

In the lectionary text for the gospel this Sunday, Jesus talks about how we need to behave with one another, even in conflict. We are familiar with his admonition to quietly seek out our sister or brother and then to seek another “witness” to enable this reconciliation to happen. The assumption here is that there is always conflict in community and that Christ is present in the midst. The challenge here is not only that this is not an easy prescriptive for perceived wrongs to be addressed; Jesus wants to protect the lost and the vulnerable. Just before this passage he reminds the disciples that the shepherd seeks out the one lost sheep of the one hundred and that forgiveness happens over and over again. Jesus enters into the everyday not so easy moments of a church’s life, and this is the context for the familiar and beloved phrase: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Jesus is present in the midst of conflict.

I want to acknowledge that for most of us the phrase recited from the Book of Common Prayer or in the quiet of our intimate prayer, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” is personal.

The promise that Jesus is present with us as we pray, as we eat, as we meet with a friend with hope, is deep within our hearts as individuals and as a community of faith—in prayers for healing, in prayers of grace, in prayers for restoration to wholeness and justice. We know that Christ stands with us in locked rooms and in the lonely hours where it seems only two or three are gathered as witnesses to the deep sorrows of living when things are difficult.



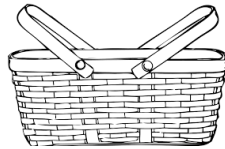
Christ with the Peasants, Fritz von Uhde, c. 1887–8, oil on panel

In this picture Fritz von Uhde places Jesus beside the table of an intergenerational family, his faint halo a quiet reminder that Christ is present in the ordinary moments of our lives. Everyday meals are a place where we remember God’s providence. Is it the rushed moment of breakfast or simple supper, ended quickly for other tasks ahead? Is grace the blessing we say with a friend that comes to the same Eucharist table?

Are we remembering to say grace? Do we speak a poetic phrase sung from our heart or a cheery reminder of childhood? All are good.

God is good; God is great.
We thank you God, for our food. Amen

Bless, O Lord, this food to our use,
and us to your service,
and make us ever mindful
of the needs of others.
Amen.



Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts
which we are about to receive from your
bounty, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest,
Let these your gifts to us be blessed.
Amen.



Reconciliation; Coventry Cathedral; Josefin de Vasconcellos.

May our hearts always be open to
Christ's bountiful Love wherever we
are. "Risen Lord, be known to us in
the breaking of the bread."