

## ***7.0 WHEN DISCIPLINE REQUIRES A PRIEST TO WITHHOLD COMMUNION***

As shepherds of the local church, presbyters monitor the kind and quality of fellowship that people enjoy as members of the body of Christ. When fellowship is broken by virtue of sin it not only harms an individual member of the body of Christ but also harms the capacity of others to live in peace, the presbyter may withhold Holy Communion. This has the effect of expressing broken fellowship with God and His people and applies the words of the Lord Jesus to make peace (Matthew 5:23-24).

### **Concerning Discipline at Holy Communion**

*ACNA Texts for Common Prayer: Holy Eucharist 'Concerning Discipline'*

If the Priest knows that a person who is living a notoriously evil life intends to come to Communion, the Priest shall speak to that person privately, and tell him/her that he/she may not come to the Lord's Table until he/she has given clear proof of repentance and amendment of life. The Priest shall follow the same procedure with those who have done wrong to their neighbors and are a scandal to the other members of the congregation, not allowing such persons to receive Communion until they have made restitution for the wrong they have done.

When the Priest sees that there is enmity between members of the congregation, he/she shall speak privately to each of them, telling them that they may not receive Communion until they have forgiven each other. And if the person or persons on one side truly forgive the others and desire and promise to make up for their faults, but those on the other side refuse to forgive, the Priest shall allow those who are penitent to come to Communion, but not those who are obstinate.

In all such cases, the Priest is required to notify the Bishop, within fourteen days at the most, giving the reasons for refusing Communion. This is intended to give sufficient time for the repentance and reconciliation of the parties so involved.

Whenever possible the priest should meet with the individual prior to the worship service to explain and to guide him or her toward repentance and reconciliation. Should this opportunity not be welcomed or resisted, then the individual should be welcomed to hear the word of God, read and preached, and to participate in prayers, but not welcomed to receive Holy Communion until such time as repentance and reconciliation has been affected.

It is advisable that the priest make contact with the Bishop to discuss any impending action that is anticipated in order to seek his advice and counsel. If however this is not possible, then a written statement of the action and the reasons for it should be forwarded to the Bishop immediately.