

To be a Christian means: I am a seeker; I am on a path.

To seek Christ is a very personal path. It can however be strengthening to join with others who are also seekers on a path. The Communion Service, celebrated with bread and wine since the time of Christ, the many ways in which single individuals seek Christ are joined. In The Christian Community, this celebration is called the Act of Consecration of Man

Why Consecration of Human Beings instead of Divine Service?

From ancient times human beings have assembled themselves in front of altars in order to serve the gods. In these services, reverence was almost always mixed with fear, the fear of God's almighty power.

Only through Christ did this divine being appear as a human being. He did not come, however, as a human 'like you and me'. Earthly human beings had estranged themselves more and more from the divine

world. As God's Son, He led us again towards an encounter with our spiritual origins, and thus to ourselves, to our own true human identity.

It is not fear or guilt that leads us to the altar of The Christian Community, but rather the feeling that we want to enliven the divine within ourselves; that we are on the path to becoming true human beings. It is in this way that the consecration of the human being is also a service to the divine. It is fulfilled in such a way that the presence of Christ, the Human God, is intensified, and at the same time it dedicates, consecrates the human being more and more.

The Sign of the Cross

Several times during the course of the service, there is the opportunity to make the sign of the cross. The people in the community make a small cross with their fingers over the forehead, over the chin, and over the heart. The priest makes a large cross enclosed in a circle.

The cross is the simplest sign of how the forces of heaven, symbolized by the vertical, permeate earthly conditions, the horizontal. In the priest's sign, circle and cross, all these prayer forces are gathered up together and stream powerfully toward the divine world.

Listening to the Gospel

In the first step of the Act of Consecration of Man, one hears the Gospel. Each week, the exchange between the speaking priest and the listening community enlivens portions out of the life and working of Christ. Christ speaks

of the divine world; He teaches humanity to understand not only the earth, but also the world of the heavens. To human beings who are scorned as sinners or possessed, He gives the power to reconcile themselves with their destiny. He heals the sick and fits the tattered body back together into a healthy unit. He fills the experience of death with life, so that death is no longer the end, but a transition into life.

On Sundays a sermon is generally included. It is not so much an exegesis or explanation as making a living connection with the Gospel, deepening and connecting the event with personal experience.

Offering- What Does It Mean—and Not Mean?

The second step is the offering. For some, the word has an unpleasant ring, but what exactly is being offered? The word comes from the Latin *offerare*, to present or bestow. The times when animals or fruits of the field were offered are past. In The Christian Community there is no money collected during the service. No material things are offered; rather we offer the best that we can muster of our soul's forces: our pure thoughts, our hearts' love, our devoted common activity.

The perception of that which I actually am creating, bringing, and offering can become much more concrete if from time to time I avail myself of the new Sacrament of Consultation. What is asked for is not a guilt laden sacrifice, but my own personal, active participation, co-celebration in the Act of Consecration of Man.

The Transformation of Matter

The third step is the transformation or transubstantiation of wine (in The Christian Community, unfermented grape juice) and bread. Christ transforms them into His blood and His body. How is this understood?

If we were to think of this only in material terms, it would actually be macabre; if we were to think of it as only symbolic, it would be totally subjective and therefore meaningless. But out of our own human experience we can understand: my own body is not my body because it is made up of particular parts or molecules; but rather my body is my body only because I live in it, because I am existentially connected with it. As soon as I die and abandon this body, it ceases to be my body. Christ connects Himself so deeply and existentially with these substances that He can say: This is my body and my blood.”

The Lord’s Prayer

As in every Christian service, the Lord’s Prayer is an abiding component of the Act of Consecration of Man. It is prayed aloud by the priest from the altar, and all those present are free to connect with it, outwardly silent and inwardly active. This great prayer, which Christ Himself prayed, forms the ending of the transformation.

Communion and Membership

The opportunity to connect with the transformed Christ-substances, to take them in as spiritual nourishment, comes in the fourth step. This is called communion or

union with Christ. The priest takes the bread and the wine at the altar not for him/herself personally, but for the whole community. Everyone who has celebrated along with the Act of Consecration of Man can share in this process. Thus a human community becomes a Christ Community.

In addition to the community communion of the priest, there is the additional possibility of taking the transformed substances into oneself as individual communion. Whoever presents him/herself at the altar receives a small host of bread and a sip of grape juice out of the chalice. Along with this most individual act is the added feature that the priest touches the side of the cheek with a blessing gesture, speaking the peace greeting of Christ.

At this point the prayer has condensed itself to the point that not only my soul, but also my body is inwardly and outwardly touched. The connection can go no deeper than this. This is the beginning of the path whereby I gradually become part of the community.

Membership in The Christian Community arises and lives in that I co-celebrate the sacraments. Nevertheless I can become a member when, according to my own wish, I am taken up as member by a priest and thereby acknowledge my connection to this path. It is meaningful to connect this event with the Sacrament of Consultation.



The Act of Consecration of Man (Communion Service)

*Praying in Community for the
Transformation of the Earth*

A Short Introduction

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