

THE FEAST DIVINE

A man's car skidded on wet pavement and struck a light pole. Bruised and disheveled, he got out of the car only to slip and fall in some mud. The state trooper who had come to the scene pointed to an exclusive restaurant across the road and suggested the dirty driver might clean up there. As he entered the restaurant, the maître de recoiled in disgust. "Excuse me," the man said, "where's the bathroom?" The squeaky-clean maître de grudgingly replied, "Go down the hall and turn left. When you see the sign marked 'GENTLEMEN,' pay no attention to it and go right inside." While we sympathize with the dirty, muddied man in this humorous little story, we also excuse the maître de for jumping to the wrong conclusion. If you eat at a greasy spoon café, you may see some grease, and maybe some dirt and a fly or two! But dirt and mud are out of place in a restaurant where the kitchen is clean, the food is rich, clothing is fashionable, prices are high, and the clientele is cultured and demanding and discriminating.

There is one dining experience which demands carefulness and consideration more than any other. I refer to that one of a kind meal described in I Corinthians 11:20 as The Lord's Supper. Not common or ordinary, this is the memorial meal instituted by Jesus Himself on the night He was betrayed (11:23). It is a meal with unparalleled privilege for the Christian, for the cup and bread of the Lord's Supper is the "communion of the blood/body of Christ" (I Corinthians 10:16). Communion in this verse is from the Greek word *koinonia* (pronounced "koy-nohn-ee'-ah") which Strong's concordance defines as "partnership, participation, fellowship." According to Jesus' own words, the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper are symbolic of His body and blood given for us (I Corinthians 11:24-25). Jesus expressly commanded us to eat and drink "in remembrance of Me" (11:24b, 25b). There is a time for the church to gather around a table to partake of a common meal and celebrate the Lord's goodness in a festive atmosphere. The early church often did so (see Acts 2:46; Jude 12). But the Lord's Supper is the Lord's, not ours'. It is a solemn rite instituted by Jesus Himself and infused with the richest and deepest significance. That is why we are commanded to "examine ourselves" and to discern the Lord's body" lest we "eat and drink in an unworthy manner" and thus become "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27-29). If we partake carefully and reverently, the Lord's Supper feeds not our bodies but our souls and it takes us to the foot of the cross every week. It is, in the words of Lloyd O. Sanderson's beautiful song, "the feast divine."

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