



COMMUNION ON THE MOON: JULY 20, 1969

Has the Word ever caused you to think about communion on the moon? (Holy Communion is normally reserved for groups of Christians remembering Christ's death and receiving assurance of their forgiveness through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless it is wonderful to think that the true God, Jesus Christ, our Lord was included in this historic step of humanity).

Forty three years ago two human beings changed history by walking on the surface of the moon. But what happened before Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong exited the Lunar Module is perhaps even more amazing, if only because so few people know about it. "I'm talking about the fact that Buzz Aldrin took communion on the surface of the moon. Some months after his return, he wrote about it in Guideposts magazine.

And a few years ago I had the privilege of meeting him myself. I asked him about it and he confirmed the story to me, and I wrote about it in my book "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About God (But Were Afraid to Ask)".

The background to the story is that Aldrin was an elder at his Presbyterian Church in Texas during this period in his life, and knowing that he would soon be doing something unprecedented in human history, he felt he should mark the occasion somehow, and he asked his minister to help him. And so the minister consecrated a communion wafer and a small vial of communion wine. Buzz Aldrin took them with him out of the Earth's orbit and on to the surface of the moon.

He and Armstrong had only been on the lunar surface for a few minutes when Aldrin made the following public statement: "This is the LM pilot. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask every person listening in, whoever and wherever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his or her own way." He then ended radio communication and there, on the silent surface of the moon, 250,000 miles from home, he read a verse from the Gospel of John, and he took communion. Here is his own account of what happened:

"In the radio blackout, I opened the little plastic packages which contained the bread and the wine. I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine slowly curled and gracefully came up the side of the cup. Then I read the scripture, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Whosoever abides in me will bring forth much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing.

I had intended to read my communion passage back to earth, but at the last minute [they] had requested that I not do this. NASA was already embroiled in a legal battle with Madelyn Murray O'Hare, the celebrated opponent of religion, over the Apollo 8 crew reading from Genesis while orbiting the moon at Christmas. I agreed reluctantly.

I ate the tiny Host and swallowed the wine. I gave thanks for the intelligence and spirit that had brought two young pilots to the Sea of Tranquility. It was interesting for me to think: the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the very first food eaten there, were the communion elements.

And of course, it's interesting to think that some of the first words spoken on the moon were the words of Jesus Christ, who made the Earth and the moon - and who, in the immortal words of Dante, is Himself the "Love that moves the Sun and other stars." (This is an article by Eric Metaxas)

What a way for the first human's on the moon to celebrate the blessings of love of the God that has given us the knowledge and ability to put a man on the moon!

Or close with this statement: While the Lord's Supper is normally a quiet and intimate way to recall Christ's death, this event reminds us that the same God of loving kindness who paid for the sins of all humanity is also the one who gives us the wisdom and knowledge to put a man on the moon.

Joseph E Stickney –May 2013
David's Star EV Lutheran Church - Vol. 5, No. 10
www.davidsstar.org

