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Concept to The Restoring Dogmas

Jaba Tkemaladze
E-mail: jtkemaladze@longevity.ge
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Abstract

This article focuses on the slow and deliberate process of altering the dogmas established by Jesus Christ, using the example of the Holy Communion ritual. It argues that any deviation from the original practices instituted by Christ represents a clear and inexcusable error, both theologically and historically. The Eucharist, or Holy Communion, was established by Christ during the Last Supper as a sacred covenant, embodying divine grace and redemption. It was intended to remain unaltered—a perfect act of remembrance and spiritual communion with God.

However, over centuries, the simple, profound ritual instituted by Jesus has been subject to reinterpretation and modification. These changes, often driven by philosophical frameworks like Scholasticism or historical events such as the Reformation, have shifted the understanding of the Eucharist's essence. The introduction of doctrines like transubstantiation and the restructuring of the ritual reflect this gradual drift from Christ's original intent. The article examines this process, emphasizing how such changes undermine the purity and sanctity of the sacrament. By tracing these developments, it highlights the need to return to the unaltered foundations of the Eucharist, as instituted by Christ, preserving its true significance as a divine and immutable act of faith.

Keywords: Eucharist, Holy Communion, Jesus Christ, Transubstantiation, Theological Paradigms, Last Supper.

Protocol of the Eucharistic Ritual Established by Jesus Christ

What?

The Eucharistic ritual established by Jesus Christ includes the following actions:

- Before communion, Jesus dipped a piece of bread into wine and gave it to Judas.
- Then, Jesus blessed the bread, broke it, and distributed it to His disciples.

- After breaking the bread, Jesus took a cup of wine, diluted it with water, blessed it, and offered it to the disciples for everyone to drink from.

Where?

The Eucharistic ritual is conducted in a person's home, not in the house of God. This emphasizes the importance of closeness and community among people. The Eucharist was instituted by Jesus in the context of an ordinary human dinner with a teacher-leader, allowing it to be interpreted as an encounter between the Divine and the human in daily life. It also symbolizes that the Lord is present in the homes of His followers and in their everyday lives.

When?

The Eucharistic ritual is conducted on the evening of Thursday during the Jewish Passover, after dinner. This holds special significance as the evening meal shared by Jesus with His disciples was the Last Supper before His suffering. Evening is the time when Christ established a new covenant meant to be remembered and passed down through generations. The ritual takes place after dinner, further emphasizing its connection with the traditional Jewish Passover meal, during which Jesus instituted this significant rite.
The Eucharistic ritual, as established by Jesus Christ, involves specific actions: the breaking of bread (His body) and drinking from the cup (s His blood). This ritual is performed in a person's home, in the evening, after a meal, reflecting the importance of personal communion with God and His presence in every believer's life.

The Sequence and Nature of Steps Departing from the Ritual Established by Jesus Christ

The history of the Eucharistic rite undoubtedly begins with the Last Supper, celebrated by Christ the Savior in a spacious, decorated room in one of the houses of Jerusalem. During this supper, He instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, and the apostles were the first to partake of His most pure body and blood. What do the closest witnesses of this event, the holy evangelists, tell us about this first communion of the Holy Mysteries? They recount that, during the Paschal meal, the Savior, reclining, undoubtedly, at a low table, "took bread, and after giving thanks, broke it and, distributing it to the disciples, said: 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took the cup, and after giving thanks, gave it to them, saying: 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matt. 26:26–28; cf. Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25). From these brief yet entirely clear testimonies, it is not difficult to form an idea of the manner and form of communion that took place at the Last Supper.

It is certain, first of all, that the apostles received the body and blood of Christ under two distinct species: they first partook of the holy body, and then they proceeded to drink from the cup of the holy blood. Concerning the particular manner of receiving the Eucharistic bread, the evangelists' reference to its distribution (διάδωσις)—undoubtedly

by hand—leads one to think that its reception (ἐτάληψις) involved taking it into the hands (χειροφηψία) rather than directly into the mouth (στομαφηψία). One can also form an idea of the manner in which the apostles partook of the holiest blood. In the words of the evangelists Matthew and Mark, "He took the cup, and after giving thanks, gave it to them" (Ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς), the reference is not to administering the holy blood contained in the cup but simply to handing over the cup itself. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the apostles, having received the holy cup from the Savior's hands, partook of His blessed blood independently, each raising the cup to their lips with their own hands.

Such was the Eucharistic form and method of communion at the Last Supper. These practices undoubtedly served as the unshakable foundation for all subsequent communion practices. The entire subsequent history of the Eucharistic rite confirms this: despite its twenty centuries of evolution, there has never been a fundamental change or transformation of these forms; all the nuances and directions it has taken in its development have always been merely combinations of these forms to a greater or lesser degree.

Our task is to depict the ancient practice of communion as it developed from this foundation—not only in the strict ecclesiastical sense but also as a domestic and private practice widely used in antiquity—and then to outline the changes this rite underwent in its development until its form was finally established.

Let us first focus on the period of the apostles and their immediate successors, the apostolic fathers.

The practice of communion at this time is mentioned only sporadically and very briefly. This is likely because both the celebration of the Eucharist and the act of communion within it were still highly simple liturgical actions, with a liturgical context that was not yet fully developed. Nevertheless, based on the few references found in the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles of the Apostle Paul, and the writings of the apostolic fathers, we can form a more or less clear understanding of this practice.

From the Acts of the Apostles, we learn, first of all, that the entire Eucharistic rite, which included the consecration of the Eucharistic elements, their distribution to the faithful, and finally their consumption, was commonly referred to as the "breaking of bread." The early Christians, we read, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers," and "breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:42–46). Elsewhere, we read that "the believers in Troas gathered to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Clearly, breaking bread was so significant to the early Christians that they referred to the entire worship service, including communion, by its name.

However, the question arises: does this expression (breaking of bread) indicate that the early Christians partook only of the Eucharistic bread? Although the references in the Acts of the Apostles do not explicitly mention the cup of blessing, based on the Apostle Paul's clear testimonies, we can confidently assert that the faithful at that time received communion under both species. "The cup of blessing which we bless," asks the apostle in his epistle to the

Corinthians, "is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). Similar references can be found elsewhere, for example, in 1 Cor. 11:26–29. Without a doubt, the Apostle considered both the Eucharistic bread and the cup of blessing equally accessible to all the faithful (Silvester, Ep., Dogmatic Theology, Part 5, p. 427).

The term "breaking of bread" continued to be a technical term used pars pro toto to denote the entire Eucharistic service during the era of the apostolic fathers. This is supported by their writings. In one of the earliest Christian documents, we read: "On the Lord's Day, break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure." The same expression is found in Ignatius the God-Bearer, who, in his epistle to the Ephesians (ch. 20), commands them to engage frequently in the breaking of bread. However, even though it was commonly referred to as "breaking of bread"—a term that seems to emphasize the Eucharistic bread—communion continued to be administered under both species. This is evident from various passages in the writings of the apostolic fathers. Ignatius the God-Bearer writes in his epistle to the Romans (ch. 7): "I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life—which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And I desire the drink of God, His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life." Similarly, in his epistle to the Philadelphians (ch. 4), he writes: "Strive to partake of one Eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup in the unity of His blood." Thus, in the apostolic and post-apostolic eras, communion involved each believer partaking of a portion of the broken Eucharistic bread and a portion of the holy wine from the cup of blessing.

Some artistic monuments also attest to the existence of this form of communion during this time. For example, in the catacombs of St. Priscilla in Rome, there is a fresco called "The Breaking of Bread." Located in the chamber known as "Capella Greca" and dated to the first decade of the 2nd century, it depicts six participants reclining around a semicircular table, with a seventh figure, a bearded man, breaking bread. Near his feet is a cup, two plates (one with two fish and the other with five loaves), and seven baskets filled with bread. According to commentators Rossi and Wilpert, this fresco represents the breaking of Eucharistic bread during a worship gathering. The bearded man is identified as the leader of the gathering (προεστώς), who breaks the bread, and the cup depicted near the plate of fish is the Eucharistic chalice, the cup of blessing. This artwork provides strong evidence that Christians in the early 2nd century received communion under both species. It also gives us insight into the simple liturgical setting of the time. The Eucharist, and therefore communion, was typically celebrated in a modestly furnished upper room, with believers reclining around a semicircular table where the Eucharistic elements were consecrated, the bread was broken, and communion was administered.

As for the distribution and reception of the Eucharistic gifts by the early Christians, there is no direct evidence in the writings of the period. It is likely that the holy bread was distributed by the leader of the gathering. This conclusion is supported by the testimony of Ignatius the God-Bearer, who states in his epistle to the Smyrnaeans: "Without the bishop, let no one do anything

pertaining to the Church." If no liturgical act could occur without the bishop's participation, then the distribution of the consecrated bread, broken by the bishop, must have been his responsibility or that of someone he designated. Regarding the manner of receiving the Eucharistic bread and drinking from the Eucharistic cup, it is reasonable to think that it closely mirrored the method used at the Last Supper.

From the middle of the 2nd century, the practice of communion began to expand significantly. In addition to public church communion during liturgical assemblies, a distinct form of private communion emerged. A clear order for the reception of the Holy Mysteries by believers began to be established, with the church imposing specific requirements on the faithful. In summary, when presenting the material we have gathered—comprising testimonies from written and artistic monuments about this practice—it would be exceedingly difficult to maintain a strictly chronological order, i.e., examining the practice of each century separately and exploring all its various manifestations within that period. To avoid potential repetitions inherent in such a presentation, we will adhere to a thematic arrangement. All information about this practice will be divided into two sections.

In the first section, we will provide information about the practice of public communion, addressing questions such as the time, place, and order of communion, the individuals administering it, the external behavior of Christians before and during the reception of the Holy Mysteries, the formula pronounced during the distribution of the Holy Gifts, the singing of psalms, and, finally, the manner of receiving the Holy Mysteries. In the second section, we will examine the practice of private, domestic communion.

First, let us address the question of how often and on which specific days early Christians approached the Holy Mysteries. Written testimonies indicate that they communed at almost every liturgy. For example, the 9th Apostolic Canon excommunicates from church communion all those who, being present at the liturgy, without sufficient reason, left the assembly without partaking of communion. Therefore, numerous patristic testimonies also speak of the nearly daily practice of communion. Many Church Fathers, interpreting the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, understood the expression "our daily bread" in a spiritual sense, referring to the Body of Christ and pointing to the custom of Christians partaking of the Holy Mysteries daily. For instance, St. Cyprian states, "You call Christ our bread because He is the bread of those who touch His Body. We daily ask for this bread to be given to us, so that those of us who dwell in Christ and daily partake of the Eucharist as the food of salvation, if excluded from communion due to some grave sin and deprived of heavenly bread, may not be separated from the Body of Christ, who Himself declares for our instruction: 'I am the bread of life.'"

The 49th Canon of the Laodicean Council and Eusebius of Nicomedia, who lived shortly before this council, also testify to the nearly daily communion of Christians in the first half of the 4th century. However, by the late 4th and early 5th centuries, this custom began to decline, at least in the East. During the time of St. John Chrysostom, there were believers who partook of the Holy Mysteries infrequently, such as only on the feasts of Theophany and Easter. Decrying this

practice as superstition, Chrysostom exclaimed: "The daily sacrifice is offered in vain! We stand before the altar of the Lord in vain. No one partakes." Elsewhere, he observed, "Many commune once a year, others twice, and some a few times." Yet while the daily practice of communion in the East began to lose its former strength by the late 4th century, it continued in the West into the 5th century, albeit with noticeable decline. At least, this is evident from the testimonies of Western Church Fathers and teachers. Jerome, for instance, remarked, "I know that in Rome it is customary for believers to receive the Body of Christ at any time; I neither condemn nor approve this: let each be convinced in his own mind." Elsewhere, in response to Lucinius' question on whether one should receive the Eucharist daily, Jerome, who always advocated preserving Church traditions and ancestral customs, noted, "One can always partake of the Eucharist without condemnation and without reproach to the conscience." Blessed Augustine also wrote about the practice of communion in his time: "Some partake of the Body and Blood of Christ daily, while others do so on specific days." He further noted, "The sacrament of communion with the Body and Blood of Christ is prepared daily in some places, while in others it is prepared on certain days and received from the Lord's Table." St. Ambrose of Milan similarly referenced frequent communion, saying, "If (the Eucharistic) bread is offered daily, why do you partake of it only once a year? Receive every day what is for your salvation."

By the early 6th century, however, when frequent communion became burdensome for most Western Christians, conciliar decrees mandated communion only on specific days of the year. For example, the Council of Agde (506 AD) decreed (Canon 18): "Laypeople (saeculares) who do not receive the Holy Mysteries on the days of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost should not be considered orthodox or remain in communion with the Church." Similarly, the Third Council of Tours (813 AD) required believers to commune at least three times a year. This prescription was reiterated at the Council of Engham (1009 AD). Finally, the Fourth Lateran Council, under Pope Innocent III, decreed that believers should receive communion once a year.

We have examined one aspect of the question regarding the time of communion in the early Church; now let us turn to the other aspect to determine on which days of the week early Christians most frequently communed. Early Christian writings indicate that all believers considered it their duty to approach communion on "the Lord's Day" (Dies Dominicus). St. Justin Martyr wrote: "On the so-called Sunday, all believers living in cities or villages gather together. Here, the gifts over which thanksgiving prayers have been said are distributed, and all those present partake of them." Even after Justin's time, the Dies Dominicus remained the most beloved day for communion, as testified by the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, and other Fathers. This custom was still observed by most Christians in the late 4th century, as evidenced by the following words attributed to St. Ambrose: "Omnes christiani omni Dominica debent offerre et communicare" ("All Christians should offer and commune every Sunday"). At this time, Sunday even came to be called the "Day of Bread." References to regular Sunday communion are also found in the works of St. John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Augustine, and others. This practice continued for a long time, especially among monastics.

Some evidence suggests its existence even in the 7th century, as noted by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, who wrote about the Greeks: "The Greeks commune every Sunday, both clergy and laity; those who miss three Sundays are excommunicated." In the Western Church, however, he noted that only those who wished to commune did so on Sundays, while others were not excommunicated for abstaining. By the 9th century, according to Magnae, this custom had completely fallen out of use in the Western Church.

In addition to Sundays, early Christians also communed on other days. According to Tertullian, these included the station days: Wednesday and Friday. He stated, "Many believe that during daytime services on station days, one should not offer the bloodless sacrifice, arguing that communion interrupts and even nullifies the station. But does not such a person err in thinking that the Eucharist hinders rather than strengthens our duties?" Undoubtedly, only a portion of Christians refrained from communion on these days, while another portion partook of the Holy Mysteries on Wednesdays and Fridays. Similarly, Basil the Great affirmed that Wednesday and Friday were not only days of fasting but also days designated for communion: "We commune," he said, "four times a week: on the Lord's Day, on Wednesday, on Friday, and on Saturday." However, regarding the Church of Alexandria, the historian Socrates noted: "In Alexandria, on Wednesday and on the day called Friday (παρασκευή), Scriptures are read, and teachers explain them, followed by everything that occurs in assemblies, except for the performance of the Mysteries." He criticized this exception, as receiving the Eucharist on these days was the general custom of other churches.

Besides the aforementioned days, early Christians frequently communed on days dedicated to the memory of martyrs. St. Cyprian of Carthage stated, "We always, as you know, offer sacrifices for them whenever we annually commemorate the sufferings and days of the martyrs." St. John Chrysostom also clearly referenced this practice: "Look," he said, "how ridiculous it is that after such an assembly (in honor of the martyrs), after the night vigil, after listening to divine Scriptures, after partaking in the divine Mysteries, and after spiritual labor, men and women on those days are found in taverns." Basil the Great and Sidonius Apollinaris, Bishop of Clermont (late 5th century), also testified to communion on these days.

Thus, early Christians sanctified themselves by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ on Sundays, fasting days, Saturdays, and commemorations of martyrs.

Having explored the timing of communion among early Christians, we now turn to the question of where the Holy Gifts were distributed.

Initially, the designated place for the consecration of bread and wine brought by the faithful during prayer assemblies was the dining table (τράπεζα) where Christians reclined during the celebration of the Eucharist. However, by the second century, a special table (referred to as τράπεζα μυστηκή, ἁγία, πνευματική) was likely being used for this purpose. "If," as Augusti states, "there is no significant reason to doubt the tradition that recounts about the Apostle Philip that 'when priests and altars were established everywhere and constructed to replace sacrifices made at the altars of

demons, the holy celebration of the mystery began to be performed upon them,' then the existence of a dedicated Eucharistic table called θυσιαστήρια or altaria in the second century is beyond question." Around this Eucharistic table or altar, the faithful received the Holy Gifts in the early centuries. Siegel notes that "this was probably already common practice during the time of Justin Martyr."

Evidence from the 3rd century supports this custom, as reflected in a letter from Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, to Xystus, Bishop of Rome. It reveals that in the Alexandrian Church, women experiencing menstrual purification were forbidden to approach the altar (τῇ τραπέζῃ τῇ ἁγίῳ προεελθεῖν) and receive the Holy Mysteries there. This suggests that at other times, women, as well as men, received communion near the altar. However, starting from the mid-4th century, communicants were prohibited from approaching the altar. The 19th canon of the Laodicean Council states, "Only those sanctified (τοῖς ἱερατικοῖς) are allowed to enter the altar and partake there." To emphasize this rule, church buildings from the mid-4th century began incorporating railings or screens (cancelli, κιγκλίδες ἔμπροσθεν τῶν θυρῶν ἱστάμνοι) and curtains (καταπετάσματα), which separated the altar area from the central space of the church where worshippers gathered. From then on, laypeople began receiving the Holy Mysteries near these barriers.

An exception was made for emperors, who could receive communion within the altar area. The 69th canon of the Trullan Council states, "No one among the laity is permitted to enter the holy altar. However, according to ancient custom, this is not forbidden for the royal authority and dignity when they wish to offer gifts to the Creator." Receiving communion near the railings became standard practice in nearly all churches. In the African Church, for example, Augustine mentioned this practice, saying, "Those who know that I am aware of their sins should not approach communion lest they be cast out from the railings (ne de cancellis projiciantur)." An exception was made for newly baptized neophytes out of reverence for their recent spiritual rebirth. Augustine addressed them, saying, "I implore you in the name of Him who was invoked upon you and by this altar, to which you have just approached."

This practice was also adopted in some Western churches. Evidence from the Spanish Church can be found in the 17th canon of the 4th Council of Toledo (633), which states, "Priests and deacons should receive communion at the altar, clergy at the choir, and the laity behind the choir." In the Milanese Church, Bishop Ambrose, who held the altar in high regard, once barred Emperor Theodosius from entering it, saying, "Ἁλουργίς γάρ βασιλέας, οὐχ ἱερέας ποιεῖ" ("Purple robes make kings, not priests").

A different practice existed in the Gallican Church, where laymen and women received communion near the altar. This is evident from the 4th canon of the 2nd Council of Tours (567), which states that although laypeople should attend services in the area separated from the choir by a railing, they were to enter the sanctuary for prayer and communion according to ancient custom. Gregory of Tours, in his History of the Franks, recounts an incident in which a layman named Eulalius, excommunicated for patricide, was allowed to participate in

the Liturgy and later approach the altar for communion after pleading with the bishop.

As for the Roman Church, Chardon (in Bonac, Part I, Book 2, Chapter 17) reports that the ancient practice was as follows: “The celebrant of the Eucharist (as now) communicated before the altar, priests at the sides of the altar, deacons behind it, subdeacons and clergy at the entrance to the sanctuary or in the choir, and the rest of the faithful beyond the railing.” However, while receiving communion beyond the railing, early Roman Christians did so in their respective places rather than directly at the barrier.

By distinguishing clergy from laity and assigning designated places for receiving the Holy Mysteries, the Church also established an orderly sequence for communion. The Apostolic Constitutions specify, “Let the bishop receive communion first, followed by presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, readers, chanters, ascetics, deaconesses, virgins, widows, children, and then the rest of the people in order.” This sequence became common practice in both Eastern and Western Churches. Simeon of Thessalonica describes a similar order in the Greek Church of the 15th century, where “the Hierarch approaches first, followed by priests and deacons. After these, at the holy doors, the rest: subdeacons, readers, and chanters. Then those with a monastic rank partake, and lastly the laity, though not all equally.”

Although this order remained consistent over time, deviations occurred. For example, the Nicene Council condemned a practice where deacons received communion before bishops. Its 18th canon states, “It has come to light that some deacons partake of the Eucharist before bishops. This practice must cease, and deacons should know their rank, serving bishops and being subordinate to presbyters. Let them receive the Eucharist in order after presbyters.”

Another variation arose in the Syrian Church (7th century), where children stood before the sanctuary during the Liturgy and received communion immediately after the clergy.

Having explored the frequency, location, and sequence of communion in early Christianity, we now turn to the question of who distributed the Holy Mysteries. According to St. Justin Martyr, in his time, the Eucharistic Gifts were consecrated by the bishop, while their distribution was the duty of deacons. He writes in his Apology, “After the thanksgiving of the presider and the acclamation of the people, the deacons distribute the bread over which the thanksgiving was made, as well as the wine and water, to each of those present.”

By the 3rd century, however, the distribution of consecrated bread was typically performed by bishops or presbyters, while deacons were responsible for distributing the mixed Eucharistic wine. This distinction is evident in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian. The Apostolic Constitutions reinforce this practice: “The bishop should distribute the offering, and the deacon should hold the cup.”

When distributing the Holy Gifts, clergy pronounced specific formulas to which the faithful responded with “Amen.” Initially, as the Apostolic Constitutions indicate, these formulas were simple: “The Body of Christ” for the consecrated bread, and “The Blood

of Christ—the cup of life" for the Eucharistic wine. Later, particularly in the West, these formulas evolved into more elaborate blessings, such as "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul" or "The Body and Blood of Christ bring you remission of sins and eternal life."

Both in the early Church and later, communicants responded "Amen" after receiving the Holy Gifts, signifying their affirmation of faith. Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine of Hippo all attest to this ancient tradition, highlighting its enduring role in the Church's liturgical life.

During the communion of the Holy Mysteries, in the early Christian church, there was usually singing of psalms that most corresponded to the idea of the sacrament. For instance, in the Apostolic Constitutions, it is prescribed to sing Psalm 33, beginning with the words: "I will bless the Lord at all times." In this psalm, especially significant for the moment, are the words: "taste and see that the Lord is good." Cyril of Jerusalem also refers to the singing of this psalm, saying: "you hear the singer, with sweet singing, calling you to partake of the Holy Mysteries, with the words: 'taste and see that the Lord is good.'" We also find testimony about the singing of Psalm 33 in Jerome's writings: "Oh, if only we could," he exclaims, "receive the Eucharist without condemnation and reproach of conscience and listen to the singer proclaiming: 'taste and see that the Lord is good,' and together with him sing: 'my heart overflows with a goodly theme' (Psalm 44:1)." Finally, we find an indication of this singing in the Liturgy of the Apostle James. Instead of Psalm 33, in some churches, it was customary to sing the words from Psalm 133: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity." This is clearly attested to by Tertullian and St. Augustine. In the Alexandrian church, as evidenced by the ancient liturgy of the Gospel of Mark, during communion, the singing of Psalm 42:1 and the following was done: "As the deer pants for the streams of water." Finally, in the time of John Chrysostom, communion was accompanied by the singing of Psalm 144, specifically the 15th verse: "The eyes of all look to You, O Lord, and You give them their food in due season." However, in the ancient liturgy associated with his name, there is no indication of singing this psalm during communion.

Although Christ the Savior established the sacrament of the Eucharist in the evening, having given His Body and Blood to the apostles after the Passover meal, the Church, from the very beginning, considered it necessary, out of respect for the divine mysteries, to receive them before any other food. We first encounter a reference to this custom in Tertullian. Addressing a Christian woman married to a pagan, Tertullian reasons: "Will he (the pagan husband) not notice that you seem to partake of something secretly before supper? And when he learns that it is nothing else but bread, what will he think of you, in his ignorance?" A clear hint at the custom of fasting before receiving the Holy Mysteries can be found in St. Cyprian. "The Lord," he says in a letter to Cecilius, "did not bring the cup, mixed with wine, in the morning, but after supper. Should we, then, perform the Lord's sacrament after supper and offer the mixed cup to those who are to participate in the sacrament?" Christ was meant to offer the sacrifice at the end of the day in order to represent the west and the

evening of the world through the very time of the sacrifice. And we celebrate the Lord's resurrection in the morning." John Chrysostom also says: "And if you fast before communion, to make yourself worthy of it, after communion, when you should be strengthening your abstinence, you ruin everything." The same is testified to by St. Basil the Great (on fasting) and Gregory the Theologian. "Christ," says the latter, "mysteriously gives the disciples the Passover in the upper room, after supper, and a day before the Passion, and we perform it in the prayer houses before supper, and on Sundays."

At the beginning of the 5th century, according to Augustine, this custom had already become universal. "It pleased the Holy Spirit," he says, "that in honor of this sacrament no other food should enter the mouth of a Christian before the Lord's Body. This is why this practice is observed throughout the world." However, based on the testimony of Socrates Scholasticus (430), we must acknowledge that there were exceptions to the universal church practice as mentioned by St. Augustine. "The neighbors of the Alexandrians," writes this church historian, "the Egyptians and the inhabitants of Thebes, although they gather on Saturdays, do not receive the Mysteries as Christians generally do, but offer a sacrifice and partake of the mysteries only after they have been satisfied with various foods—around evening."

An exception to the universal church practice was also the widespread custom in certain churches of receiving the Holy Mysteries after supper on Great Thursday. This custom existed, for example, in the African churches. In the 50th rule of the Carthaginian Council, we read: "The holy sacrament of the altar is to be performed by people who have not eaten. This is an exception for only one day of the year, when the Lord's Supper is performed." There are some historical indications of the existence of this custom also in the Gallican Church. For instance, the 6th rule of the 2nd Mascon Synod (585), which, although forbidding the clergy from receiving the divine Mysteries after eating, made an exception for Great Thursday, following the example of the Carthaginian Council. This custom continued until the end of the 7th century, when it was finally abolished by the 6th Trullan Synod. "Following the apostolic and patristic traditions, we decree," say the Fathers of this Synod, "that fasting before communion is not to be dispensed with during Lent, in the Thursday of the last week, and that the whole of Lent should not be dishonored."

Now, let's move on to the question of the position of the body in which early Christians typically approached Holy Communion. "To this question," says Bingham, "it should be answered: sometimes they received Communion standing, sometimes on their knees, but they never received Communion sitting." The fact that believers in the early Church had the custom of receiving Communion standing is primarily indicated by the words from the Apostolic Constitutions, spoken by the deacon before the beginning of the liturgy of the faithful: "Let us stand, with fear and trembling, bringing offerings to the Lord." A number of testimonies from the writings of the Church Fathers also point to this practice of receiving Communion standing. For example, Dionysius of Alexandria, recounting the experience of a Christian who frequently approached Communion, "depicts him standing before

the table" (τραπέζῃ παραστάντα). Similarly, Cyril of Jerusalem, after offering advice on how to approach the reception of the Holy Body of Christ, continues with these words: "Approach also to the cup of the Blood; not stretching out your hands, but bowing down (κυπτων)." Likewise, John Chrysostom depicts both the priest and the people standing before the altar. "More terrifying than this altar or throne is the One before whom you stand, O layman," and a little further down: "Just as here the priest stands, calling upon the Holy Spirit, so you too call upon the Spirit, not with words, but with deeds." Finally, Blessed Augustine speaks of the same. "But has anyone ever heard any of the faithful, standing before an altar built even in honor and veneration of a holy martyr, say in their prayers: 'To you, Paul, or Peter, or Cyprian, I offer this sacrifice'?"

This practice of receiving Communion "standing," according to Bingham's observation, primarily occurred on days when prayers were offered standing in church; such days included the Lord's days and all the days of Pentecost. "On other days," Bingham says, "especially on days of kneeling in the church, another custom prevailed—the offering of prayers on the knees. One might think that this custom also extended to the reception of the Holy Mysteries, although there are no clear testimonies about this." A hint of this practice of receiving Holy Communion on the knees can be seen in the following words of Chrysostom: "Let us approach the Holy Mysteries with trembling, giving thanks, kneeling, confessing our sins, shedding tears," and so on. But while early Christians sometimes received Communion "standing" and sometimes on their knees, they never received the Holy Mysteries sitting. The writings of early Christian authors provide no indication of such a practice.

A deep sense of reverence for the Holy Mysteries prompted some early Christians, especially those in monastic life, to approach them "barefoot." However, this custom of removing shoes before Communion was local, existing only in some Western monasteries. Odon of Cluny attests to its existence.

Among all the questions we have outlined regarding early Church practices of Communion, we now turn to the method of receiving the Holy Mysteries. How did early Christians receive the Holy Body? Directly into the mouth, as is done today, or on the hands? What was the method of receiving the Holy Mysteries at the first supper, and most likely in the Apostolic age? Similarly, we need to point out the method by which early Christians received the Holy Blood.

We now turn to consider the ancient manner of Communion. Numerous testimonies from the Fathers and teachers of both Churches clearly testify that the Eucharistic bread was given to the leading Christians in their hands. The existence of such a practice is already mentioned by Clement of Alexandria. In his "Stromata," we read: "Having broken the Eucharist, according to the custom, some offer each member of the people to take a portion themselves, for each person is the best judge of whether to approach or refrain, based on their conscience." Undoubtedly, this refers to receiving the Holy Body in the hands. Tertullian, in his opposition to certain Christians who made idols and at the same time received the Eucharist, says: "Is it not bitter to see how a Christian, leaving the

idols for a time, comes to our church? How he from the workshop of the demon enters the house of God... He stretches out his hands to the Body of the Lord, hands that have recently formed the bodies of demons." And a little further down: "What hands deserve to be cut off, if not those which daily bring scandal to the Body of Christ?" A number of such references can also be found in the writings of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. "Before confessing one's sins, he says, confess your transgression... (Those who have fallen) violate His Body and His Blood, and thus, with their hands and mouths, they sin more against the Lord now than when they rejected Him." In the same work, we read: "The one lying threatens those standing, the wounded—those uninjured, and the sacrilegious one resents the priests of God for not immediately allowing him to receive the Body of the Lord with impure hands and drink the Blood of the Lord with defiled lips." Finally, in his letter (48) to the people of Fiva, we read: "Let us arm the right hand with the spiritual sword so that it may boldly cast off the vile sacrifices, so that remembering the Eucharist, in which the Body of the Lord is given, it may embrace Him when it receives from the Lord the reward of the heavenly crowns." A clear testimony of the practice of receiving the Eucharistic bread with the hands is also found in Dionysius of Alexandria, who recounts the following about himself: "I, says Dionysius, did not dare to do this (to re-baptize one who had received baptism from heretics), saying that I do not dare to prepare again one who had listened to the blessing of the gifts, approached the table, stretched out his hands to receive the holy food, took it, and for a long time partook of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." But the most detailed reference to this practice can be found in the writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "When approaching Communion," he says, "do not come with outstretched palms, but make your left hand a throne for the right, as one who wishes to receive the King, and, bending your palm, receive the Body of Christ." And Basil the Great notes: "In church, the priest gives the part, and the one receiving it holds it with full right, thus bringing it to the mouth with their own hand." Similarly, Gregory the Theologian sheds light on the existence of this practice with his remarks: "Julian, he notes, washes away the water of baptism with impure blood, substituting our sacred act with his filthy one, making purification over his hands to cleanse them from the bloodless sacrifice, by which we become participants with Christ in His sufferings and divinity." Numerous mentions of the ancient practice of receiving the Eucharistic bread with the hand are found in the homilies of Chrysostom. "When," he says in his 3rd Homily on Ephesians, "you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, you who dare to receive His Body with impure lips and hands... Tell me," he continues a little further down, "would you dare to approach the sacrifice with unwashed hands? I think not. On the contrary, you would rather decide not to approach at all than to approach with unclean hands." And in his 27th Homily on 1 Corinthians, we read: "Let each one keep their hand, tongue, and lips in purity, which have served as the threshold for the entrance of Christ." The same is attested in his 6th Homily against the Jews.

In reproaching the Christians who, during illness, sought healing from the Jews through the laying on of hands, he says: “How will you justify yourself before Christ? How will you beg Him? With what feeling will you approach the church afterward?

With what eyes will you look at the priest? With what hand will you touch the holy altar?" The same practice of receiving communion also prevailed in the Western Church, as evidenced by Saint Ambrose of Milan. In his admonition to Emperor Theodosius, he says: "With what eyes will you look at the temple of the Lord, the universal one? How will you stretch out your hands, from which the blood of the unjustly slain still drips? How will you receive with those hands the Most Holy Body of the Lord?" The Eucharistic bread was given to the faithful on their hands even in the fifth century. Blessed Theodoret says: "The Holy Apostle, in saying that one is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, implies that just as Judas betrayed Him and the Jews mocked Him, so they dishonor Him who receive His most holy Body with unclean hands and place it into defiled mouths." And Blessed Augustine asks: "In whose hands did you place the Eucharist?" Undoubtedly, he also alludes to the same practice of receiving the holy bread in the following words: "With what care we protect the Body of Christ and ensure that nothing from it falls from our hands to the ground, so we must take similar care that the Word of God, when we think or speak, does not perish from our hearts." The practice mentioned by the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Churches was common in the East even in later times. It is referred to in the Trullan Council of 692, specifically in Rule 101, which says: "If someone wishes to partake of the most pure Body during the liturgy and be united with it through communion, they should place their hands in the shape of a cross and then approach to receive the grace." The last reference to the ancient Eastern practice of receiving the Eucharistic bread in the hands comes from John of Damascus (8th century). In his "Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," he writes: "By folding the hands in the shape of a cross, we receive the Body of the Crucified." The ancient practice of communion was dominant not only in the Eastern Churches but also in the West during the 8th century. This is attested by the Venerable Bede (†735), who describes the death of the monk Celmon: "When Celmon felt the approach of death and wished to partake of the holy mysteries, they brought him the holy Eucharist; having received it with his hands, he communed and thus prepared for his end." Although the event described by Bede occurred at the end of the 7th century, according to Professor Petrovsky, it also holds significance for the early 8th century, "since Bede would have noted any changes in the practice of communion if they had been evident in his time." A later witness to the ancient practice is found in the statutes of Saint Boniface (†754). Since the Eucharist was only administered in the mouth to the sick, one can infer that the healthy received the Eucharist on their hands under Boniface. As we will see below, this same practice was followed by the Roman Church during later periods.

Thus, the practice of distributing the Eucharistic bread into the hands was common in both the Eastern and Western Churches for eight centuries.

To ensure there was no carelessness or neglect in this method of receiving the Eucharistic bread, the Church from the earliest times required the faithful to treat the act of receiving with great attention. Tertullian already says: "We take great care that nothing from our bread or cup falls to the ground." Origen remarks: "You, who are accustomed to being present at the divine mysteries, know what caution and

reverence you show when receiving the Body of the Lord, making every effort to ensure that nothing falls from it and that nothing is lost from the sacred gift. For you consider yourself guilty, and rightly so, if anything falls from it due to negligence." Reverence towards the Eucharistic bread is also urged by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem: "With caution, having consecrated your eyes by touching the holy Body, approach to partake, being careful that nothing is lost from it. If you lose something, you will be deprived as if you had lost your own member... What is more precious than gold and precious stones, you should guard, ensuring that not even a single crumb falls."

Concerned about ensuring that nothing from the Eucharistic bread fell to the ground, the ancient Christians also expressed their respect for the holy gifts by approaching them with washed hands. We find frequent references to this in patristic literature. Let us recall, for example, the words of John Chrysostom from his 3rd Homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians and his 27th Homily on the Epistle to the Hebrews. But it is especially clear in the words of Blessed Augustine: "All men, he says, when they wish to partake, should wash their hands." Clearly, in ancient times, the ablution of hands was required not only from the presbyters who were performing the Eucharist but also from the people. When discussing the method of receiving the Eucharistic bread, one cannot remain silent about a peculiar custom that existed in some Western churches. We are talking about the custom of giving the Eucharistic bread to women not directly into their hands but into a special long cloth called the Dominicale. The first reference to its use comes from Blessed Augustine, in his 252nd word "de Tempore." Noting that men should approach the Eucharist with clean, washed hands, he continues: "But all women should have a clean cloth (towel) to receive the Eucharist." The existence of the Dominicale as an unquestionable tradition is also attested around the time of Gregory the Great. This is revealed in the canons of the Council of Antisiodorus (578), Canon 36: "It is not permitted for a woman to receive the Eucharist with an uncovered hand"; and Canon 42: "Every woman approaching to receive the holy mysteries must have her Dominicale; if she does not have one, she should not partake until the next day." This practice existed only in the West. It is not mentioned by the Eastern Fathers and teachers of the Church.

Having considered the ancient method of receiving the Eucharistic bread by the faithful, let us now turn to the question of the method of consuming the consecrated wine from the Eucharistic chalice. The most ancient method, common to both Eastern and Western Churches, was the consumption of Eucharistic wine directly from the chalice itself. Clear references to this practice can be found in the writings of Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, and other Church Fathers. "When," says Saint Cyprian, "the deacon began to present the chalice to the attendees and it came to the turn of a little girl, he, despite her resistance... poured it into her mouth." Undoubtedly, Cyril of Jerusalem testifies to the same when he gives this instruction to those approaching the Holy Chalice: "After partaking of the Body of Christ, approach the chalice of the Blood, not extending your hands, but bowing... and by partaking of the Blood of Christ, you will be sanctified. And when the liquid is still on your lips, touch it with your hands, sanctifying your forehead, your eyes, and all your senses." This

custom continued to exist in later times. In the Gallic Church, we find evidence of it at the end of the 6th century. Gregory of Tours, who lived during this time, reproached the Arians for the custom of "communing the laity from one chalice, and the kings from another." Later, in the West, a custom emerged where the Eucharist was administered using a special type of tube (calamus syphon), made of gold, silver, etc. In this method, one end of the tube was placed in the chalice, while the other end was placed in the mouth. The exact time when this custom began is impossible to determine, according to Martingy.

A vivid explanation and supplement to the data about ancient Eucharistic practices found in written sources can be found in the archaeological monuments of Christian art. These monuments particularly shed light on the form and method of Communion among the early Christians. Let us first focus on the Christian art from the catacomb period.

Behind the symbolic veil draped over these monuments, it is not difficult to find clear indications that Communion during the era of persecution was performed under two species: bread and wine. For example, consider the recently discovered tomb of Saint Callistus in Rome. In one of its chambers, according to Rossi's account, two depictions were found of a fish swimming in the waves with a woven basket on its back. Above the basket are five round loaves of bread, and in the middle, through a lattice wall, a glass vessel of red color, likely containing wine, is visible. According to the general consensus of archaeologists, the depiction of loaves in ancient monuments usually indicates the Eucharist. Here, the loaves are accompanied by a vessel of grape wine—the other element of the Eucharist. Thus, there is no doubt that this painting represents the Eucharist. It is also clear that in the 3rd century, both bread and wine were used for the faithful's Communion. Furthermore, a tomb inscription from the end of the 2nd century, belonging to Avercius, Bishop of Hierapolis, a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, attests to the same practice: "Faith, we read here, offered the great and pure Fish, which was conceived by the Immaculate Virgin. This Fish, Faith gave to the faithful to eat, offering good wine along with bread."

In the earliest Christian art, we also find indications of the method of receiving the Eucharist. For instance, there is one sacramental depiction in the aforementioned catacombs of Saint Callistus: a dining table around which are seated seven naked figures. With one hand, they make some gesture, while with the other, they reach towards the table, which holds two large fish. Before the table, parts of seven baskets of bread have also been preserved. According to Rossi and his school, this depiction symbolically represents the Eucharist, and the extension of the hands of the attendees towards the table is a clear indication that in the 3rd century, the faithful received the Eucharistic bread in their hands. A similar group is found on a 5th-century diptych from the Milan Cathedral. This diptych also points to the method of receiving the Eucharistic bread with hands. Another interesting monument, found in 1839 in Antun (France), is a Greek metric inscription from the late 2nd or early 3rd century. "The Son of the Heavenly Fish," it says, "receive the honeyed food of the Savior of the saints: eat, drink, holding the Fish in your hands" (ἰχθύν). According to Wilpert and Martingy, this inscription is one of the best witnesses

to the practice of receiving the Eucharistic bread in the hands of the faithful at the beginning of the 3rd century.

If we now shift from the monuments of the catacomb period to those of the Byzantine period (6th century and beyond), we see that the ancient practice of receiving the Eucharist in the form of bread, given into the hands, and wine, offered from the chalice, remained common in the Church even after the era of persecution. This is clearly shown by the long series of depictions of the Last Supper in the liturgical version that began to appear in the 6th century. These include depictions of the Eucharist in the Rossano Gospel (6th century), the Syrian Gospel of Ravula (586), the Parisian Greek Four Gospels (11th century), the Greek Psalter of Lobkov (9th century), the British Psalter (1066), the Athonopandokrator Psalter (9th century), and others. In all these depictions of the Last Supper, the Apostles are shown approaching to receive the Eucharistic bread with outstretched hands. However, the act of Communion in these monuments is not depicted uniformly. In some, the Savior is depicted holding the Eucharistic bread in His right hand and the chalice in His left, while a group of Apostles approaches, with the foremost one bowing and extending his hand to receive the Eucharist (from the Gospel of Ravula). In other monuments, the depiction of the supper is divided into two parts: in one, Jesus Christ gives the Holy Bread to six Apostles, and in the other, the Holy Chalice (in the Rossano Gospel, the frescoes of Nekresi, and the mosaics of St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev). In some, although the act of Communion from the chalice is separated from the act of distributing the Holy Bread, the chalice is shown in the hands of the Apostles themselves.

When considering these monuments, a question arises: what value do they hold in determining the duration of the ancient practice? According to Professor Pokrovsky, their value is not the same: while some reproduce the practice contemporary to them, others depict a practice that had already passed, outlived its time. Monuments from after the 9th century, according to this view, represent a time when the Eastern rite of Communion had already changed from its original forms.

In addition to Byzantine monuments, there are also a number of Western artworks that clearly testify that the ancient method of Communion, which prevailed in the West in the 8th century, continued to exist in the subsequent periods. These include depictions of the Eucharist in sacramentaries: the Tours Sacramentary (9th century), the Metz Sacramentary (855), the Göttingen University Library and Bamberg A. II, 52 (late 10th or early 11th century), the Antiphonary No. 390–391 from the city of Gallen, the Gospel lectionary in the Berlin Print Museum (mid-11th century), and the golden relief of the altar column in Aachen (10th century). Here, the Savior is depicted holding the Eucharistic bread in one hand and the chalice in the other. A characteristic feature is that, for receiving the Eucharistic bread, usually only Judas is shown extending his hand. Such liturgical imagery of the Last Supper, according to Professor Pokrovsky, sometimes appears in monuments from the 11th–13th centuries. "Thus," he says, "the enamel box issued by Cahier, and the miniature in the National Library (No. 9561, fol. 164): Jesus Christ, standing behind the altar, gives the Apostles the Holy Bread with His right hand and the

chalice with His left (on the box – a small jug)."

The most significant of these monuments are those that reproduce the existing practice of Communion. In contrast, monuments from the 11th–13th centuries depict an almost anachronistic form of Communion. The 13th century marks the time of the introduction of new forms of communion in the Western Church that remain in use to this day.

From everything said about the method of Communion in the early Christian period, we can conclude that from the end of the 2nd century to the 8th century in the East and to the 11th century in the West, Christians received the Body and Blood separately, with the Eucharistic bread being placed in their hands.

But already quite early, both in the East and in the West, alongside the ancient practice, a new custom of distributing the Eucharistic bread not into the hands, but directly into the mouth, began to emerge. As for the West, traces of this custom can still be seen in the middle of the 6th century. This is testified to by Pope Gregory the Great in his third book of dialogues, where he notes that Pope Agapetus ordered a lame and blind person to have the Body of the Lord placed in his mouth. Indeed, this case was exceptional: it speaks only of the fact that the Eucharistic bread was initially placed into the mouth only during the communion of the sick. However, by the 9th century, this method began to be practiced during the communion of all believers. Its existence at this time in the Church of Spain is evidenced by the Council of Córdoba (839 AD). It mentions that the local sect of the Casianists refused communion in churches because there the holy bread was placed in the mouth. The same 9th century marks the beginning of the new practice in the Gallic Churches. This is what was decreed at the synod in Rouen (Rothomagensis) under Louis (the Clumsy): the presbyter "should place the Eucharist in the mouth of no layperson or woman, but only in their mouth." However, this newly emerged practice in the West likely did not last long. At least, this assumption is supported by the fact that, aside from the written testimonies cited, no other indications of its existence are found. In art monuments, this practice is depicted only twice: in the Stuttgart Psalter (10th century) and in the Gospel of Saint Bernard from the early 11th century. Here, Judas is depicted as receiving the Eucharist directly into his mouth. In the East, such a method of communion did not exist. The reception of the Body of Christ into the hands and the communion of the Blood of Christ from the chalice was replaced by their joint consumption via the spoon. The question of when the spoon became a practice in the Eastern Churches has been answered differently. Some, such as Nicephorus, Latinus, and Arkudius, dated its origin to the time of John Chrysostom and Pope Innocent II (417). But we have already seen that even Chrysostom, in his homilies (the 3rd on the letter to the Ephesians, the 24th and 27th on the first letter to the Corinthians), and other contemporary writers of the Eastern and Western Churches, mention exclusively the distribution of the Eucharistic bread into the hands. Therefore, there is no basis for associating the beginning of this custom with the name of John Chrysostom. The first testimony of the existence of the spoon is found in John the Merciful (595). This is what we read in the commentary attributed to him on the liturgy: "The receiving through

the spoon signifies the tongs of the prophet Isaiah, by which he took the coal from heaven."

The communion by means of the spoon thus represents the tongs of the prophet Isaiah, by which he took the coal from heaven.

However, according to Professor Petrovsky, this passage is hardly attributable to John the Merciful, since, with clear evidence of the ancient practice in the 7th and 8th centuries, it becomes indisputable that communion via the spoon could not have existed at the end of the 6th century. The first historically reliable testimonies about the new practice of communion are found in Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and in the second rule of the Council of Braga (675). Sophronius, recounting the martyrs Cyriacus and John, mentions that they carried a chalice filled with the Body and Blood of Christ. In citing this testimony, Professor Petrovsky makes the following observation: "As we can see from the context, the new practice was only resorted to in exceptional cases, such as the communion of the sick; the usual method of communion remained the same." The second rule of the Third Braga Council also does not speak of the final establishment of the new practice of communion. This is what we read in it: "The custom of giving the people instead of full communion the soaked Eucharist (pro complemento communionis intinctam tradunt eucharistiam) is not supported by the Gospel, where the separate distribution of bread and the chalice is mentioned. We see that Christ did not give the soaked bread to other Apostles after the traitor had received the piece, and this piece was given to signify the traitor, not to symbolize the institution of the sacrament." It is clear that during the time of this council, communion via the spoon was still not a universal practice. This method became widespread, but not earlier than the end of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century. The foundation for this assertion can be found primarily in the text of the Barberini manuscript of the Liturgy of Basil the Great and the Liturgy of John Chrysostom. The antiquity of these manuscripts is attributed by some (Bunsen, Goar) to the 8th century, and by others (Petrovsky) to the 9th. Here we read: "After the people say: one is holy, one is the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father, the priest takes parts of the Holy Body and places them in the holy chalices." The mention of placing parts of the Holy Body in the chalice is the best guarantee that communion via the spoon is indicated in one place in the publication of Krasnoseltsev's "Commentary on the Liturgy of Saint Herman in the 8th–10th centuries." In the Greek edition of this commentary (no later than the 9th century), we find, among other things, this expression: "We drink the cup, as the Body and Blood". This expression clearly indicates that the faithful at this time were receiving communion from the chalice, which contained the Body and Blood of Christ, and they were certainly receiving it via the spoon. However, this new way of communion in the 9th century had not yet become the norm for all Eastern Churches. Some historical testimonies tell us that in the Church of Jerusalem, even in the 11th century, the ancient practice of communion remained dominant. A clear indication of this can be found in the Messianic (984–5) and Rossan (no later than the end of the 11th century) manuscripts of the Jerusalem Liturgy of Apostle James. After the prayer said by the priest before communion, this

liturgical sequence contains the following note: "Then the priest gives communion to the clergy; when the deacons take the discos (on which the Body of Christ was certainly placed) and the chalices to distribute to the people, the deacon who takes the first discos says: 'Lord, bless!'" The same is testified to by the 11th-century writer, Humbert.

Having become a common practice in the East during the 10th and 11th centuries, communion via a spoon begins to spread to the West. By the mid-11th century, this custom was still met with disapproval in the West. For example, Humbert (11th century) wrote about this method of communion: "If you (Greeks) have the custom of receiving the bread of eternal life soaked in the cup with a spoon, then what are you contradicting? The Lord did not place the bread in the cup with wine and did not tell the Apostles: 'Take, and eat with a spoon, for this is My Body.' But He, as the Roman Church still firmly preserves, took the holy bread, blessed it, and, having broken it, gave it to them, saying: 'Take, eat,' and so on." However, soon after, communion with a spoon began to exist in the West. This custom emerged at the end of the same 11th century, initially being practiced during the communion of the sick. This is clearly evidenced by the 28th canon of the Clermont Council, which allowed the Eucharist to be given with a spoon only in cases of dire need, such as to avoid spilling the Holy Blood during the communion of the sick. Similarly, Pope Paschal II, in his 32nd letter to Pontius, noting that the Divine Tradition should be observed in the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord, made an exception in this case for infants and the sick who could not swallow the holy bread. The Synod of Tours was even more favorable to this new form of communion. "Every priest, we read in one of its canons, should have a pyx (pyxidem) or a vessel where he should carefully place the Body of Christ, intended for those departing from the world. The holy offering must be soaked with the Blood of Christ so that the priest may say to the sick: 'The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you for the remission of sins and eternal life.'" The spread of communion via a spoon in the West is also indicated by some of the testimonies cited by the liturgist Bonogu. For example, testimonies from the ancient Mass ritual described by John, the bishop of Abrincata, and from the ancient rules of the Cluniac monastery. Finally, this custom was defended by Ernulf, the Bishop of Rochester (1115–1124) in one of his letters, published by Daieri. But the method of communion itself also provoked disapproval in the West. Many considered it a novelty and even opposed its use during the communion of the sick and children. It was disapproved by Bernold of Constance (1100) and the London Synod. At the latter, for instance, the following decision was made: Inhibemus, ne quis quasi pro complemento communionis intinctam alicui eucharistiam tradat (san. XI). Not accepting the practice of the Eastern Church, and on the other hand, seeing the inconvenience of the ancient method of communion, which constantly risked spilling the Blood, the Western Church began to develop the practice of administering communion to the laity under only one kind of the Body. The first references to this practice date back to the 12th century. According to Bonogu, the advocates of this new practice at the time included Abbot Rudolph of Lütich (1100) and Robert of Poitiers. The latter, for example, stated: "It would be very good to give the people only the bread because

something could constantly be spilled from the wine." According to Professor Petrovsky, the new practice of communion was supported by synods: the Council of Cologne (1179) and in the province of Canterbury (1181). However, a series of other testimonies from the 12th century tell us that the dominant practice during this time was still communion under both kinds. For example, we can refer to the statements of Peter Lombard (mid-12th century) and Gratian (same century). "Some, says the latter, being filled with schismatic arrogance, contrary to divine decree and apostolic teachings, administer to the people instead of complete communion intinctam eucharistiam. That this is opposed to the gospel and apostolic teaching, and contradicts church practice, is revealed from the source of truth itself, from which the divine mysteries have their origin." In condemning the method of communion with a spoon, Gratian, as we can see, advocates for the separate distribution of the holy bread and wine. The practice of communion under both kinds continued in the West during the 13th century. For example, Albert the Great calls it the commandment of the Savior. Its existence is also confirmed by 13th-century synods: the Durham Synod and the Exeter Synod. However, alongside the continued existence of the ancient practice of communion, a new custom of communion under only the kind of bread began to spread more and more. Thomas Aquinas, who was more or less sympathetic to this new practice, notes that it had already spread "in many churches." The new practice is also spoken of by Bonaventure. Advocating for the complete denial of the cup to the laity, he argued that the act of communion under only one kind of bread is the same as the act of communion under both kinds. The widespread adoption of this new practice is indicated by one of the resolutions (1261) of the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order. "Monks," it says here, "both lay brothers and monks of the order, should not receive from the cup: this right belongs only to the priest." By the end of the 13th century, communio sub una became a universal custom, so much so that the 14th-century writer Duns Scotus considered it something well-known. In the 15th century, the Council of Constance (1415) finally legalized the new practice; the same was confirmed by the Council of Basel (1431), and the Council of Trent included it among the canons of the church.

We have considered the ancient Christian practice of communion (in the proper sense of the church). But in addition to this form of communion, home communion was widely practiced in the ancient Church. We now turn to the consideration of this particular, home-based practice of communion.

A number of historical testimonies first of all tell us that in the ancient Church, after the Eucharistic service, the holy gifts were sent to those believers who, for valid reasons, could not attend the worship services. According to Garnack, "the foundation of this custom lay in the idea of community, which the ancient Church imbued and inspired throughout its life, and which found its concrete expression, its mystical seal, in the partaking of the Eucharist. Among those Christians who did not receive the holy gifts during the liturgy, the Church paid special attention to the sick, those imprisoned or in custody, and those who were repenting, if their life was in danger." The first historical evidence of this practice is found in Justin Martyr. "After the thanksgiving of the presider," we read in his First Apology, "the

so-called deacons give each of those present the bread over which the thanksgiving has been offered, and send it to those who are absent"; and a little later: "And there is distribution to each one, and partaking of the gifts over which thanksgiving has been made, and to those who are absent, they are sent through the deacons." Clear evidence of the ancient custom of communion for the absent is found in the acts of St. Lucian, the priest of Antioch. After narrating how St. Lucian once performed the Eucharist on his own chest (in the Mamertine prison), it is noted: "And he himself became a participant in the sacrament and sent to those who were absent (aberant)." The transfer of the holy mysteries to the absent was usually entrusted to the deacons. But in cases of special need, it was also assigned to other lower clergy. Clear confirmation of this is found in the account of the martyrdom of the acolyte Tarcisius. This martyr received the crown of martyrdom because he refused to give the holy mysteries to the pagans he was carrying, on the orders of Priest Dionysius, to prisoners in the Mamertine prison. Sometimes, however, the holy communion was even carried by ordinary believers. An indication of this can be found in a letter from Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, to Fabius of Antioch. Here, there is a story about an elderly man, Serapion, who had fallen away and had not yet repented, who received communion from the hands of his young grandson due to the illness of the priest. In times of persecution, this method of carrying the holy mysteries by laypeople was practiced quite frequently. It continued to be used for the communion of the sick for a long time afterward. It persisted especially in the Western Church. Here, we even find it in the 9th century. "We have learned," we read in one of the decrees of the Rheims Synod (during Pope Nicholas I), "that some priests are so disrespectful to the holy mysteries that they entrust the Body of the Lord, for distribution to the sick, to men and women." To combat this "bold" custom, the synod decreed, "that each priest should personally give communion to the sick." However, this custom continued to exist in the 10th century. This is evidenced by the fact that the Bishop of Verona, Raterius, in one of his letters to priests, demanded that no priest "should entrust the Eucharist to the people or women for the communion of the sick." Only after the 10th century did the communion of the sick become exclusively the responsibility of deacons and priests, and by the 13th century, of priests alone.

A vivid expression of the idea of unity in Christ, which animated the early Christian community, is another custom practiced in the first centuries—the exchange of Eucharistic gifts between churches. This exchange usually took place around the time of Easter. Clear evidence of its existence is provided by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, in his letter to Pope Victor. Pointing to the existence of disagreements in the Churches of Asia Minor regarding the celebration of Easter, Irenaeus notes that the refusal of some to celebrate it on Sunday did not yet lead to excommunication. "On the contrary," Irenaeus addresses Victor, "those very presbyters who preceded you, who did not observe it, sent the Eucharist to the brothers who came from other dioceses that did observe it." However, very early on, this custom led to certain abuses, so much so that the Council of Laodicea deemed it necessary to abolish it. "During the Easter festival," we read in the 14th canon of this council, "it is not permitted to send the Holy

Mysteries to other parishes as a form of blessing." Nonetheless, in some places, this custom continued for a long time even after the Council of Laodicea. This is evidenced, for example, by Blessed Augustine (Epist. 31): "The bread we sent as a token of respect for the recipient may it be a most fruitful blessing." A reference to this custom is also found in a letter from Paulinus to Augustine: "We ask you to accept the bread we sent you as a sign of unity." (Ep. 25). The custom of mutual exchange of the Holy Mysteries existed not only between entire Churches and bishops but also among ordinary believers. It was especially widespread among monks. Evidence of this is found in John Moschus. "An Orthodox ascetic," it is said in his Spiritual Meadow, "asked a heretic (a follower of Severus) to send him a portion of the Eucharist. The heretic rejoiced and immediately sent what was requested, suspecting nothing. The Orthodox man, having received the portion from the heretic, heated a vessel and placed the portion in it, and it immediately disappeared in the heat of the burning vessel." However, the Eucharist of the Orthodox Church remained whole and unharmed.

We have seen that in the ancient Church, all those who were absent from the liturgy, provided their absence was not their fault, received the Holy Mysteries at home. Now we shall turn to another widespread custom during the era of persecution, whereby "believers who attended the solemn celebration of the Holy Mysteries in catacombs and other secret places would take additional consecrated portions of the Eucharistic bread with them. They would bring these home and partake of them whenever there was a need to strengthen their faith, and most often in moments of preparation for martyrdom." Clear evidence of this custom is found in the works of Tertullian and Cyprian. Tertullian, explaining to the perplexed how to reconcile public liturgical celebration and Eucharistic communion with the requirements of fasting days, wrote: "Having received the Body of the Lord and keeping it, you will observe both inviolate: both the communion of the sacrifice and the fulfillment of the obligation." Cyprian also testifies to this when, in his work On the Lapsed, he recounts that "a woman who dared with unworthy hands to open her casket, in which the Lord's holy thing was stored, was terrified by the fire that came forth from it." A reference to this custom is also found in Cyprian's work On Spectacles, where he tells of an unworthy Christian: "Hurrying to the spectacle after leaving the church and, as usual, still carrying the Eucharist with him, this unfaithful man brought the Holy Body of Christ into the midst of the shameful bodies of prostitutes." Basil the Great, in his letter to Caesarius, points to the widespread nature of this custom during times of persecution: "It is not at all dangerous if someone during persecution, in the absence of a priest or minister, finds it necessary to take communion with his own hand. It would be superfluous to prove this, as long-standing custom attests to it in practice." The practice of home communion continued long after the times of persecution. This is confirmed by the same Basil the Great. "All monks," he says of his time, "living in deserts where there is no priest, keep the Eucharist at home and commune themselves... And in Alexandria and Egypt," he continues, "every baptized layperson keeps the Eucharist at home and communes himself whenever he wishes." Gregory the Theologian, in his funeral

oration for his sister Gorgonia, writes that the Holy Gifts were kept in her house.

During the described period (5th century), the Holy Gifts were often taken along during journeys. Ambrose of Milan mentions this custom, recounting that his brother Satyrus received the Eucharist from his companions on a ship. Blessed Jerome also mentions the custom of home communion: "I know," he says, "that in Rome, believers have the custom of receiving the Body of Christ whenever they wish: I neither condemn this nor approve it. But I appeal to their conscience: why, the next day, after indulging in fellowship and, in the words of Persius, washing the night away in the river, do they not dare to go to the martyrs? Why do they not wish to go to church? Is not Christ the same in their home as in the house where the community of believers gathers?"

However, we must note that the custom of receiving Communion at home was not always approved of, and certainly not by everyone. Origen, in his commentary on the 8th chapter of Leviticus, expressed opposition to this practice: “The bread which the Lord gave to His disciples with the words ‘Take, eat,’ He did not command them to keep until the next day.” This stance was particularly strongly supported by the Councils of Spain, namely the Caesaraugustan Council (381) and the First Council of Toledo (400). One decree from the first council reads: “If anyone dares not consume the sanctified Eucharist they have received, let them be anathema forever.” A similar decision was made at the Council of Toledo: “If anyone does not consume the Eucharist received from the priest, let them be called sacrilegious (Sacrilegus).”

The strict attitude towards this ancient custom stemmed from numerous abuses, particularly by the Priscillianists, who exploited the distribution of sacred gifts to conceal their heterodox beliefs and avoided consuming the Eucharist altogether. While the custom of home Communion in Spain ceased as early as the beginning of the 5th century, it persisted much longer in other Christian Churches around the world. For example, Pope Gregory the Great mentions it in the 3rd book of his “Dialogues” (cap. 36): “Every monk, wherever he may go, must carry the Eucharist with him.” A similar account is found in John Moschus’ narrative about a miracle that occurred in Seleucia during the episcopacy of Dionysius (mid-6th century): “A certain Orthodox servant, having received, as was customary in that country, the Holy Gifts on Maundy Thursday, wrapped them in a clean cloth and placed them in his cupboard... There they remained for an entire year. When the man decided to burn them and opened the cupboard, he saw that all the sacred particles had sprouted stems and ears of grain.”

The practice of home Communion is also mentioned by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who recounts that a certain nobleman (Philipinus) always kept the Body of Christ in his home. By the 10th century, Eastern monks had even established a ceremonial procedure for home Communion. According to the instructions of Archbishop Luke the Hermit of Corinth: “If there is an oratory, place the vessel containing the Eucharist on the altar; in its absence, on a specially prepared clean table. Unfold the cloth, place the Holy Gifts upon it, burn incense, chant psalms, the Trisagion, and the Creed. Then, after making three bows in reverence, partake of the Body of Christ, saying

‘Amen.’” This custom continued to exist even in later times.

When examining the ancient practice of home Communion, one cannot overlook the methods of transporting and preserving the Holy Gifts. As for their transportation, both clergy and lay believers used a special cloth, secured around the neck with a cord, known as an orarium (as mentioned by Ambrose of Milan). Alternatively, the Holy Communion was sometimes placed by believers in special vessels made of gold, silver, or other materials. Less wealthy members of the Christian community used small wicker baskets and glass containers for transporting the Holy Gifts. This is clearly evidenced by Blessed Jerome, who stated: “No one is richer than the one who carries the Body of the Lord in a wicker basket (canistro vimineo) and the Blood in a glass vessel (vitro).” Illustrations in the catacombs appear to corroborate Jerome’s words. These images often depict elongated grates with loaves marked with cross-shaped incisions on top, while a vessel filled with red wine is visible inside.

In homes, the Eucharist was preserved in containers whose value varied according to the material wealth of their owners. In his work On the Lapsed, St. Cyprian refers to these containers with the general term “ark” (arca). However, according to Martigny, a more precise understanding of such containers can be derived from a circular ark with a dove on top, depicted in a chapel on the Vatican cemetery above a sarcophagus (Bottari, tav. XIX). On another wall of this chapel, a praying woman and a large bundle of books are portrayed, which, according to Martigny, symbolically recalls the dual purpose of such containers in basilicas—to store both the Eucharist and sacred books.

After considering the Church and home Communion practices of antiquity, we turn to a rather unusual custom observed in certain Christian Churches—the practice of administering Communion to the deceased. This raises the question: how could such a profanation of the Eucharistic sacrament arise? Most likely, this custom was influenced by two factors: the desire to assist the souls of the departed in their afterlife and a profound, though not entirely rational, faith in the power of the sacrament. The exact method of administering Communion to the deceased remains unknown, but based on the spirit of the conciliar prohibitions against it, it is believed that the Holy Gifts were placed in the mouths of the deceased.

The first mention of this practice appears in the 26th canon of the Council of Carthage: “It is decreed that the Eucharist shall not be given to the bodies of the deceased. For it is written: ‘Take, eat,’ but the bodies of the deceased can neither take nor eat.” The practice was also mentioned in the 12th canon of the Synod of Auxerre (578): “The Eucharist and the kiss of peace are not to be given to the dead.” It is thought that this custom was also practiced in the Eastern Churches. Some archaeologists, such as Augusti and Bingham, suggest a reference to this in the words of St. John Chrysostom, directed against the Marcionites: “To whom, tell me, are the words of the Savior addressed: ‘Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you’ (John 6:53)—to the living or the dead?” The practice was particularly widespread in the East during the 7th century, prompting the Trullan Council to

reiterate the prohibition established by the Council of Carthage.

Another similar practice in the early Church involved placing consecrated elements, particularly the Eucharistic bread, in the grave with the deceased. This was especially common for clerics and served as a kind of ultimum viaticum. Martene, in his De antiquis ecclesiae ritibus, documents this tradition: “It is known,” he writes, “that St. Basil, during one liturgy, divided the Holy Bread into three parts—one for himself, another to be placed in a golden dove-shaped vessel above the altar, and the third to be buried with him (conservavit consepeliri sibi).” Pope Gregory the Great also mentions this custom in the 2nd book of his Dialogues (cap. 24), recounting that Pope Benedict ordered the Holy Gifts to be placed on a monk’s chest and buried with him.

This practice likely continued long after Pope Gregory, both in the East and the West. A clear reference to it in the Eastern Church is found in the writings of the 13th-century commentator Balsamon, who notes: “While the Councils prohibited Communion for the dead, it is still the custom to place the Holy Bread in the hands of deceased bishops to ward off evil spirits and as a sign of their heavenly reward.” In the Western Church, this practice persisted into the 12th century, as evidenced by Ivo, who wrote: “When the body of St. Otmar was moved, the Holy Gifts were also transferred from his tomb” (Bingham, Oper. VI, 427). With this examination of the long-standing practice of Communion for the deceased, we conclude our discussion of early Christian Eucharistic traditions.

The Church has departed from the ritual of Holy Communion established by Jesus Christ, substituting it with practices intended to “ward off evil spirits” or secure “blessings.”

Discussion

When reflecting on the practice of Holy Communion, we inevitably arrive at a fundamental question: to what extent can the authority of councils, synods, and saints influence customs established by Jesus Christ Himself? It is evident that no human being, no matter how holy, can surpass or alter what was instituted by God incarnate. Saints, the blessed, synods, and councils are merely humans and assemblies of humans striving for truth. Yet, no matter how high their position in the spiritual hierarchy, they remain subordinate to the One who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life (John 14:6). Christ Himself instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and therefore, any deviation from His command must be approached with the utmost caution and discernment.

The ritual established by Christ must be observed strictly: the breaking of His body, the drinking of His blood, in the house of a host, after supper, on Holy Thursday. Other questions remain, to which Christ Himself has given answers, but they must be confirmed by theologians once at least one dogma is restored: the ritual of Holy Communion as instituted by Jesus Christ Himself.

Should women and children participate in the ritual of Holy Communion?

At the Last Supper, according to the Gospels, only men—the apostles—were present. Women and children are not mentioned. This raises the question: was this an indication that Communion is reserved exclusively for adult men, or were the circumstances of that era responsible for the composition of the participants?

Christ never explicitly forbade women or children from partaking in Communion. On the contrary, He emphasized that all may come to Him (Matthew 19:14). However, it is essential to note that participation in the Eucharist requires conscious faith and spiritual preparation, as the Apostle Paul states: "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). Considering this, can we speak of the permissibility of infant Communion, as infants are incapable of understanding the depth of the Sacrament? Or is infant Communion an act of faith by the parents, who take responsibility for the spiritual upbringing of their children?

Can the ritual of Communion be held on days other than Holy Thursday?

Christ instituted the Eucharist specifically on Holy Thursday, the eve of His suffering. This fact lends special significance to that day. However, nowhere in Scripture is there a strict commandment limiting the Eucharist to this day. Moreover, early Christians broke bread daily (Acts 2:46), indicating that the essence of the Eucharist is not rigidly tied to a specific date but becomes a central part of liturgical life.

This raises a question: if Christ instituted the Sacrament on Holy Thursday, should this chronology be strictly preserved, or does the spirit of His command allow for more frequent participation in Communion to retain the grace imparted through the Eucharist?

Is it necessary to partake in Communion more than once, if for some saints one Communion was sufficient?

History provides numerous examples of saints for whom a single Communion became the pivotal event of their lives. It became a source of inexhaustible grace, sustaining them for many years. This raises the question of the frequency of Communion. Is frequent participation necessary to sustain spiritual life, or is one Sacrament sufficient to receive the fullness of grace?

Christ did not establish limitations on the number of Communions. The Apostle Paul teaches that each person should approach the Cup worthily, after examining their conscience. Thus, the frequency of Communion becomes a matter of personal spiritual life and readiness. However, in modern life, where many Christians cannot attend daily worship, should the Eucharist be turned into a rare, almost sacredly distant act, or should it be sought frequently to strengthen faith?

Conclusion

In all these matters, one thing is clear: the commandments established by Christ must be preserved impeccably. Neither councils, nor synods, nor saints have the authority to abolish or distort their essence. Humanity, as in the time of Christ, tends to substitute truth with convenience, tradition, or human reasoning. However, the path of true faith lies in following the One who gave Himself for the salvation of all, who accepted and forgave everyone seeking genuine communion with God.

The ritual of Holy Communion was established by Christ with exceptional clarity and without ambiguity. Sacraments, of course, are not the work of human hands but of God alone, and this includes the sacrament of Holy Communion. However, the ritual—if it was established by Christ Himself—must be observed, and only in the way He instituted it. The sooner the ritual as instituted by Christ is restored, the sooner humanity will awaken, sober up, and remember the divine nature within itself.

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49. Прангишвили, А. И., Гаситашвили, З. А., Мацаберидзе, М. И., Чхартишвили, Л. С., Чичинадзе, К. Н., Ткемаладзе, Д. В., ... & Азмайпарашвили, З. А. СИСТЕМНЫЕ СОСТАВЛЯЮЩИЕ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ И ИННОВАЦИЙ ДЛЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ НАНО-БИОМЕДИЦИНСКОЙ ЕКОСИСТЕМНОЙ ТЕХНОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ ПЛАТФОРМЫ. В научном издании представлены материалы Десятой международной научно-технической конфе-ренции «Управление развитием крупномасштабных систем (MLSD'2016)» по следующим направле-ниям:• Проблемы управления развитием крупномасштабных систем, включая ТНК, Госхолдин-ги и Гос-корпорации., 365.
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