

It was our collect of the day this evening. It's also a prayer that's part of the service for taking communion to people in their homes or in the hospital.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.¹

This is a prayer that is very appropriate to taking communion week by week. But it bears special meaning tonight as we celebrate Holy Week, as we remember Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.

The prayer sets the scene. "On the night before he suffered." The context is tonight, Maundy Thursday, the night before Good Friday.

We remember that story every time we celebrate Eucharist. We recall the events on the night before Jesus suffered, the night he was betrayed.

So what does the prayer say Jesus does on this special night? He institutes the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. He inaugurates a sacred meal that Christians will participate in for centuries and millennia to follow.

And we call it a sacrament—a tangible sign of God's love and grace for all of us. Holy Communion is a way that God promises to be especially present with us whenever we break the bread and offer the cup.

That's the introductory part of the collect, the part that reminds us of what God has done:

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

The next part though, is about what we're specifically asking for. It's about what we want from God. It's what we're asking God's help to do.

Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are to remember Jesus every time we celebrate this sacrament. We recall Jesus' words over and over again: "Do this in remembrance of me."

But it's not just about remembering. It's also about re-membering. Re-membering is not just an intellectual exercise of recalling something in our minds. Remembering is also about becoming members again, becoming part of something again—RE-member-ing. It is about us reminding ourselves that we are members of Christ's body.

¹ BCP, p. 221, 397

But through God's grace communion is also an act which connects us, which knits us together into Christ's body, the church. We remember *{point to head}* so that we may be RE-membered, so that we may be reunified with Christ and with each other.

And the prayer asks that as we receive communion we do it thankfully. Thanksgiving is a hugely important word here. In New Testament Greek it is *eucharisteo*, the word from which we get the English word Eucharist. Eucharist is thanksgiving, and we ask God's help so that we may remember that fact. We ask God's help so that we may receive communion with an attitude of true thankfulness.

And then the collect concludes with a reminder that this act of Communion, this Eucharist, gives us a pledge of eternal life. It's not just a ceremony we go through for the sake of going through it. We believe that God uses this sacred meal to give us a foretaste on earth of the eternal life that awaits us. And it is a pledge, it is a promise. And for that too, we should be thankful.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.