

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

THE APOSTLES' CREED – THE THIRD ARTICLE

But this is the meaning and substance of this addition: I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ [Ephesians 1:22]. This group is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with many different gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms [Ephesians 4:5–8, 11]. I am also a part and member of this same group, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses [Romans 8:17]. I am brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Spirit through having heard and continuing to hear God's Word [Galatians 3:1–2], which is the beginning of entering it. In the past, before we had attained to this, we were altogether of the devil, knowing nothing about God and about Christ [Romans 3:10–12]. So, until the Last Day, the Holy Spirit abides with the holy congregation or Christendom [John 14:17]. Through this congregation He brings us to Christ and He teaches and preaches to us the Word [John 14:26]. By the Word He works and promotes sanctification, causing this congregation daily to grow and to become strong in the faith and its fruit, which He produces [Galatians 5].

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

It is easy to reply to all kinds of questions about which people are troubled at the present time, such as this one: "Can even a wicked priest serve at and administer the Sacrament?" And whatever other questions like this there may be. For here we conclude and say, "Even though an imposter takes or distributes the Sacrament, a person still receives the true Sacrament, that is, Christ's true body and blood, just as truly as a person who receives or administers it in the most worthy way." For the Sacrament is not founded upon people's holiness, but upon God's Word. Just as no saint on earth, indeed, no angel in heaven, can make bread and wine be Christ's body and blood, so also no one can change or alter it, even though it is misused. The Word by which it became a Sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief. For Christ does not say, "If you believe or are worthy, you receive My body and blood." No, He says, "Take, eat and drink; this is My body and

blood." Likewise, He says, "Do this" (i.e., what I now do, institute, give, and ask you, take). That is like saying, "No matter whether you are worthy or unworthy, you have here His body and blood by virtue of these words that are added to the bread and wine." Note and remember this well. For upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all errors and deception that have ever come or may yet come.

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