

19th February 2026

Tickets

**"It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha,
only I most respectfully return Him the ticket."**

Fedor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Members of the Tartan Army – the Scotland Supporters' Club – are, even as we speak, exploring ways of securing tickets for Scotland's World Cup games. Even though I'm not travelling to the World Cup, as a member of the Scotland Supporters' Club myself, I've registered for tickets. If I'm successful, I'll pass them on to family and friends. Getting tickets for any big event is hard work, *and* expensive. But, if you make the effort, and are able to pay the vast sums required, it's very worthwhile indeed.

Growing up in a Highland Presbyterian tradition, the Sacrament of Holy Communion was celebrated only four times a year. Indeed, in some churches, or in ultra-Presbyterian denominations, Communion would be only once a year, preceded by a week's worth of "preparatory services" too. In our congregation back then, Elders delivered a "Communion Card" the week before the Sacrament (cards replacing the "Communion Tokens" of past generations). This allowed the Kirk Session to know who had attended – the obedient folk – and it enabled those at the church door to know who could legitimately take Communion – the worthy folk. My father called the Communion Card his "ticket". "Don't forget the tickets," he would intone when we were leaving for church on a Communion Sunday.

And I say, "A plague on your Communion cards!" Is the Communion table – four times a year or weekly (my preference) – not an open table? Is the Eucharist not a Sacrament of Grace and not legislation? Do we *really* need a ticket meet with Christ? An invitation, yes! A welcome, yes! An acceptance, yes! An encouragement, yes! But an entrance ticket? Oh, no!

I once went to visit a friend, a Roman Catholic priest, who'd moved to a new parish. He showed me round his church, and pointed out a sturdy, marble "Altar Rail" across the Chancel area. "That," he said forcibly, "is going to go. I'm not having any of my parishioners feeling there's a barrier – physical or spiritual – between them and the ever-present Christ."

A ticket? No need, not when a thoughtful priest bids you come close to your Lord with no barrier to impede you.

A prayer for today

Access to the Grace of God is free and offered to all – no ticket required!