

Preparation for communion

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OLCC Convocation August 4th-5th, 2016

We practice closed communion in the OLCC as we have inherited the practice from the tradition of the old Synodical Conference. This practice has two sides: one related to the doctrine of church fellowship and one related to individual cure of souls and pastoral responsibility.

This short paper will deal with the preparation of the people of God to receive The Lord's Supper. I will deal with both the individual's preparation, the congregation's preparation and the pastors preparation of his flock to receive The Lord's Supper. I will deal also with both the preparation needed for the first time one is to receive the Lord's Supper, but also the continual preparation.

My impression is that the situation today in many confessional Lutheran churches in the tradition of the synodical conference is that some kind of closed or close communion is practiced. This will normally include that a thorough examination of the young is taking place at confirmation. It also means that normally people outside the fellowship of the congregation are not permitted to come to the Lord's Supper. If a person in the congregation is openly unrepentant and lives an openly wicked life, this person will be suspended from the Lord's Supper and ultimately excommunicated. At least that is what most confessional Lutherans believe should happen.

It is however also my impression that in many churches of the Augsburg Confession, private confession and absolution has not been kept as a condition for receiving the Lord's Supper. I have also rarely met churches today where the practice of personal announcement to the pastor before receiving the Lord's Supper has been retained.

My own experience in the past is, that one should not expect that church attendants keep their confirmation-knowledge if they are never asked about it again.

So even though on paper, many churches do practice closed communion, in reality, the pastor does not have much knowledge about the confession of those who attend the Lord's Supper in his church. This is a problem in itself, but the problem is not lesser in today's world when antinomianism and anti-doctrinalism is rampant in the world and in the church.

What content should be known in order to commune

First I will consider what is needed in order to commune in the Lutheran church.

Luther comments on the word of institution in his Small Catechism:

Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words For you require altogether believing hearts.¹

In order to receive The Lord's Supper worthily, one must believe in the promise of forgiveness in the gospel as well as in the sacrament.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1Co 11:27-29 ESV)

Commenting on these words, The Formula says:

18] 8. We believe, teach, and confess also that there is only one kind of unworthy guests, namely, those who do not believe, concerning whom it is written John 3:18: He that believeth not is condemned already. And this judgment becomes greater and more grievous, being aggravated, by the unworthy use of the Holy Supper, 1 Cor. 11:29.²

I think that this is directed against those who will see other kinds of preparation to be necessary. Chemnitz elaborates in his Enchiridion:

Who then are they that eat and drink unworthily in the Lord's Supper, so that we might learn to guard the more carefully against that unworthiness?

That unworthiness does not consist in this, that we miserable sinners are unworthy of that heavenly food. For that food is prepared and intended especially for sinners. But the following are they that eat unworthily, as one can clearly gather from Paul, 1 Cor 11:

- I. They that do not discern the body of The Lord, that is [they] that do not hold that the very sacred food of this Supper is the body and blood of Christ, but handle and use it with no greater reverence and devotion than other common foods.*
- II. They that continue in sins without repentance and have and retain not the intent to lead a better life, but rather to continue in sin, as Paul rebukes this very thing in some Corinthians. For such people make a mockery of the very bitter passion of our Lord, as though sin were, as it were, something trivial, and not so great an abomination, by reason of which the Son of God suffered such an ignominious death. In fact, he that comes to that holy table in this spirit regards Christ as a patron of sin, as though in the*

¹ Triglotta SC IV Question four

² Triglotta FC Ep VII 18

Supper He supplies fuel for the fires of sin with His body and blood and wants to nourish and strengthen it. And therefore they eat unworthily.

- III. *They that come to this Supper without true faith, namely they that either seek the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation elsewhere than alone in the merit of Christ, or who, steeped in Epicurean security, hunger and thirst, with no true desires, after righteousness, that is, the grace of God in Christ, reconciliation, and salvation. For he that does not believe will be condemned, though he uses the Word and the Sacraments.*³

Chemnitz essentially mentions the same things we have already considered: repentance, faith in the gospel and faith in the promises of the sacrament.

Chemnitz was one of the authors of the Book of Concord, and his Enchiridion was the standard of teaching in his superintendency. When the Formula says that the only unworthy guests are those that do not believe, we should therefore not understand this as if those who reject the real presence and therefore do not discern the body of the Lord are worthy guests.

The Apology comments also on 1 Cor 1:29:

*Christ [Paul] says, 1 Cor. 11:29, that those who eat unworthily eat judgment to themselves. The pastors, accordingly, do not compel those who are not qualified to use the Sacraments.*⁴

Melanchthon here affirms that there is also a preparation needed for every Lord's Supper, so that the Lord's Supper is not received carelessly. While I do think that the Lord's Supper is to be offered every Sunday, I also think that we should warn against communing carelessly every Sunday without preparation.

The Lord's Supper is for those who know and confess their sins, believe in the forgiveness of sins obtained by merits of Jesus Christ, and believe that they receive his very body and blood in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins.

In short, one should know and believe the fundamental articles of the Christian Church with special emphasis on the matters related specifically to the Lord's Supper.

Since the Lord's Supper is instituted as a means of grace in order to maintain and strengthen faith through faith in the fact that it is the Lord's body and blood, it is needed only by those, who benefit from this fact. Those who are not yet able to either examine themselves or acknowledge the gift given in the Lord's Supper, are also not yet in need of the Lord's Supper.

³ Chemnitz, Martin, Luther Poellot, Jacob A. O. Preus, Georg Williams, Martin Chemnitz, and Martin Chemnitz. *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion ; The Lord's Supper ; The Lord's Prayer*. St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2007. *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion* p. 130, question 277

⁴ Triglotta, Ap XI 62

On the other hand, those who are able to examine themselves, who know the fundamental Christian doctrines and are in need of the assurance given in the Lord's Supper, should not be kept away from the Lord's Supper.

In Acts 2:42, the Lord's Supper is mentioned together with other signs of the visible church starting with the teaching or doctrine of the apostles:

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Act 2:42 ESV)

The Lord's Supper belongs together with these other marks of the church, especially the apostolic doctrine. Participation in the Lord's Supper therefore is not just a private matter, but a confession of the doctrine of the pastor and congregation with whom one communes. The vertical fellowship with the Lord's Body and blood is part of what creates the vertical fellowship between believers in the church, as Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 10:

*¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?
¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
(1Co 10:16-17 ESV)*

Therefore, participation together in the Lord's Supper presupposes the same confession of faith. This as we know, has consequences for our practice of closed communion in relation to churches that we are not united with in doctrine.

But it also has consequences for the individual preparation of our parishioners to the Lord's table. While we should not suspend or excommunicate every parishioner who does not have a full understanding of all our churches' doctrine, we should make sure that those who participate in the Lord's Supper are in agreement with our doctrine and when they have doubts they are not openly rejecting our doctrine. And we should make sure that members who attend our altars are not attending other altars at the same time or in other ways are joining heterodox fellowships.

Who is to judge

Who then is responsible for the preparation of parishioners to receive the Lord's Supper. According to Corinthians 11 the communicants should examine themselves. This is not all there is to say about this, however.

While every communicant needs to examine himself, everyone is not his own shepherd. The office of the pastor is to be considered here.

We also learn in 1 Corinthians 4:1 regarding Paul and Apollos:

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
(1Co 4:1 ESV)*

This is said about the ministers of the church. They are stewards of the mysteries of God, which includes the sacraments.

We should also remember that the Lord's Supper is a ministration of the forgiveness of sins, so it is also included in the power of the keys given to the apostles and the ministers after them:

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (Joh 20:23 ESV)

In the Apology, the power of the keys is explained in the article on the power of bishops:

Again, according to the Gospel or, as they say, by divine right, there belongs to the bishops as bishops, that is, to those to whom has been committed the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, no jurisdiction except to forgive sins, to judge doctrine, to reject doctrines contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the Church wicked men, whose wickedness is known, and this without human force, 22] simply by the Word.⁵

It is therefore a part of a pastor's job to judge the members of his congregation and withhold communion from those who are openly not prepared to receive the Lord's Supper.

This authority of the pastor is formally upheld in the larger confessional Lutheran churches, but I have heard more than once that it has not been possible to exercise this authority. It is true that the congregation should not be excluded, when it comes to public excommunication, but the pastor is the one to judge, whether a member is ready to receive the Lord's Supper, and while the congregation has the authority to judge its shepherd, it is not itself the shepherd of the congregation.

I think we need to reemphasize the authority of the pastor, so that it is not only brought into play when someone is to be suspended but also by more regular examination of communicants. I will return to that subject shortly.

[What form should the preparation take](#)

We have now in general considered the content that is to be known in order to participate in the Lord's Supper. Let us now consider in what form this content is to be learned. In confessional Lutheran churches of the Synodical Conference tradition this has generally been done through memorization of the Small Catechism at the age of confirmation.

Some kind of memorization of the commandments of God seems to be mandated from Deu 6:

6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(Deu 6:6-9 ESV)

This might even be seen as a method of memorization. Matt 28 also seems to mandate a teaching where the knowledge learned is retained.

In the preface of the Small Catechism, Luther also touches on memorization:

But with the young people stick to one fixed, permanent form and manner, and teach them, first of all, these parts, namely, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same manner after you and commit it to memory.⁶

Clearly, Luther says that the chief texts of the catechism are to be memorized word for word., so that they can be repeated word for word.

If they will not learn these texts, Luther says:

But those who are unwilling to learn it should be told that they deny Christ and are no Christians, neither should they be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at baptism, nor exercise any part of Christian liberty, but should simply be turned back to the Pope and his officials, yea, to the devil himself. Moreover, their parents and employers should refuse them food and drink, and [they would also do well if they were to] notify them that the prince will drive such rude people from the country, etc.⁷

So according to our confessions, at least the chief texts should be memorized before admittance to the Lord's table. We should however also consider that Luther only want to reject those that are unwilling. If someone, maybe because of a lack of mental abilities, is not able to memorize these texts word by word but is able to learn the content and prove that he has learned it, I think he should be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

Luther continues then to tell, how the explanations should be learned:

In the second place, after they have well learned the text, then teach them the sense also, so that they know what it means, and again choose the form of these tables, or some other brief uniform method, whichever you like, and adhere to it, and do not change a single syllable, as was just said regarding the text; and take your time to it. For it is not necessary that you take up all the parts at once, but one after the other. After they understand the First Commandment well, then take up the Second, and so on, otherwise they will be overwhelmed, so as not to be able to retain any well.⁸

There seems to be a bit more freedom in the approach to the explanations. I am not convinced that Luther demands memorization of a certain form of the explanations in order to commune. He makes the choice of explanation a matter of freedom. In Southern Germany, Brenz' catechism was used, which is shorter, and in my opinion also a valid choice.

6 Triglotta, SC Preface

7 Triglotta, SC Preface

8 Triglotta, SC Preface

Luther doesn't talk about committing it to memory and being able to repeat it, but instead focusses his attention on understanding it at taking your time to explain it. Even though I think it is a good idea to memorize the explanations also, I think it is worth a discussion whether all the explanations should be memorized in order for one to be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

Let us go to the Large Catechism, which also touches on this subject. In his introduction, Luther says:

This sermon is designed and undertaken that it might be an instruction for children and the simple-minded. Hence of old it was called in Greek Catechism, i.e., instruction for children, 2] what every Christian must needs know, so that he who does not know this could not be numbered with the Christians nor be admitted to any Sacrament, just as a mechanic who does not understand the rules and customs of his trade is expelled and considered incapable. 3] Therefore we must have the young learn the parts which belong to the Catechism or instruction for children well and fluently and diligently exercise themselves in them and keep them occupied with them.⁹

After the preface comes the chief texts and then the Large Catechism. While Luther cannot be thinking of the text of the Large Catechisms, it must be the chief texts, he is speaking about when he says what needs to be learned in order for one to be a Christian and go to the Sacrament.

Luther continues:

For I well remember the time, indeed, even now it is a daily occurrence that one finds rude, old persons who knew nothing and still know nothing of these things, and who, nevertheless, go to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and use everything belonging to Christians, notwithstanding that those who come to the Lord's Supper ought to know more and have a fuller understanding of all Christian doctrine than children and new scholars. 6] However, for the common people we are satisfied with the three parts, which have remained in Christendom from of old, though little of it has been taught and treated correctly until both young and old, who are called and wish to be Christians, are well trained in them and familiar with them.¹⁰

So clearly, one should know the three chief parts, but also more in order to go the Lord's Supper.

Take note on the fact that Luther doesn't talk about what should be learned for one's first communion, but what someone who wants to commune should know.

I think that a problem with Confessional Lutheran churches both in the Us and in Europe is that too much is expected at the age of confirmation, but too little before that time and too little after that time. In my opinion we might consider to receive children at the Lord's Supper a bit earlier than is now commonly practiced and demand a little less memorization, but make sure that what has been learned is retained and enlarged later through regular examinations. More on that in a moment.

⁹ Triglotta LC Short Preface 1-3

¹⁰ Triglotta LC Short Preface 5-6

Implications for first communion for young people

While The Lords Supper is not needed by the infants without a reflective faith, it is instituted because we need it to strengthen us and keep us in the faith. We must therefore take into consideration, when children begin to need this means of grace. When they begin to fear the law and doubt the Lords Grace, I think it is time to ask, whether they are ready to receive the Lords Supper.

We also need to make sure that those who are admitted to The Lords Supper, are actually prepared. It is not enough that they need the Lords Supper. They must also be able to receive it for their benefit. They must know what it is and why they need it. We must therefore instruct children, before they are received to The Lords Supper, and we must examine them and make sure that they are able to examine themselves.

In the Synodical Conference tradition, first communion has generally been connected to Confirmation. This however has not been the general Lutheran practice. After the reformation, Confirmation was abolished many places and redefined at other places. Some places it was redefined as an examination before first communion and other places it was not. The age of both confirmation and First Communion has also varied.¹¹

Luther's Small Catechism goes through the basics of the faith, and it is a good choice for this instruction. It is also our confessional standard of what should be known by the communicants. I do not want to abandon memorization altogether. I think the chief texts need to be memorized. And I wish that we were able to have the Small Catechism including the explanations memorized by all communicants. But I also think we have to discuss, how much one needs to memorize before going to the Lord's Supper.

We might run a risk of postponing communion too long, if we demand more than we need to demand from children. I don't want to be lax or antinomian. I think children should memorize and understand the meaning of the chief texts before they commune. If a child's conscience is aroused earlier than the age in which a child is able to memorize the whole catechism, and if a child is able to memorize the chief texts and is able to show that they have understood them, I think it is hard to defend not communing them.

In the Lutheran Service Book, they have made a rite for examination of Catechumens based on the Questions and Answers appended to the Small Catechism with the chief texts. I think it might be too short, but I also think that memorization of the whole Small catechism is too much to demand before communion, if a child is able to explain the different parts.

First communion could either be connected to confirmation or not. Since confirmation has been connected to a certain age at least it is in Denmark, one might want to disconnect it from first communion. In Denmark today it is generally not connected to first communion as it was earlier. I think for most members of the State Church it is rather their last communion.

In the Free Church which is a sister church to the LCMS, it has been connected with first communion.

¹¹

See Repp, Arthur Christian. *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*. Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1964.

If one was to have an earlier age of first communion, one could disconnect it from confirmation. We have done that in our by-laws in our congregation, where admission to the Lords Supper depends on being examined, and not on being confirmed.

One possibility is to allow for earlier first communion with a reduced Small Catechism and then still have the full catechism memorized at confirmation.

Application to the issue of continual preparation to receive the Lord's Supper

An important but too often neglected issue today is the continual preparation and examination of the communicants.

The Augsburg Confession says concerning this issue, when it speaks about confession and absolution in article XXV:

Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved.¹²

Clearly this examination is not an examination of the sins of the one to be absolved, since Article XI has already made clear that an enumeration of sins is not necessary. It is rather an examination of the repentance, faith and doctrine of the communicant, which was done together with private confession and absolution.

The Apology says in article XV on Human Traditions:

With us many use the Lord's Supper [willingly and without constraint] every Lord's Day, but after having been first instructed, examined [whether they know and understand anything of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments], and absolved.¹³

The Augsburg Confession does not demand confession of individuals sins to the pastor as a condition for receiving the Lord's Supper. Confession of sins and the wish to receive absolution was a sign of repentance and faith and therefore made a prerequisite for attending the Lord's Supper.

Chemnitz in his Enchiridion explains further the purpose of confession and absolution before receiving the Lord's Supper:

For none are received to the Lord's Supper, unless they first, by general confession, attest their repentance and faith to the pastor of the church, who on that occasion also enters into private discussion with individuals. And this very thing, moreover, is observed in our churches for this purpose and for these reasons:

- I. That from this kind of confession and private discussion pastors might note whether hearers rightly hold and sufficiently understand the necessary parts of doctrine, and if they perceive that they still lack something in this matter, that they might thus have occasion to inform the more earnestly and better from the Word of God.*

¹² Triglotta, AC XXV 1

¹³ Triglotta Ap XV 40

- II. *That in this way they might explore whether they that desire to be admitted to the Lord's Supper are moved by true repentance and at the same time teach them more precisely what sin is and what reward [is]; likewise, that things are required for true repentance and how they are to be rightly engaged in.*
- III. *That in this way they might inquire and learn who believes what, [and] how, how seriously [and] with and through whom they seek remission of sins; where there is opportunity at the same time, to instruct and teach the unlearned more precisely what the nature and character of faith is, and likewise to remind them to learn to examine themselves whether they be in faith (2 Cor 13:5).*
- IV. *That by that private exploration they might be able to determine what kind of intent to improve they have individually, and on that occasion diligently impress on them for what reasons new obedience is necessary and in what it consists.*
- V. *That by that service they might, with salutary counsel and comfort from the Word of God, help pious consciences that are either pressed by temptation or troubled by some scruple; and that can be done best in that kind of private conversation.¹⁴*

Thus confession and examination prior to receiving the Lord's Supper should be used to examine the communicant's repentance, faith and knowledge of Christian doctrine. It should also serve the pastor so that he can know how to teach the flock properly. By a systematic examination of each individual's knowledge of the basic Christian faith the pastor will learn where something is lacking in his congregation.

The Danish Church Ordinance from 1539 makes mention of examination before communing both when it deals with absolution and when it deals with communion.

On absolution:

If he wants thereafter to be communed, he should be asked, what he thinks and understands about the Lord's Supper, if he understands, what the Supper is, what it is good for, and why he wants to receive it, and whether he has in the school of Christ bettered himself, so he can list the Ten Commandments and other things that belong to the teaching of children. [my translation]¹⁵

On communion

To this holy common meal (which solely belongs to the Christians), no one shall be received, unless he has first presented himself to the priest and asked him to be communed. Neither shall everyone who asks be admitted to the Supper, until they have explained themselves and their

¹⁴ Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word and Sacrament* 2007 p. 136-137

¹⁵ My translation of

Olsen, Max William. *Den Danske Kirkeordinants Af 1539, Og Andre Aktstykker Vedrørende Den Lutherske Kirkereformations Indførelse I Danmark*. Kjøbenhavn: NYT Nordisk Forlag, 1936. p. 79-80

*faith and answered the questions, that are asked about the Supper, unless they are known as noble and righteous persons. [my translation]*¹⁶

If we take our doctrine of closed communion seriously, I think we need to have regular examination of the communicant's doctrine.

While the practice of private confession and absolution had not been widely retained by the old Missouri Synod, they had retained announcement for Holy Communion. It was seen as more important than making pastoral calls in the early days of the LCMS, as is testified in a synod proceeding from 1855 as quoted in *Moving Frontiers*:

*The Synod deemed therefore that aside from special circumstances, inquiry at private confession or at the announcement for Holy Communion is the proper and chief means by which the pastor should obtain knowledge of the spiritual condition of individuals; not only because at that time he can generally talk with a person alone and unhindered but also because those who come to announce are more inclined to explore their spiritual condition more precisely, and the impending confession and Communion presents a special opportunity for self-examination.*¹⁷

I think the formality of the personal announcement for communion has its benefit, and my experience is that it is easier to have a spiritual conversation with a person under those circumstances than in a more informal setting as in a pastoral visit.

Walther goes as far as to make personal announcement for communion a precondition for a call, in his *Pastoral Theology*:

*It would be contrary to conscience to accept a call to a congregation that did not agree to personal announcement for the holy Supper.*¹⁸

Walther also makes a list of points to explore in such a confessional announcement:

1. *Whether the person considers God's word to be God's word;*
2. *Whether he knows what is necessary for salvation;*
3. *Whether he recognizes himself to be a miserable sinner, finds comfort in Christ's merit, and has no wicked intentions (Ps. 66:18);*
4. *Whether he believes in the mystery of the holy Supper and seeks in it forgiveness as well as strengthening in faith and godliness;*

¹⁶ My translation of Olsen, 1936. p. 81

¹⁷ Meyer, Carl S. *Moving Frontiers, Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*. St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1964. p. 246

¹⁸ Walther, C. F. W., and John M. Drickamer. *Walther's Pastorale, That Is, American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*. New

Haven, Mo.: Lutheran News, 1995. Pastorale p. 38

5. *Whether he confesses the Lutheran faith, as it is laid down in Luther's Small Catechism, as the correct Christian doctrine.*¹⁹

All of these points could be elaborated more. I have used a combination of Walther's suggestions and Luther's Questions and Answers.

Walther also comments on how often this examination should occur:

*It is not only not necessary to examine each person before each Communion (it is enough to do it from time to time, perhaps once a year), since the examination is not based on a law but on the needs of souls; in the cases of those who are known to be knowledgeable, upright, and proven Christians, the examination can be omitted entirely.*²⁰

Walther quotes Luther in support of this. While it is true that it might not be strictly necessary to examine every parishioner, I think it is a good practice to make it something everyone should go through at least once a year.

I have not been able to find the practice of personal announcement for communion in the later Pastoral Theology of John Fritz.

There is made mention of it in *The Shepherd Under Christ*, which is a textbook in pastoral theology from NPH. Mention is made of the practice of just writing your name on communion cards before attending communion. This might make the announcement into a mere registration of those who have communed rather than an announcement of who wants to commune.²¹

How should we do, then?

Confession and absolution prepares the individual communicant to receive the Lord's Supper properly. I therefore think it is a good practice to have confession and absolution before every communion. I also think that an announcement to the pastor of one's attendance to communion before the service is proper for several reasons:

Firstly, this way the pastor is able to know how much there is to be consecrated. The Danish Church Ordinance from 1539 states:

*The priests [Danish: præst from the greek presbyteros] should make sure to know the number of those that are to be communed, so they don't have to consecrate twice. (my translation)*²²

¹⁹ Walther, 1995 p. 116

²⁰ Walther, 1995 p. 117

²¹ Schuetze, Armin W., and Irwin J. Habeck. *The Shepherd under Christ: A Textbook for Pastoral Theology*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1974. p. 89-90

²² Translated from Olsen, 1936 p. 70-71

Secondly, the people is taught that the pastor actually has authority and is the administrator of this sacrament.

Thirdly, the pastor should be able to deal with those who are not to commune.

Fourthly, when even the members of the congregation are required to announce their intention to commune on beforehand, it is much easier for visitors to understand the seriousness of the sacrament and the reason why they cannot commune.

Even though I consider announcement before every communion to be an important practice, I don't think that private confession, absolution and individual examination is necessary before every communion.

In our congregation therefore, we have a confessional service with communion announcement before every service. In this confessional service, there is a general confession of sin with individual absolution of those who want to commune. Before the confession and absolution, I either have a confessional address based on the catechism or we use Luther's Questions and Answers. After absolution I use the communion exhortation. Those who have attended the confessional service and want to commune write their names in the communion book.

In addition to every Sunday confession and announcement, I have a personal examination of every member, usually in Lent. I also offer private confession and absolution at the end of the examination for those who want to make use of this.

I don't think everyone has to copy our exact practice, but I think that there should be some kind of personal examination of every member at least once a year, and I think that the members should be prepared to receive the Lord's Supper through confession and absolution every Sunday if possible.