

Communion Service with Rev. Csaba Todor
Rev. Csaba Todor - 26 December 2004
First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Bedford, MA
Sermon by Rev. Csaba Todor and Rev. Kinga Reka Szekely

Transylvanian Unitarians take communion four times a year: at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Thanksgiving. All these holy days have their significance in our very liberal religious life: at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We celebrate the joy of family, actually, we celebrate a very significant character of family and human beings – the holiness of life.

Communion is separated from our regular church-services, which are based on intellectual, theological and spiritual effect of the sermon on the people. The communion is much more about spirituality. Some people in Transylvania believe a minister is as good as he or she could make a spiritual communion service.

The bread and the wine are donated by a member of the congregation in memory of a loved one. This is a moment to remember our limits and a moment of hope. So when we remember Jesus in our communion we remember our connection to the past, the present and the future.

We read the words of the Bible, from Luke “and he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying-this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying-“this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.”

Here are two ideas I want to talk about: the bread and the wine are a symbol of remembering. We do not believe that the bread is the real body of Jesus. Nor do we believe that the wine is the blood of Jesus. There is no metaphysical meaning in the wine and the bread. There is no theological speculation. The bread and the wine symbolize the substance of our life now and the possibilities of the future. The focus of communion is on the people who are here for communion. We believe in a community of people who are alive, and community with a world of faith beyond physical reality.

The significance of the last supper for us consist of Jesus clear statement that he claims a new covenant with God and that he asks his disciples to take communion to honor the community in his memory. This new covenant is based on the direct connection between human and God, creator and created– simply said, it is based on freedom of thought. This is why we examine every rule, all dogma with criticism- faith is the gift of God, and God is love.

Religious reformers such as Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohamed and others all claimed a new covenant. They all realized that the institutional religion was no longer satisfactory and that it was time to change it. It is actually a paradox of spirituality: we need ceremonies, because of their deep spiritual treasure but sometimes we have to recognize the time for change.. Jesus’ criticism targeted the clergy. First he pointed out that they were robbing people of God’s word, the scriptures, making them feel ignorant and stupid. Then he pointed out that they were considering laws more important than human lives.

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Finally he pointed out that they were hypocritical and scornful. I think these charges are more than enough to disqualify clergy. But of course, at that time and many, many other times and in many other situations, a faithful and honest young man just wasn't able to change the ideology of a whole generation/tradition.

Communion is a sacred moment when we look at ourselves in the light of God's radiant love. People who believe they were born with a divine spark in their hearts know that human life is a short but wonderful opportunity to experience love and connectedness. In order to do this we need moments of depth. We need to stand in silence for a moment, to look in the mirror of our conscience and in the mirror of our partner's eyes.

After doing so, if we still believe that our lives are headed in the right direction and we still feel connected to each other, we have to reinforce this feeling. Communion is a sacred opportunity to reinforce our connectedness to each other as individuals in order to reinforce our connectedness to the community we live in.

In life there is much love but there is also fear. When we experience fear, fear of failure, fear of being misled, then the world shrinks and we see nothing but dangerous enemies coming after us. To fix this problem we need to get rid of our fears.

Communion is a perfect time to practice a little bit of exorcism. It is a perfect time to look inward and say: "Fear, go away. Fear of getting old, fear of getting sick, fear of death, fear to start a new life, fear to be honest, fear to quest for new meaning in life. Go away."

Communion is an opportunity – an invitation – to focus our lives on love. The love we can give, the love we can receive. You have to believe that there is enough love for everybody - to be convinced that (among many other things) God is love, the Spirit of life is love. So let us chase away the fear, stay with love, have the bread and wine and feel courageous.

Because communion is not only a festive hour when we stand in a circle, it is not only the simple act of sharing bread and wine. It is a testimony of our community. We witness each others' lives, we care for each other, that is why we have communion. Moreover, we witness the fact that we have things in common.

Everybody has to realize that in order to have a somewhat balanced life we need both individualistic and communitarian involvements. Tony Kushner, in the appendix of his play "Angels in America" says "One person alone is a fiction.

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There has to be at least two persons to make art or religion happen.”

But communion is not only a way to prove that we have communitarian involvement. It also has to reveal the fact that people who share communion feel responsible for each other. Taking communion, we remember Jesus and everyone else who taught us to love each other and feel responsible for a community of people.

So before you eat this bread and drink this wine, remember those persons and see where you are in the light of their bequests. Remember Jesus, who was a struggling, loving, crying human being, just like us, but who was strong enough to bequeath something universal to all of us.

Honor the bread and the wine as symbols of life. Honor the community of this communion, honor your true self, honor the spirit of life.

Amen