

A Word about Table Manners at the Lord's House whether at Home or Away

What would you do?

You have computer map and directions in hand. You are out of town and leave for church where you are visiting. You weren't really late for church ... You made it with a minute to spare. You signed the guest book, shook hands with the greeter, received a bulletin and entered the sanctuary. Naturally, you got the looks. After all, you were visitors. You found a pew and sat down. It was a Communion Sunday. It was a LCMS congregation.

Then there it was – a note in the bulletin concerning attendance at the Lord's Supper. One of the lines read: "Guests wishing to receive the sacrament must speak with our Pastor before communing."

So what did you do? I suggest that when the time came you remained in your pews, thankful that the pastor and the congregation cared enough about you to ask us to wait on communing until you could speak with the pastor. On the way out of Church at the end of the service you might even want to thank the pastor for the loving practice of the Biblical doctrine of Closed Communion. He'll likely be pleasantly surprised since he probably had never received such a thank you.

Talking with the pastor about the Lord's Supper is really all about Table Manners and a Confession of the Truth. First, consider Table Manners. You would never go to another person's house, walk in, sit down and expect to be fed. That would be presumptuous and rude. How much more so when it is the Lord's House and you are a visitor! It really is important to exercise proper Table Manners when you are visiting another congregation with which we are in fellowship. Remember a few things.

1. Do not assume that you have a right to attend; that is, that you are somehow entitled to go to the Lord's Supper.
2. If you would like to go to the Sacrament of the Altar, try to contact the pastor a day or so prior to the service. (Please don't wait until 10 minutes before the service begins.)
3. Don't be offended if you are asked to speak with the pastor before attending the Lord's Supper.
4. Be respectful and understanding if you are not given permission to commune there or if you are asked to wait. Second, consider the opportunity that you are going to be given by speaking to the pastor. It will be an opportunity for you to make a Confession of the Truth. He's going to ask you some questions. What sort of questions? Here are some of the questions that might be asked:
 - What is the name of your home congregation?
 - Is your congregation a member of another synod?

- Who is your pastor?
- Would your pastor approve of your communing here?
- Are you a confirmed member of your home congregation?
- Are you a member of a lodge or unionistic society?
- Why do you desire to commune here?
- What do you hope to receive in the Lord's Supper?
- Are you prepared?
- Finally, would you be angry if I asked you to wait before communing here?

Holy Communion is given and intended to be a blessing. It is possible to commune to your judgment if you don't know why you are coming or what you hope to receive. (Please read through *1 Corinthians 10 and 11*.) Pastors are stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1) and the Lord's Supper is one of those Gospel mysteries. On the Last Day each pastor will be called to give an account of his stewardship (*Hebrews 13:17*).