

One of life's mysterious truths is this: In the final analysis, love can never communicate itself adequately through words; it must resort to action. Words become like the fuses in the switch box. When the load gets above a certain point they simply fizzle and burn out. They cannot carry the load of love and grace. So love, in order to convey its fullest meaning, always must fall back upon "sacrament." Sacrament - the acting out- of the love that will not let us go.

Moreover, the acts of love remain longer in the memory, and remain there with more compelling force, than do the words of love. For instance, in thinking back upon our mothers' love and devotion to the home, to her children - and her God - we do not think in terms of what they said so much as in terms of what they did. We recall many things she did - mending the clothes, baking her favorite recipe, helping with the school work. More meaningful still, is our recollection of her singing, "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah" or "He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought" and "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me" in the middle of a wakeful, troubled night.

Action and remembered action are powerful means of conveying powerful and motivating emotions. Hence, we leap for joy! We can't put it into words; we have to get up and move around. "We tremble and run, for fear. We embrace for love. When a friend is in need we will do almost anything to help him - thus seeking to put into some kind of action the comfort of friendship which cannot be contained in words alone. Goethe hit the nail on the the head: "The highest cannot be spoken; it can only be acted."

So God came to us in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the Word in action. So ~~the~~ Jesus Christ resorted to "sacraments", certain acted-out things in order to convey to us the wonderful love of God. And when we do them in "remembrance" of him, they help us to recall the love that will not let us go. This truth and its recognition is an ever-deepening need.

Luke, the author of Acts, speaking of the early first century Christians has this to say of them: "...they received his words ... were baptized, and... devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers.

The sacraments, as well as the preaching of the Word, are "means of grace." That is, the sacraments not only stand for something in the present precious in the past, they give effect

in our souls to something in the present, something that is unseen but eternal. This is true of all valid symbols.

Take for example the wedding ring. When the bride and groom stand before the minister with the ring - the ring is a symbol, a token. It not only stands for something; it conveys what it stands for to the believing heart. "This ring I give thee in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love."

The ring is not essential to either the legality or the reality of the marriage vows, but it does confirm and seal and add something important. For we creatures of time and space, of flesh and blood, are helped by the transference from hand to hand of a tangibility which in turn represents the communion of heart with heart. Love communicates itself by token and through sacrament.

So it is with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when celebrated in and by the Church, the believing body of Christ. It is something like playing of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; every time the score is played, the soul-moving music swells again into the hearkening ear and wells up again within the longing heart of the hearer.

One of the most important things about this sacrament is what it means to Christ who created and established it. "This do in remembrance of me." The sacrament reminds us that it means something to God in Christ. Therefore it means everything to us. Again referring to the wedding ring, if ever there comes a time between husband and his wife when the ring he once gave her no longer represents to him a pledge of loyalty and love, then at that moment the meaning of the ring changes for her - it cannot but be so. This sacrament of God's love - the Lord's Supper - hold eternal meaning for men and women who receive it in faith because this sacrament represents the everlasting love of God. "This do in remembrance me." The one who speaks is the "same yesterday and today and for ever."

This sacrament brings us together as the "body of Christ," "the beloved community," the church of the living God, the body of believers. There are days when my personal faith is entirely insufficient. All I could possibly do would be to echo the father of the epileptic boy when he was confronted by Jesus with a demand for faith before help could be applied: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Then it is the Church, the body of believers, that undergirds my feeble, faltering faith, with its triumphant, abiding faith and hope

and love! None of us are able to go it alone. We need that strength which comes only when together ~~only when~~ God's children are worshipping together. Highlander story....

In this day when God at times seem so far from us - it becomes increasingly hard to keep the feelings of our faith tender. It may grow easier to comprehend, but it does not become easier to adore. And, therefore, the ever-deepening need, when the vision of Christ passed into the creed, that the heart be quickened, and the affections warmed, and ~~life~~ the life of feeling given its own place.... God has provided that need. He has provided for it in the sacraments, where there is so little to satisfy the mind, and yet so much that wins unerringly into the very secret of the soul.

For the sacraments <sup>can</sup> lift up as no voice to preach. They move in a realm where argument is silent. They are a simple picture, drawn by the hand of heaven, and such as the eyes of a child delight to dwell upon. And so do they lead us to the childlike spirit, where trust and wonder and love are all-embracing, and where the greatest and most real of things are the things that never can be proved.

As we approach this Table today let us remember that:

There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Loose all their guilty stains

The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there may I, though vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away.