

Formulary with the emphasis on the accents of Calvin



Notes

In this Formulary the emphasis falls on the wonderful communion with the living Christ, through which He nourishes us at the table with Himself through the Holy Spirit (see NGB, art 35).

Text

The celebration of the communion with the living Christ

Institution

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Communion was instated by the Saviour himself:

“When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God’. After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes’, And he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant of my blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:14-20).

Remembrance

In obedience to the words of Christ: “Gebruik dit tot my gedagtenis” we celebrate with communion that Jesus Christ was sent to earth by the Father according to God’s promise. The Lord Jesus Christ has given Himself as sacrifice for us who are sinners. With joy we confess that our lives depend on his death. We thank our devoted Saviour who gave his life for his flock like the Good Shepherd in this divine mystery:

*“He appeared in a body,
was vindicated by the Spirit,
was seen by the angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16).*

Attitude and assurance

The great gift of God’s grace in Christ inspires us to loath ourselves due to sin and to humble ourselves before the Lord. With joy and gratitude we hold on to the assurance that all our sins are forgiven based on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. His full justice is imputed and granted to us. We therefore come with our hands outstretched to the abundant Giver, like patients to the Healer, like sinners to the Worker of justice, like the dead to Him who gives life. Christ is the only food for our souls. Therefore the heavenly Father invites us to be nourished in Him with the communion and to get new energy from Him until we receive the heavenly eternity. The unmistakable signs and seals of the bread and wine assures us of Christ’s sincere love and faithfulness. We can know that He works all things in us that are promised in these signs, and that He is indeed the Bread of life.

Community

The blessings of the holy communion are granted as surely as if we had seen and touched Christ himself in the communion. The bread and the wine assert and confirm to us that Christ pours his life into us in the communion, as if it penetrates to the marrow.

When the bread is given as the sign, we should immediately think of the resemblance: Like bread nourishes the life in our bodies, sustains and protects it, so the body of Christ is the only food that can nourish and revitalize our souls. When wine is offered as sign of the blood of Christ, we should remember that it nourishes, and replenishes us, and fills us with joy. Christ does not do this by merely giving us a sign, but He fulfills it with the Spirit that He promises. Christ allows us to live in his community through the Spirit, so that we may say together with the apostle: *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal 2:20). He makes us shoots of his, the Heavenly Vine, so that we can bear fruit for Him. He binds us together in real love as parts of one body through the Spirit. Want dit is immers aan tafel saam met Christus waar sy bevel tot ons kom: *"My command is this: 'Love each other as I have loved you'"* (John 15:12).

As bread consists of many grains that are so mixed together that the one cannot be distinguished from the other, so we should be united and bound together that there could be no division or severance among us. Jesus warns: *"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined"* (Matt 12:25). We think of Jesus' command when we experience the wonderful presence of Jesus Christ through His Word and Spirit: *"My command is this: You should love each other as I have loved you"* (John 15:12).

Expectation

The apostle Paul places the holy communion within the perspective of Christ's second coming when he says: *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"* (1 Cor. 11:26). When we celebrate communion, we experience the joy of sharing in the new covenant in Christ's blood. We thank the Lord that we may know the redemption of which prophets spoke. We also look forward to the appearance of our Saviour in glory and the eternal wedding celebration during which will drink new wine with Him in the kingdom of His father, filled with joy. With great joy we pray with God's church: *"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"* (Rev 22:20).

Prayer

Merciful God and Father, with this communion we want to celebrate the wonderful community with your beloved Son Jesus Christ. We pray that you send us Your sanctifying Spirit, so that we may be nourished by the true bread in heaven that grants us eternal life. Amen.

Song

(for instance Scriptural Hymn 17-2)

Exhaltation

Let us exhalt our hearts to Christ where He sits at the right hand of the Father. Near the table of the Lord with joy and unity. Thank Him for the great love that He showed us when He gave himself as sacrifice, and which he still shows us with all His benevolence.

Form for distribution

The bread that we break is the communion with the body of Christ. Take it, eat, think and believe that the body of Christ has been granted to us.

The cup of gratitude for which we express our thanks, is the communion with the blood of Christ. Take it, drink, think and believe that the valuable blood of our Lord Jesus Christ has been spilled for the forgiveness of all our sins.

Thanksgiving

Let us praise the Lord with mouth and heart:

(Sing: Psalm 103:1,3,4,5 or Psalm 138 or another suitable song).