



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + September 6, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: Altars and Home Altars

God and altars go together.

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of God built altars as monuments to the promises and revelations of God. When God delivered Noah and his family, Noah built an altar of thankoffering (Gen. 8:20), even as Abraham built an altar to mark the spot where God promised him the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6). Isaac built an altar after God appeared to him during the night, promising great blessing to his family (Genesis 26:24-25), and Jacob erected an altar where God opened heaven to him and revealed a company of angels (Gen. 35:7). In time, all of Israel would gather around the altar of the temple to offer sacrifice after sacrifice in anticipation of the Great and Final Sacrifice, Jesus.

Altars recall God's mighty acts and gather His people to call on His name.

In the Church, we have the altar "not built by human hands": Holy Communion. That blessed Supper proclaims God's mighty act of giving us His Son, Jesus, for the forgiveness of our sins, and even so, it inspires our thanksgiving and praise. How does the Lord's Supper raise an altar in our homes, too? Traditionally, "home altar" refers to our practice of devotion. What role does Holy Communion play in nurturing your daily practice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving? Read on to find out!

About the Cover Art

Many religious illustrations of the past were engravings, in which an image is carved into wood or metal. Then ink is applied to it and pressed on a piece of paper. This engraving was done by the Italian artist Raphael in 1649. It presents us with Noah after the flood, assisted by his sons (and possibly grandsons, as imagined by Raphael) in building an altar of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance. The presence of rams anticipates Jesus, the Lamb of God, who has given made the ultimate sacrifice of thanksgiving on our behalf.

**Words to Live By:
Cherishing Holy Communion Every Day**

You don't leave the body and blood of Christ at the altar in church: you take it with you, to be a daily strength and comfort. How?

It's not by keeping some of the bread or wine with you (Jesus wants you to "take, eat," and "take, drink" at the Supper!). Rather, it's by carrying these words with you: "given and shed for you." Our Lord attaches those words to His body and blood, promising that everything in that body and blood—sacrifice, life, forgiveness, eternity, strength—are yours.

Wake up every day, and go throughout your day, reminding yourself: "The body and blood of Jesus were given to me, with all their gifts. I know, because I've eaten and drunk them." Live from the altar, for the altar.

Daily Readings for the Week of Sept. 13 (Pentecost 15)

S Job 4:1-6, 12-21 Revelation 4:1-11 Mark 6:1-6a	Th Job 8:1-10, 20-22 Acts 10:17-33 John 7:14-36
M Job 4:1,5:1-11,17-21, 26-27 Acts 9:19b-31 John 6:52-59	F Job 9:1-15, 32-35 Acts 10:34-48 John 7:37-52
T Job 6:1-4, 8-15, 21 Acts 9:32-43 John 6:60-71	Sa Job 9:1, 10:1-9, 16-22 Acts 11:1-18 John 8:12-20
W Job 6:1; 7:1-21 Acts 10:1-16 John 7:1-13	

These readings correspond to pages 783-817 in Volume IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Preparing for Holy Communion

Preparing to receive Holy Communion is part of our home and personal devotion, because it is at home and in our personal lives that our journey to the altar begins. We prepare for the Supper, that it may be pure joy to us.

In the Small Catechism of the Lutheran Church, we have a simple summary of this preparation:

Who receives this sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.

The preparation for Holy Communion is joyful! It's a matter of trusting the Lord's promise: this gift really is for you!

Here are some ways to nourish that faith in your practice of daily prayer:

- 1) **Daily Repentance and Forgiveness.** Remember why that body and blood were given for you: *for the forgiveness of sins*. Call to mind your sins of the day and confess them to the Lord, trusting Him to carry them away.
- 2) **Hallow your table.** Our Lord's willingness to inhabit our bread and wine teaches us to look on all of creation with amazed eyes. Jesus is willing to abide here with us! Therefore, treat your daily meals with care and reverence, as true gifts of God, recalling our Lord's love of seeing us eat and giving Him thanks for it.
- 3) **Look forward to the Supper.** A few days before you next receive the Supper, start asking God to bless you with His Holy Spirit, that you may receive His gifts with thanksgiving and faith in all that He's done for you.