

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 2 E. THE SACRAMENTS

The treatment of unused consecrated elements

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1. Lutherans believe that the consecrated elements (the bread and the wine) which are consumed during holy communion, are the body and blood of Christ.
2. We believe and teach that the real presence of Christ in the eucharist is not limited to the actual moment when the communicant receives the bread and wine. The real presence of Christ endures throughout the whole action of celebrating the Lord's supper, that is, through the consecration of the elements, the distribution, and the eating and drinking.
3. The example of the early church shows that it is acceptable practice to take the consecrated elements from the altar to members who are sick and dying. This is the only reason that a Lutheran pastor will reserve or set aside the consecrated elements outside the actual celebration of the eucharist. In such cases the reservation of the bread and wine is regarded as an extension of the sacramental action. It is intended to include those who would normally be part of the worshipping community.
4. Some influential people in the Lutheran church (notably Luther and Chemnitz) have taught that the real presence continues until all consecrated elements are consumed. But Lutherans generally have refrained from speculating on how long the sacramental presence lasts. They have simply followed the *Formula of Concord* (Article 7) in holding that we cannot assume the presence of Christ's body and blood outside the context of the eucharistic celebration.
5. We recommend that pastors be responsible for making a careful estimate of the quantity of wine and wafers to be consecrated, so that there's not a lot of unused elements left over after the service.

THE TREATMENT OF UNUSED CONSECRATED ELEMENTS

6. It is good Lutheran practice to treat the unused consecrated elements with reverence. Unused consecrated bread and wine may be:
 - a. reverently consumed in the sacristy by the pastor and assistants after the service; or
 - b. retained for future sacramental use (except in the case of the wine which has been passed around in the common cup); or
 - c. in the case of wine, poured onto the earth where it is not liable to profanation, and, in the case of the bread, buried at a similar site.
7. We urge pastors to inform their congregations of sound Lutheran practice in this matter, and to explain the reasons for it.