

Plenty of debates in the church make us roll our eyes at each other after we go through the usual telling of the good ‘ole days when what happened to us was *obviously* the right way of doing things, and *obviously* should be done the exact same way today. One of those lovely edge-of-our-pew disputes is what age should one start receiving Communion. Is it after the 2nd grade, 5th grade, middle school with Confirmation? Or should we be like the Orthodox, who will even let an infant take in a morsel of bread and a drop of wine? Or do they need to pass some test to be able to spew out what Martin Luther wrote 500 years ago? Do they just need a short meeting with the pastor to okay it? Or is it better with a more extended class to dive into the Scripture and essential theological background?

Now back in *my* day, just a little past the good ‘ole days of Lutheranism USA, I was not allowed to take in my First Communion until after Confirmation. Now I can honestly tell you I remember exactly two things from Confirmation: one was my absolutely hideous handwriting on those dreaded pages of sermon notes inside that light blue notebook. The other was an interim pastor we had for a while, who took

up some class-time by challenging us to quiz him by saying certain lines from the hymnal to see if he could name that hymn. I remember exactly zero about what we learned in regards to Communion.

Yes, I'm sure the professional theologically-trained pastors taught us the so-called basics of the bread and wine being the body and blood of Jesus Christ. And I'm sure we read the Last Supper passage, setting the stage for the cross and the eternal re-altering of the entire world. It's quite possible I actually paid attention in those classes and remembered such things when it came to the big day, at least. But I have a feeling I, quite simply, appreciated it more because I was forced to wait for it, wait for the body and blood, wait to become more fully part of the church, of the body of Christ, wait to taste and see that the Lord was good not only to me, but to the world.

And then I think about these couple of verses from Proverbs, meant to describe the very wisdom of God. It says: “‘You that are simple, turn in here!’ To those without sense she says, ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.’” Now, fast-forward about ten years after that Confirmation and First Communion Day for me...I was

working at a church during my first year of seminary, as we were required to do; to, basically, get our feet wet when it came to the whole church-life thing. But after one worship service, this woman came up to me and said that I needed to smile more when I was helping serve Communion; because for her, it was a victory feast, it was re-living the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death. How can you not but burst forth the biggest smile spurred on by the uncontrollable joy that our human faces can possibly manage from ear to ear? “You that are simple, turn in here,” so says the wisdom of God.

Now it’s quite possible growing up in the church that I did, that I subconsciously developed this idea of Communion as a focus on the *sacrifice* of Jesus Christ, an almost re-living of his *death*, to realize what our Savior went through to save us forever. Something so in-grained during some of the most influential psychological years of life that becomes so incredibly difficult to reconsider after the fact. “You that are simple, turn in here...Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.”

The simplicity isn't just about whether we approach the altar every Sunday with sadness or happiness. The simplicity for us human beings trained into believing that there's only one way of doing things in the church or plenty of other realms in our life; the simplicity is believing as if there is only one way that God can work through the vast array of a miracle in the most holy Communion.

So, if we need God to be the prodigal father, after a week when we felt so incredibly lonely or without any hope or wondering if we could ever possibly be forgiven for what we did a few days before or a few decades gone by; if we need God to be the one to wrap the divine arms around us when we take that piece of bread, God can do exactly that. If we need God to be the One to give us that desperately needed divine jolt to make us realize how much the Holy Spirit is rushing through us through even a smidgen of bread and wine; if we need God to be the One to give us that not-so-subtle push not just back to our pews to praise God but out into the world, God can most certainly do exactly that too.

If we come up to this altar with the utmost sadness for reasons that God only knows, we're welcome to turn in here to the body and blood of

our Savior. If we come up beaming with excitement for blessings galore, we're welcome to turn in here too. Or if we're somewhere in-between, and we cannot quite put the words to it, God's beyond-our-understanding wisdom invites us simple-minded children of God to turn in and taste and see the earth-shattering goodness of our Lord.

Regardless of how we got there, regardless of whether it was through Confirmation, or a baptism, or God only knows what else, we're not only welcome, we're not only invited, we're whole-heartedly encouraged to realize how our utter simplicity, can still be where God goes to holy work in us every single time, no matter the circumstance, no matter what part of the faith journey we may be on that day; there is absolutely no limit, no fine print, no way to minimize what this God is more than capable of for each of us and for the entire world. And for that Greatest News of all that can never be taken away from us, we give thanks to God indeed! Amen!