

# A Statement on Internet Communion

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The International Lutheran Council expresses deep concern over the practice of internet communion, by which we mean the speaking of the words of institution over the absent elements of bread and wine, by a pastor, via the internet, for the benefit of a communicant absent by distance from the pastor and the assembled congregation. We are also troubled by the practice of an individual Christian speaking the words of institution simultaneously over the elements while the pastor is viewed and or heard speaking the words of institution over the internet. We encourage our member church bodies to take up this matter and reject these practices.

Though this matter raises many questions, such practices are fundamentally at odds with Christ's own words of institution: "And as they were eating, He took bread, and after

blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured for many'" (Mark 14:22-24; cf. Matthew 26:26-28 and Luke 22:17-20).

The Apostle Paul transmits this same teaching in 1 Corinthians 11, and further states: "When you come together to eat, wait for one another" (1 Corinthians 11:33).

Finally, the Formula of Concord (FC SD VII 79-87a) states:

Now, in the administration of the Holy Supper the words of institution are to be publicly spoken or sung before the congregation distinctly and clearly and should in no way be

omitted [and this for very many and the most important reasons. First,] in order that obedience may be rendered to the command of Christ: This do [that therefore should not be omitted which Christ Himself did in the Holy Supper], and [secondly] that the faith of the hearers concerning the nature and fruit of this Sacrament (concerning the presence of the body and blood of Christ, concerning the forgiveness of sins, and all benefits which have been purchased by the death and shedding of the blood of Christ, and are bestowed upon us in Christ's testament) may be excited, strengthened, and confirmed by Christ's Word, and [besides] that the elements of bread and wine may be consecrated or blessed for this holy use, in order that the body and blood of Christ may therewith be administered to us to be eaten and to be drunk, as Paul declares [ 1 Cor 10:16 ]: The cup of blessing which we bless, which indeed occurs in no other way than through the repetition and recitation of the words of institution.

However, this blessing, or the recitation of the words of institution of Christ alone does not make a sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as it was instituted by Christ, is not observed (as when the consecrated bread is not distributed, received, and partaken of, but is enclosed, sacrificed, or carried about), but the command of Christ, This do (which embraces the entire action or administration in this Sacrament, that in an assembly of Christians bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, drunk, and the Lord's death is shown forth at the same time) must be

observed unseparated and inviolate, as also St. Paul places before our eyes the entire action of the breaking of bread or of distribution and reception, 1 Cor. 10:16.

[Let us now come also to the second point, of which mention was made a little before.] To preserve this true Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Supper, and to avoid and abolish manifold idolatrous abuses and perversions of this testament, the following useful rule and standard has been derived from the words of institution: *Nihil habet rationem sacramenti extra usum a Christo institutum* ("Nothing has the nature of a sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ") or *extra actionem divinitus institutam* ("apart from the action divinely instituted"). That is: If the institution of Christ be not observed as He appointed it, there is no sacrament. This is by no means to be rejected, but can and should be urged and maintained with profit in the Church of God.

And the use or action here does not mean chiefly faith, neither the oral participation only, but the entire external, visible action of the Lord's Supper instituted by Christ, [to this indeed is required] the consecration, or words of institution, the distribution and reception, or oral partaking [manducation] of the consecrated bread and wine, [likewise the partaking] of the body and blood of Christ.

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