on the way out because (no, I'm not making this up) "Jesus is full of nougaty goodness." Insert laugh track.

Then came my sacramental awakening. Thank God for my receptivity to the Lutheran Confessions, and the calm patience of the religion department of Concordia, Ann Arbor. Wow. Not only is it the true body and blood of our Lord, but "discerning the body" includes doctrinal fellowship and what Paul calls "no division." Wow. "Thou knowest all my griefs and fears, Thy grace abused, my misspent years. Yet now to Thee, for cleansing tears, Christ crucified, I come." Why did I ever call it Communion when I never understood its *communal* nature? Better late than never, I guess.

Fast forward a couple decades, and our congregation's reaction to an epidemic included *increasing* the frequency of the Lord's Supper to maintain our community—sans the common cup. In addition to regular worship, for eleven months you could enter the narthex on a Sunday afternoon and find me administering the body and blood of Christ, mask and gloves donned, to those who were uncomfortable around crowds. Even through the greatest, most Satanic public division I've known in my lifetime, the blood of Christ kept us united (well, those of us who actually took it ... cf. 1 Cor 11:19). And since the efficacy and unity of the Sacrament is not contingent on the container, I honestly didn't give the common cup a second thought. I knew it would be back someday, and besides that I had bigger hills to die on while the world ripped itself

id half over a virus that needed its own marketing campaign to convince everyone how serious it was.

Finally, on Easter Sunday, there it was: the common cup. Resurrected from its protective case. Tucked nicely next to the stacks of individual cups. Hidden slyly under its shroud.

I'd forgotten how beautiful it was.

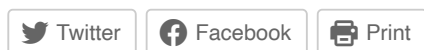
With as many difference as we have—personalities, sensibilities, opinions on non-essentials—the cup itself that holds the blood of Christ is a symbol of our unity. Even if you prefer the individual cups, you cannot ignore the liturgical beauty of the common cup. So many saints drinking the risen Savior's blood. So many lives united in confession and faith. So many lips touching the same silver. The gates of hell itself cannot rend asunder the Church of Jesus Christ, let alone whatever it was that kept the cup locked up for a year.

So in defiance of disunity, in mockery of death, in remembrance of the One who drank the cup of judgment for our sakes, I lifted this beautiful grail-shaped beacon as high as I could:

"The peace of the Lord be with you always!"



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Debby on April 15, 2021 at 7:05 am [Reply](#)

Thank you...I needed to hear this. Blessings to you!

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