Greetings, DGCC Family.

I’d like to take a break this week from our study of the books Bible (next week we will look at the Gospel of John) and talk about Communion, which we will be celebrating this coming Sunday, November 6. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to church that day in order to celebrate this Sacrament.

In our tradition, we celebrate two Sacraments: The Lord’s Supper (Communion) and baptism. The reason we recognize these two acts as Sacraments is because these are the two the Lord Himself performed.

The Last Supper, or Communion, is mentioned in all four of the Gospels as well as in the writings of Paul. The roots of Communion date back to the Exodus, when God provided manna from heaven in order that the Israelites would not go hungry as they wandered in the wilderness. This is how Jesus first describes it in the Gospel of John, chapter 6:

“Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum” (vs. 53-59).

Clearly, this is a radical statement that would have caused much discussion in its day (as it sometimes does now). As He so often did, Jesus is speaking here in metaphor. For example, the Greek used here for “drink” is πίνω. It does not necessarily mean literally to physically drink, but instead means to receive something into your soul that nourishes it and refreshes it and leads it to eternal life. When we figuratively drink the blood of Christ, that is, when we receive into our souls the truth of His sacrifice, His body broken and His blood shed, our souls are instilled with the promise of eternal life made possible by that sacrifice.

Again, I look forward to seeing you all on Sunday, when we will renew our souls together as the family of God when we gather in the Father’s House for the Lord’s Supper.

Tomorrow: My first Communion.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 1

Happy November, everyone.

Like most kids growing up Catholic, I made my First Communion as a young boy in the second grade. While I don’t agree with the Catholic theology of Communion (called “transubstantiation, meaning that the “host,” i.e., the wafer, becomes the actual body of Christ, and the wine becomes the actual blood of Christ), nonetheless, I appreciate that we were taught to approach Communion with reverence and sanctity.

To begin with, technically, we were supposed to have made confession of our sins to a priest the day before in order to receive Communion on Sundays, and to say our prayers of penance. I mean, my sins as a ten-year-old boy usually amounted to such high crimes as punching my twin brother every chance I got and sneaking off the dreaded canned asparagus to our family dog under the table.

Once we made our confession, we had to say the prayers of penance our priest gave us. Five “Our Fathers,” Five “Hail Marys,” and so on. Then we were ready.

Sunday morning would come, and at the given moment in the Mass, the priest would call the congregation forward and we would take turns kneeling before the railing in front of the altar. The priest was the only one allowed to touch the “host,” and only with his thumb and forefinger, which had been specially consecrated. He would then come by, and as you were kneeling, you would stick out your tongue and he would lay the wafer on your tongue while an altar boy held a plate under your tongue lest the host should somehow accidentally fall off your tongue (this actually happened once to a girl who was kneeling next to me and we all thought for sure that the floor would open up and take her straight to, well, you know).

You were not allowed to chew the Eucharist but were supposed to let it dissolve as you went back to your pew and kneeled while the rest of the church was finished. All in all, it was quite the ordeal, and nothing really like that first Communion, which started like this:

“When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:14-16).

Jesus “reclines” at the table with His friends. He is “eager” to share the meal with them. No pomp or ceremony to overshadow the beauty and the reverence of the moment. And with it, a promise: to eat of it again, all of us, but this time with Jesus Himself, when He returns and “it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.”

Tomorrow: A call to remember.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 2

Grace and peace to you this day.

As Jesus gathered His friends the disciples about Him for that Last Supper before His death, He did so as both fully human and fully divine. As such, He intimately understood human nature and the human condition, including our tendency to forget things. That’s why, when He gathered the disciples together that Thursday evening, this is what He said:

“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Remember, as we said on Monday, that Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). In the days of Jesus, bread was a primary source of food. It was eaten morning, noon, and night and did, in fact, sustain earthly, physical life. Here, at the last supper, Jesus takes the metaphor to its conclusion and states that He is the bread of eternal life. And, lest we forget, whenever we celebrate the Lord’s supper, we do so for a specific reason: in remembrance of the sacrifice He made for us in order that we are granted, by grace alone, that eternal life.

On Sunday we will do just that. We won’t recline on a mat on the floor as Jesus and His disciples did, but we will gather as friends, as the children of God, as the Father’s family. We will eat a piece of bread that is symbolic of the body of our Savior, a body broken, as predicted in the Prophets, for you, and for me, so that we can live with our Savior in eternity.

You’re invited. Not by me, but by the One we are called to remember. I hope to see you there.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
Greetings, my friends.

As many of you may know, one of my favorite Old Testament verses is from the book of Jeremiah the prophet. It goes like this:

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

God loves us so much that He is willing to start over. For those of you who are American history students, FDR had “The New Deal.” That is essentially what God is saying here. “I’m going to start over. My love for my people will overcome their transgressions. I will write a new covenant, a new agreement, a new deal. This time I will write it not on stone tablets, but on the very hearts of the people. And they will be my people, and I will be their God.”

What an awesome promise. Six hundred years later, that prophecy was fulfilled by a baby born in a manger, the Son of Mary, the Son of Joseph, the Son of God, the Son of Man. This is how He Himself described it at The Last Supper:

“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).

God’s new covenant is written on our hearts with the blood of Jesus, “poured out” of His body as a sacrifice for you and me. God so loved the world, that this was His way of reconciling us once, completely, and perfectly, with the blood of Jesus shed that day on a rocky hill called Calvary. A promise written on the hearts of humankind…on yours, and on mine.

On Sunday, the Sabbath day, when we remember this promise, we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of the One who made that sacrifice. Looking forward to seeing you then.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 4

Happy Friday, everyone. I most recently heard this sung a few years ago by the choir at the Taiwanese Community Church. It was a full choir and pipe organ. Absolutely beautiful. Turn up the volume and enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXdDi5lfddM

IHS,

Pastor Lou