

## Communion of the Early Christians.



IN his magnificent little book upon the Lord's Prayer, which St. Cyprian wrote in the middle of the third century, a passage occurs in his explanation of the petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' from which it appears that it was the custom of the early Christians to communicate daily. He says: 'Christ is the Bread of Life. We pray that this Bread may be given us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily

receive the Eucharist as the food of salvation, may not by any mortal sin be shut out from the partaking of this heavenly Bread, may not be separated from the Body of Christ; for He Himself hath said, "*I am the living Bread which is come down from heaven.*" So now we pray that our daily Bread, which is Christ, may be given to us daily, in order that we who are in Christ, and who live in Him, may never fall away from His salvation nor depart from His Body.'

In his work upon the lapsed, viz, those unhappy Christians who in times of persecution, through fear, denied our Lord, the holy Bishop writes: 'They have done violence to the Body and Blood of the Lord; yea, truly have they sinned far more against Him with their hands and mouths than even in denying Him;' an unworthy Communion being held by the Saint as a greater offence against God than denying our Lord would be. From this passage we may see, as was the fact, that in primitive times it was the custom for the faithful to receive the Body of the Lord in their hands. It was also the custom to communicate little children, but only under the form of wine.

On the spot where St. Cyprian gave up his spirit under the sword of the executioner the Christians erected an altar, which they called *mensa Cypriani* (the table, or altar, of Cyprian), because there Cyprian was offered for Christ. Here the Most Holy Sacrifice was offered up,