

A Treatise Concerning the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and Concerning the Brotherhoods

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1. Like the sacrament of holy baptism, the holy sacrament of the altar, or of the holy and true body of Christ, has three parts which it is necessary for us to know. The first is the sacrament, or sign, the second is the significance of this sacrament, the third is the faith required by both of these; the three parts which must be found in every sacrament. The sacrament must be external and visible, and have some material form; as the water of baptism is used by immersion or by pouring. For the sacrament, or sign, must be the significance must be internal and spiritual, within the spirit of man; faith must apply and use both these.

2. The sacrament, or outward sign, is in the form of bread and wine, just as baptism has as its sign water; although the sign is not simply the form of bread and wine, but the use of the bread and wine in eating and drinking, just received, or must at least be desired, if it is to work a blessing. Although at present the two kinds are not given the people daily, as of old, nor is this necessary, — yet the priesthood partakes of it daily in the sight of the people, and it is enough that the people desire it daily and receive one kind at the proper time, as the Christian Church ordains and offers.

3. I deem it well, however, that the Church in a general council should again decree that all persons, as well as the priests, be given both kinds. Not that one kind were insufficient, since indeed the simple desire of faith suffices, as St. Augustine says: “Why preparest thou stomach and teeth? Only believe and thou hast already partaken of the sacrament”; but because it would be meet and right that the form, or sign, of the sacrament be given not in part only, but in its entirety, just as I have said of baptism

9 that it were more fitting to immerse than to pour the water, for the sake of the completeness and perfection of the sign. For this sacrament signifies the complete union and the undivided fellowship of the saints, as we shall see, and this is poorly and unfittingly indicated by only one part of the sacrament. Nor is there as great a danger in the use of the cup as is supposed, since the people seldom go to this sacrament, and Christ was well aware of all future dangers, and yet saw fit to institute both kinds for the use of all His Christians.

4. The significance or purpose of this sacrament is the fellowship of all saints, whence it derives its common name *synaxis* or *communio*, that is, fellowship; and *communicare* means to take part in this fellowship, or as we say, to go to the sacrament, because Christ and all saints are one spiritual body, just as the inhabitants of a city are one community and body, each citizen being a member of the other and a member of the entire city. All the saints, therefore, are members of Christ and of the Church, which is a spiritual and eternal city of God, and whoever is taken into this city is said to be received into the community of saints, and to be incorporated into Christ’s spiritual body and made a member of Him. On the other hand, *excommunicare* means to put out of the community and to sever a member from this body, and that is called in our language “putting one under the ban”; yet there is a difference, as I shall show in the following treatise, concerning the ban.

To receive the bread and wine of this sacrament, then, is nothing else than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incorporation with Christ and all saints. As though a citizen were given a sign, a document, or some other token as a proof that he is a citizen of the city, a member of the community. Even so St. Paul says: "We are all one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of one bread and of one cup."

5. This fellowship is of such a nature that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and His saints are imparted and communicated to him who receives this sacrament; again, all his sufferings and sins are communicated to them, and thus love engenders love and unites all. To carry out our homely figure: it is like a city where every citizen shares with all the others the name, honor, freedom, trade, customs, usages, help, support, protection and the like, of that city, and on the other hand shares all the danger of fire and flood, enemies and death, losses, imposts and the like. For he who would have part in the common profits must also share in the losses, and ever recompense love with love. Here we see that whoever wrongs a citizen wrongs the entire city and all the citizens; whoever benefits one deserves favor and thanks from all the others. So, too, in our natural body, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:25, where this sacrament is given a spiritual explanation: the members have a care one for another; whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; whether one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. It is apparent then that if any one's foot hurts him, nay, even the smallest toe, the eye at once looks toward it, the fingers grasp it, the face frowns, the whole body bends to it, and all are concerned with this small member; on the other hand, if it is cared for, all the other members rejoice. This figure must be well weighed if one wishes to understand this sacrament; for the Scriptures employ it for the sake of the unlearned.

6. In this sacrament, therefore, God Himself gives through the priest a sure sign to man, to show that, in like manner, he shall be united with Christ and His saints and have all things in common with them; that Christ's sufferings and life shall be his own, together with the lives and sufferings of all the saints, so that whoever does him an injury does injury to Christ and all the saints, as He says by the prophet, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye"; on the other hand, whoever does him a kindness does it to Christ and all His saints, as He says, "What ye have done unto one of the least of My brethren, that ye have done unto Me." Again, he must be willing to share all the burdens and misfortunes of Christ and His saints, their sorrow and joy. These two sides of the fellowship we shall consider more fully.

7. Now, adversity assails us in more than one form. There is, in the first place, the sin remaining in our flesh after baptism, the inclination to anger, hatred, pride and unchastity, and so forth, which assails us as long as we live. Against this we not only need the help of the congregation and of Christ, in order that they may fight with us against it, but it is also necessary that Christ and His saints intercede for us before God, that sin may not be accounted to us according to God's strict judgment. Therefore, in order to give us strength and courage against these sins, God gives us this sacrament, as though He said: "Behold, many kinds of sin assail thee; take this sign by which I give thee My pledge that sin assails not only thee but My Son Christ, and all His saints in heaven and on earth. Therefore, be bold and confident; thou tighest not alone; great help and support are round about thee." King David, also, says of this bread: "The bread strengtheneth man's heart"; and the Scriptures in other places characterize this sacrament as a strengthening. So in Acts 9:19 it is written of St. Paul that he was baptized and when he had received meat, he was strengthened. In the second place, the evil spirit assails us unceasingly with many sins and afflictions. In the third place, the world is full of wickedness and entices and persecutes us and is altogether bad. Finally, our own guilty conscience

assails us with our past sins, with the fear of death, and with the pains of hell. All of these afflictions make us weary and weaken us, unless we seek and find strength in this fellowship.

8. If any one be in despair, if he be distressed by his sinful conscience or terrified by death, or have any other burden on his heart, and desire to be rid of them all, let him go joyfully to the sacrament of the altar and lay down his grief in the midst of the congregation and seek help from the entire company of the spiritual body; just as when a citizen whose property has suffered injury or misfortune at the hands of his enemies makes complaint to his town council and fellow citizens and asks them for help. Therefore, the immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this sacrament, that we may there lay down all misery and tribulation and put it on the congregation, and especially on Christ, and may joyfully strengthen and comfort ourselves and say: "Though I am a sinner and have fallen, though this or that misfortune has befallen me, I will go to the sacrament to receive a sign from God that I have on my side Christ's righteousness, life and sufferings, with all holy angels and all the blessed in heaven, and all pious men on earth. If I die, I am not alone in death; if I suffer, they suffer with me. I have shared all my misfortune with Christ and the saints, since I have a sure sign of their love toward me." Lo, this is the benefit to be derived from this sacrament, this is the use we should make of it; then the heart cannot but rejoice and be comforted.

9. When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn also share the misfortunes of the congregation, as was said. But what are these? Christ in heaven and the angels together with all the saints have no misfortunes of their own, save when injury is done to the truth and to God's Word; yea, as we said, every bane and blessing of all the saints on earth affects them. There your heart must go out in love and devotion and learn that this sacrament is a sacrament of love, and that love and service are given you and you again must render love and service to Christ and His needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in His holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing: you must fight, work, pray, and, if you cannot do more, have heartfelt sympathy. That is bearing in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and His saints. Here the saying of Paul applies, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Lo, thus you uphold them all, thus they all again in turn uphold you, and all things are in common, both good and evil. Then all things become easy, and the evil spirit cannot prevail against such a community. When Christ instituted the sacrament He said: "This is My body which is given for you, this is My blood which is shed for you, as oft as ye do this, remember Me." As though He said: "I am the Head, I will first give Myself for you, will make your suffering and misfortune Mine own and bear it for you, that you in your turn may do the same for Me and for one another, have all things in common in Me and with Me, and let this sacrament be unto you a sure token of this all, that you may not forget Me, but daily call to mind and admonish one another by what I have done for you and still am doing, that you may be strengthened thereby, and also bear with one another."

10. This is also a reason, indeed the chief reason, why this sacrament is received many times, while baptism is administered but once. Baptism is the beginning and entrance to a new life, in the course of which boundless adversities assail us through sins and suffering, our own and those of others. The devil, the world and our own flesh and conscience, as was said, never cease to pursue us and oppress us. Therefore we need the strength, support and help of Christ and of His saints, which are pledged us in this sacrament as by a sure token, by which we are made one with them and are incorporated with them, and all our suffering is laid down in the midst of the congregation.

Therefore, this holy sacrament is of little or no benefit to those who have no misfortune or anxiety or do not feel their adversity. For it is given only to those who need strength and comfort, who have timid hearts and terrified consciences, and who are assailed by sin, or have even fallen into sin. What could it do for untroubled and falsely secure spirits, which neither need nor desire it? For the Mother of God says, "He filleth only the hungry, and comforteth them that are distressed."

11. That the disciples, therefore, might by all means be worthy and well prepared for this sacrament He first made them sorrowful, held before them His departure and death, by which they were exceeding troubled. And then He greatly terrified them when He said that one of them should betray Him. When they were thus full of sorrow and anxiety and were concerned about the sorrow and sin of betrayal, then they were worthy, and He gave them His holy Body to strengthen them. By which He teaches us that this sacrament is strength and comfort for those whom sin and evil trouble and distress; as St. Augustine also says, "This food demands only hungry souls and is shunned by none so greatly as by a sated soul which does not need it." Just as the Jews were required to eat the Passover with bitter herbs, standing and in haste, which also signifies that this sacrament demands souls that are desirous, needy and sorrowful. Now if one will make the afflictions of Christ and of all Christians his own, will defend the truth, oppose unrighteousness, help bear the need of the innocent and the sufferings of all Christians, he will find affliction and adversity enough, besides that which his evil nature, the world, the devil and sin daily inflict upon him. And it is God's will and purpose to set so many hounds upon us and drive us, and everywhere provide us bitter herbs, that we may long for this strength and take delight in the holy sacrament, and thus be worthy of it, that is, desire it.

12. It is His will, then, that we partake of it frequently, in order that we may remember Him and exercise ourselves in this fellowship according to His example. For if His example were no longer kept before us, the fellowship also would soon be forgotten. So we at present see to our sorrow that many masses are held and yet the Christian fellowship which should be preached, practiced and kept before us by Christ's example has quite perished; so that we hardly know what purpose this sacrament serves, or how it should be used, nay, with our masses we frequently destroy this fellowship and pervert everything. This is the fault of the preachers who do not preach the Gospel nor the sacraments, but their humanly devised fables concerning the many works to be done and the ways to live aright.

But in times past this sacrament was so properly used, and the people were taught to understand this fellowship so well, that they even gathered material food and goods in the church and there distributed them among those who were in need, as St. Paul writes. Of this we have a relic in the word "collect," which still remains in the mass, and means a general collection, just as a common fund is gathered to be given to the poor. That was the time when so many became martyrs and saints. There were fewer masses, but much strength and blessing resulted from the masses; Christians cared for one another, assisted one another, sympathized with one another, bore one another's burden and affliction. This has all disappeared, and there remain only the many masses and the many who receive this sacrament without in the least understanding or practicing what it signifies.

13. There are those, indeed, who would share the benefits but not the cost, that is, who gladly hear in this sacrament that the help, fellowship and assistance of all the saints are promised and given to them, but who, because they fear the world, are unwilling in their turn to contribute to this fellowship, to help the poor, to endure sins, to care for the sick, to suffer with the suffering, to

intercede for others, to defend the truth, to seek the reformation of the Church and of all Christians at the risk of life, property and honor. They are unwilling to suffer disfavor, harm, shame or death, although it is God's will that they be driven, for the sake of the truth and their neighbors, to desire the great grace and strength of this sacrament. They are self-seeking persons, whom this sacrament does not benefit. Just as we could not endure a citizen who wanted to be helped, protected and made free by the community, and yet in his turn would do nothing for it nor serve it. No, we on our part must make others' evil our own, if we desire Christ and His saints to make our evil their own; then will the fellowship be complete and justice be done to the sacrament. For the sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a man that he is made one with all others.

14. To symbolize this fellowship, God has appointed such signs of the sacrament as in every way serve this purpose and by their very form incite and move us to this fellowship. Just as the bread is made out of many grains which have been ground and mixed together, and out of the many bodies of grain there comes the one body of the bread, in which each grain loses its form and body and acquires the common body of the bread, and as the drops of wine losing their own form become the body of one wine: so should it be with us, and is, indeed, if we use this sacrament aright. Christ with all saints, by His love, takes upon Himself our form, fights with us against sin, death and all evil; this enkindles in us such love that we take His form, rely upon His righteousness, life and blessedness, and through the interchange of His blessings and our misfortunes are one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common. This is a great sacrament, says Paul, that Christ and the Church are one flesh and bone. Again, through this same love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christians our own, take upon ourselves their form and their necessity and make theirs all the good that is within our power, that they may enjoy it. That is a real fellowship, and that is the true significance of this sacrament. In this way we are changed into one another and are brought into fellowship with one another by love, without which there can be no such change.

15. He appointed this twofold form, bread and wine, rather than any other, as a further indication of the union and fellowship in this sacrament. For there is no more intimate, deep and inseparable union than the union of the food with him who partakes of it, since the food enters into and is assimilated with his very nature and becomes one with his being. Other unions, effected by means of nails, glue, cords and the like, do not make one indivisible substance of the objects joined together. In the sacrament we become united with Christ, and are made one body with all the saints, so that He concerns Himself for us, acts in our behalf, as though He were what we are what concerns us concerns Him as much as us, and even more than us; and, on the other hand, that we also concern ourselves for Him, as though we were what He is, as indeed we shall finally be, when we are conformed to His likeness, as St. John says, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him"; so complete is the fellowship of Christ and all the saints with us. Our sins assail Him, His righteousness protects us; for the union makes all things common, until at last He completely destroys sin in us and makes us like unto Himself, at the last day. In like manner, by the same love we are to be united with our neighbors, we in them and they in us.

16. In addition to this, He did not appoint this twofold form by itself, but gave His true natural flesh, in the bread, and His natural and true blood, in the wine, that He might give us a really perfect sacrament or sign. For just as the bread is changed into His true natural body and the wine into His true natural blood, so truly are we also drawn and changed into the spiritual body, that is, into the fellowship of Christ and all saints, and put by this sacrament in possession of all the virtues and

mercies of Christ and His saints; as was said above of a citizen who is taken and incorporated into the city and the protection and freedom of the entire community. Therefore He instituted not simply the one form, but the two separate forms, His flesh under the bread, His blood under the wine, to indicate that not only His life and good works, which are represented by His flesh and which He accomplished in His flesh, but also His passion and martyrdom, which are represented by His blood and in which He shed His blood, are all our own, and by being drawn into this fellowship we may use and enjoy them.

17. All this makes it dear that this holy sacrament is naught else than a divine sign, in which Christ and all saints are pledged, granted and imparted, with all their works, sufferings, merits, mercies and possessions, for the comfort and strengthening of all who are in anxiety and sorrow, and are persecuted by the devil, sin, the world, the flesh and every evil; and that to receive the sacrament is nothing else than to desire all this and firmly to believe that it shall be done.

There follows the third part of the sacrament, that is faith, on which all depends. For it is not enough to know what the sacrament is and signifies. It is not enough that you know it is a fellowship and a gracious exchange or blending of our sin and suffering with the righteousness of Christ and His saints; you must also desire it and firmly believe that you have received it. Here the devil and our own nature wage their fiercest fight, that faith may by no means stand firm. There are those who practice their arts and subtleties to such an extent that they ask where the bread remains when it is changed into Christ's flesh, and the wine when it is changed into His blood; also in what manner the whole Christ, His flesh and His blood, can be comprehended in so small a portion of bread and wine. What does it matter? It is enough to know that it is a divine sign, in which Christ's flesh and blood are truly present — how and where, we leave to Him.

18. See to it that you exercise and strengthen your faith, so that when you are sorrowful or your sins afflict you and you go to the sacrament or hear mass, you do so with a hearty desire for this sacrament and for what it means, and doubt not that you have what the sacrament signifies, that is, that you are certain Christ and all His saints come to you bringing all their virtues, sufferings and mercies, to live, work, suffer and die with you, and be wholly yours, to have all things in common with you. If you will exercise and strengthen this faith, you will experience what a rich and joyous wedding-supper and festival your God has prepared upon the altar for you. Then you will understand what the great feast of King Ahasuerus signifies, you will see what that wedding is for which God has slain His oxen and fatlings, as it is written in the Gospel, and your heart will grow right free and confident, strong and courageous, against all enemies. For who will fear any calamity if he is sure that Christ and all His saints are with Him and share all things, evil or good, in common with him? So we read that the disciples of Christ broke this bread and ate with great gladness of heart. Since, then, this work is so great that our insignificant souls dare not desire it, to say nothing of hoping for or expecting it, it is necessary and profitable to go often to the sacrament, or at least in the daily mass to exercise and strengthen this faith, on which all depends and for the sake of which it was instituted. For if you doubt you do God the greatest dishonor and regard Him as unfaithful and a liar. If you cannot believe, pray for faith, as was said above in the other treatise.

19. See to it also that you make yourself a fellow of every man and by no means exclude any one in hatred or anger; for this sacrament of fellowship, love and unity cannot tolerate discord and dissension. You must let the infirmities and needs of others burden your heart, as though they were your own, and offer them your strength, as though it were their own, as Christ does for you in the

sacrament. That is what we mean by being changed into one another through love, out of many particles becoming one bread and drink, giving up one's own form and taking one that belongs to all.

For this reason slanderers and those who wickedly judge and despise others cannot but receive death in the sacrament, as St. Paul writes. For they do not unto their neighbor what they seek from Christ and what the sacrament indicates; they wish them no good, have no sympathy with them, do not receive them as they desire to be received by Christ, and then fall into such blindness that they do not know what else to do in this sacrament except to fear and honor Christ in the sacrament with their prayers and devotion. When they have done this they think they have done their whole duty, although Christ has given His body for this purpose, that the significance of the sacrament, that is, fellowship and mutual love, may be put into practice, and His own natural body be less regarded than His spiritual body, which is the fellowship of His saints. What concerns Him most, especially in this sacrament, is that faith in the fellowship with Him and with His saints may be rightly exercised and become strong in us, and that we, in accordance with it, may rightly exercise our fellowship with one another. This purpose of Christ they do not perceive and, in their devoutness, they daily say and hear mass, and remain every day the same; nay, become worse daily, and mark it not.

Therefore take heed; it is more needful that you discern the spiritual than that you discern the natural body of Christ, and faith in the spiritual is more needful than faith in the natural. For the natural without the spiritual profiteth us nothing in this sacrament; a change must occur and manifest itself through love.

20. There are many who, regardless of this change of love and faith, rely upon the fact that the mass or the sacrament is, as they say, *opus gratum opere operato*, that is, a work which of itself pleases God, even though they who perform it do not please Him. From this they conclude that, however unworthily masses are said, it is none the less a good thing to have many masses, since the harm comes to those who say or use them unworthily. I grant every one his opinion, but such fables please me not. For, if you desire to speak thus, there is no creature nor work that does not of itself please God, as is written, "God saw all His works and they pleased Him." What good can result therefrom, if one misuse bread, wine, gold, and every good creature, though of themselves they are pleasing to God? Nay, condemnation is the result. So too, here: the more precious the sacrament, the greater the harm which comes upon the whole congregation from its misuse. For it was not instituted for its own sake, that it might please God, but for our sake, that we might use it rightly, exercise our faith by it, and by it become pleasing to God. If it is merely an *opus operatum*, it works only harm; it must become an *opus operantis*. Just as bread and wine work only harm if they are not used, no matter how much they please God of themselves; so it is not enough that the sacrament be prepared (that is, *opus operatum*), it must also be used in faith (that is, *opus operantis*). And we must take heed lest with such dangerous glosses our minds be turned away from the sacrament's power and virtue, and faith perish entirely through such false security in the outwardly completed sacrament.

All this results because they give heed in this sacrament to Christ's natural body more than to the fellowship, the spiritual body. Christ on the cross was also a completed work, which was well-pleasing to God; but the Jews unto this day have found it a stumbling block, for the reason that they did not make of it a work that must be used in faith. See to it, then, that the sacrament be for you an *opus operantis*, that is, a work that is made use of, and that it be well-pleasing to God, not because of what it is in itself, but because of your faith and your right use of it. The Word of God is also of itself pleasing to God, but it is harmful to me when it does not please God also within me. In short, such

expressions as *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* are nothing but useless words of men, more of a hindrance than a help. And who could tell all the abominable abuses and misbeliefs which daily multiply about this blessed sacrament, although some of them are so spiritual and holy that they might almost lead an angel astray? Briefly, whoever would understand the abuses need only keep before him the aforesaid use and faith of this sacrament; namely, that there must be a sorrowing, hungry soul, desiring heartily the love, help, and support of the entire communion of Christ and of all saints, doubting not that in faith it obtains them, and then, on the other hand, making itself one with everyone. Whoever does not thus direct and order the hearing or reading of masses and the reception of the sacrament, errs and does not use this sacrament to his salvation. For this reason also the world is overwhelmed with pestilences, wars and other horrible plagues, since with our many masses we only call upon us the more disfavor.

21. We see now how necessary this sacrament is for those who must face death, or other dangers of body and soul, since they are not left alone in them, but are strengthened in the communion of Christ and all saints. Therefore also Christ instituted it and gave it to His disciples in their extreme need and danger. Since we are all daily surrounded by all kinds of danger, and must at last die, we should humbly and heartily and with all our powers thank the God of all mercy for giving us a gracious sign, by which, if we hold fast thereto by faith, He leads and draws us through death and every danger to Himself, to Christ, and to all saints.

Therefore it is also profitable and necessary that the love and fellowship of Christ and all saints be hidden, invisible and spiritual, and that only a bodily, visible and outward sign of it be given us. For were this love, fellowship and help known to all, like the temporal fellowship of men, we should not be strengthened nor trained thereby to put our trust in the invisible and eternal things, or to desire them, but should much rather be trained to put our trust only in the temporal, visible things and to become so accustomed to them as to be unwilling to let them go and to follow God onward; we should thus be prevented from ever coming to Him, if we followed God only so far as visible and tangible things led us. For everything of time and sense must fall away, and we must learn to do without them, if we are to come to God.

Therefore the mass and this sacrament are a sign by which we train and accustom ourselves to let go all visible love, help, and comfort, and to trust in Christ and in the invisible love, help, and comfort of His saints. For death takes away everything visible, and separates us from men and temporal things; hence, to meet death, we must have the help of the invisible and eternal things; and these are indicated to us in the sacrament and sign, to which we cling by faith, until we attain to them also by sight.

Thus the sacrament is for us a ford, a bridge, a door, a ship, and a litter, in which and by which we pass from this world into eternal life. Therefore all depends on faith. He who does not believe is like one who must cross the sea, but is so timid that he does not trust the ship; and so he must remain and never be saved, because he does not embark and cross over. This is due to our dependence on the senses and to our untried faith which shrinks from the passage across the Jordan of death — the devil also cruelly helps toward this.

22. This was indicated of old in Joshua in. After the children of Israel had gone dry-shod through the Red Sea, a type of baptism, they went through Jordan in like manner; but the priests stood with the ark in Jordan, and the water below them flowed by, while that above them stood upon a heap, a type of this sacrament. The priests carry and uphold the ark in Jordan when in the hour of our death or

peril they preach and administer to us this sacrament, Christ, and the fellowship of all saints. If we believe, the waters below us depart, that is, the temporal, visible things harm us not, but flee from us. And those above us stand up high, as though they would overwhelm us; these are the horrors and apparitions of the other world, which at the hour of death terrify us. If, however, we pay no heed to them, and pass on with a firm faith, we shall enter into eternal life dry-shod and unharmed.

We have, therefore, two principal sacraments in the church, baptism and the bread. Baptism leads us into a new life on earth; the bread guides us through death into eternal life. And the two are typified by the Red Sea and the Jordan, and by the two lands, one beyond and one on this side the Jordan. Therefore our Lord said at the Last Supper: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." So entirely is this sacrament intended and ordained to strengthen us against death, and to give us entrance into eternal life.

Finally, the blessing of this sacrament is fellowship and love, by which we are strengthened against death and all evil. This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints, on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they and we are able; so that by this sacrament all self-seeking love is uprooted and gives place to love which seeks the common good of all, and through this mutual love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community, — that is the true union of Christian brethren. Now let us see how the pretentious brotherhoods, of which there are now so many, measure up to this and resemble it.

CONCERNING THE BROTHERHOODS.

1. First, let us consider the evil practices of the brotherhoods. One of these is their gluttony and drunkenness, — one or more masses are held, afterward the entire day and night, and other days besides, are given over to the devil, and they do only what displeases God. Such mad reveling has been introduced by the evil spirit, and is called a brotherhood, whereas it is rather a debauch and altogether a heathenish, nay, swinish mode of life. There would far better be no brotherhoods in the world than that such an abomination should be permitted. Temporal lords and cities should unite with the clergy in abolishing it. For God, the saints, and all Christians are greatly dishonored thereby, and the divine services and feast-days made a sport for the devil. Saints' days should be kept and hallowed with good works; and the brotherhood should also be a special treasury of good works; instead it has become a treasury of beer money. What have the names of Our Lady, of St. Anne, St. Sebastian, or other saints to do with your brotherhoods, in which you have nothing but gluttony, drunkenness, squandering of money, howling, yelling, chattering, danding and wasting of time? If a sow were made the patron saint of such a brotherhood she would not consent. Why then do they afflict the dear saints so sorely by taking their names in vain in such shameful practices and sins, and by dishonoring and blaspheming the brotherhoods named after them with such evil practices? Woe unto them who do and permit this!

2. If men desire to maintain a brotherhood, they should gather provisions, and feed and serve a tableful or two of poor people, for the sake of God; the day previous they should fast, and on the feast-day remain sober, and pass the time in prayer and other good works. Then God and His saints would be truly honored; this would lead to better conditions, and a good example would be given others. Or they should gather the money which they intended to squander for drink and form a common treasury, each trade by itself, so that needy fellow-workmen might be assisted, or be lent money, or a young couple of that trade might be fitted out respectably from the common treasury: these would be true works of brotherhood, which would make God and His saints look with pleasure upon the brotherhoods, of which they would then gladly be the patrons. But where they are unwilling to do this, and follow after the old mummery, I admonish that it be not done on the saints' days, nor in the name of the saints or of the brotherhood. Let them take some other weekday and leave off the names of the saints and of their brotherhoods, lest the saints at some time mark it with disapproval. Although there is no day which is not dishonored by such doings, at least the festivals and the names of the saints should be spared. For such brotherhoods call themselves brotherhoods of the saints while they do the work of the devil.

3. Another evil feature of the brotherhoods is of a spiritual nature; it is a false opinion of themselves, in that they think their brotherhood is to be a benefit to no one but to themselves, — to those who are members and are on the roll or contribute. This damnably wicked opinion is an even worse evil than the first, and is one of the reasons why God has brought it about that the brotherhoods are becoming such a mockery and blasphemy of God through gluttony, drunkenness and the like. For there they learn to seek their own good, to love themselves, to be faithful only to one another, to despise others, to think themselves better than others and presume to stand higher before God than others. And thus perishes the communion of saints, the Christian love, and the true brotherhood, established in the holy sacrament. Thus a selfish love grows in them; that is by these many external work-brotherhoods they oppose and destroy the one, inner, spiritual, essential, common brotherhood of all saints.

When God sees this perverted state of affairs, He perverts it still more, as is written in Psalm 18:26, "With the perverse thou wilt be perverted"; and He brings it to pass that they make themselves and their brotherhoods a mockery and a disgrace, and He casts them out from the common brotherhood of saints, which they oppose and do not make common cause with, into their brotherhood of gluttony, drunkenness and unchastity, so that they, who have neither sought nor thought of anything more than their own, may find their own; and then He blinds them that they do not recognize it as an abomination and disgrace, but adorn their unseemliness with the names of saints, as though they were doing right; beyond this He lets some fall into so deep an abyss that they openly boast and say whoever is in their brotherhood cannot be condemned, as though baptism and the sacrament, instituted by God Himself, were of less worth and were less certain than that which they have thought out with their darkened-minds. Therefore their God will dishonor and blind those who, with their mad conduct and the swinish practices of their brotherhoods, mock and blaspheme His feasts, His name, and His saints, to the injury of the common Christian brotherhood, which flowed from the wounds of Christ.

4. Therefore, for the right understanding and use of the brotherhoods, one must learn to distinguish rightly between brotherhoods. The first is the divine, the heavenly, the noblest, which surpasses all others, as gold surpasses copper or lead — the fellowship of all saints, of which we spoke above. In this we are all brothers and sisters, so closely united that a closer relationship cannot be conceived, for here we have one baptism, one Christ, one sacrament, one food, one Gospel, one faith, one Spirit, one spiritual body, and each is a member of the other; no other brotherhood is so close. For natural brothers are, to be sure, brothers of one flesh and blood, of one heritage and home, but they must separate and join themselves to others' blood and heritage. Organized brotherhoods have one roll, one mass, one kind of good works, one festival day, one treasury, and, as things are now, their common beer, common feast and common debauch, but none of these binds men so closely together as to produce one spirit, for that is done by Christ's brotherhood alone.

Since, then, the greater, broader and more embracing Christ's brotherhood is, the better it is, therefore all other brotherhoods should be so conducted as to keep this first and noblest brotherhood constantly before their eyes, to regard it alone as great, and with all their works to seek nothing for themselves, but do them for God's sake, to entreat God that He keep and prosper this Christian fellowship and brotherhood from day to day. Hence, when a brotherhood is formed, they should let it be seen that its members outstrip other persons in order to do Christianity some special service with their prayers, fastings, alms and good works, and not in order to seek selfish profit or reward nor to exclude others, but to serve as the free servants of the whole community of Christians.

If men had such a correct conception, God would restore good order, so that the brotherhoods might not be brought to shame by debauchery. Then God's blessing would follow, so that a general fund might be gathered, with which other men also might be given material aid; then the spiritual and bodily works of the brotherhoods would be done in their proper order. Whoever will not follow this method in his brotherhood I advise to flee from it and let the brotherhood alone; it will do him harm in body and soul.

But if you say, If the brotherhood is not to give me some special advantage, of what use is it to me? I answer: If you are seeking some special advantage, how can the brotherhood or sisterhood help you? Serve the community and other men by it, as is the nature of love, and you will have your reward for this love without any effort and desire on your part. But if you deem the service and

reward of love too small, it is evidence that yours is a perverted brotherhood. Love serves freely and for nothing, therefore God also gives again to it every blessing freely and for nothing.

Since, then, everything must be done in love, if it is to please God at all, the brotherhood must also be a brotherhood in love. It is the nature, however, of that which is done in love not to seek its own, nor its own profit, but that of others, and, above all, that of the community.

5. To return once more to the sacrament; since the Christian fellowship also is at present in a bad way, as never before, and daily grows worse, especially among the rulers, and all places are full of sin and shame, you should not consider how many masses are said, or how often the sacrament is celebrated, for this will make things worse rather than better, — but how much you and others increase in that which the sacrament signifies and in the faith it demands, — for therein alone lies improvement; and the more you find yourself being incorporated into Christ and into the fellowship of His saints, the better it is with you, — that is, if you find that you are becoming strong in the confidence of Christ and of His dear saints, and are certain that they love you and stand by you in all the trials of life and in death, and that you in turn take to heart the shortcomings and lapses of all Christians and of the whole Church, that your love goes out to everyone, and that you desire to help everyone, to hate no one, to suffer with all and pray for them: then will the work of the sacrament proceed aright, then you will often weep, lament and mourn for the wretched condition of Christendom to-day. If, however, you find no such confidence in Christ and His saints, and the needs of the Church and of every fellowman do not trouble or move you, then beware of all other good works, if in doing them you think you are godly and will be saved. Be assured they are only hypocrisy, sham and deceit, for they are without love and fellowship, and without these nothing is good. For the sum of it all is, *Plenitudo legis est dilectio*, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Amen