

'Courage to See'

*President Steve Veazey's
2023 World Conference Communion
service message on April 23.*

Veazey's message reminds us that through Communion, Jesus offers us a new way of being human, a new way of being one with God and others.

It's been four years since we shared the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at World Conference. During that time our lives have been disrupted by a global pandemic, cultural upheavals, wars, environmental crises, economic difficulties, and more. It has been a tough time.

Sadly, we have lost beloved church leaders, members, and friends to the pandemic and other maladies. There are empty seats at our dining tables, in our churches, and here. Let's pause to remember them as we hold our grief in mutual love. At the same

time, we have scriptural assurance that the physically departed are now part of a "great...cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us (Hebrews 12:1 NRSV).

This is a spiritual relatedness beyond physical presence that encourages us to remain faithful to Christ and the gospel way. During the past four years, as difficult as they were, we have continued to effectively offer ministry and witness of Christ around the world! Thank you for your determination, flexibility, sacrifices, and creativity. You have done well!



Today our theme is “Courage to See.” Sharing the Lord’s Supper helps us see truth about Jesus Christ and the meaning of discipleship. We experienced the parable of the Samaritan earlier (Luke 10:29–37 NRSV). This parable teaches that whomever we encounter in whatever circumstances should be seen as “our neighbor.” As President [Stassi] Cramm wrote: We are called to demonstrate Christlike love with every person we encounter, setting aside any prejudice we may hold. And Christlike love calls us to see and respond when there are needs or injustices.”

Coming upon the wounded man, the Samaritan saw him truly as a person. He saw what was needed to save his life. He risked responding even though the robbers probably still were lurking nearby. He saw what was needed for the wounded one to heal more completely and generously provided it.

Opening our eyes to someone in need takes courage. How many people do we pass daily who are just longing to be seen? William Sloane Coffin, the late cleric and peace activist, wrote: “No one need be afraid of fear, only afraid that fear will stop him or her from doing what is right. Courage means being well aware of the worst that can happen, being sacred almost to death, and then doing the right thing anyhow.”

The Samaritan courageously saw and acted, showing us how to love God and neighbor as disciples of Jesus. W. Paul Jones, theologian and author, states: “The heart of being Christian is “metanoia,” a reorientation in being, in which one sees through the eyes of God by incorporating the mind of Christ. The conversion is radical, for it so changes a person that society’s competitive lures lose their appeal. Instead, the Christian truly does want to love the neighbor as oneself, does foster community over the self... (W. Paul Jones, *Remnant Christianity in a Post-Christian World*, page 89)”

Are we among the radically converted? Have we courageously reoriented our beings to see “through the eyes of God by incorporating the mind of Christ?” Let’s not fool ourselves! The mind of Christ clashes with many aspects of our cultures and lifestyles, no matter how good or righteous we think we are. It is a profoundly different way of viewing ourselves, our interactions, our possessions, and our priorities. It moves us from self-centeredness to seeking oneness in communities that embody Christ’s kind of love of justice.

The Lord’s Supper brings clearly into view the Jesus who stirred strong opposition because of his astounding perception of God’s love and purpose. And when Jesus revealed God’s love in all its breadth and vulnerability in a violent world, he became the victim of violence. The horror of this should shock us into examining our lives in a violent world that many seem content to preserve. This self-examination and “reorientation in being” is the beginning of salvation.

The truth apparent in the Lord’s Supper is that Jesus will suffer and die so we can see and experience the



extent of God’s love. Jesus’s words and actions at the Passover meal before his crucifixion introduced a new covenant of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. He was crucified for that vision, fully trusting God for whatever came next.

Vincent Donovan, a late missionary and Catholic priest, wrote: “There will always be a cross somewhere in the midst of the Christian solution to evil, a cross of the pain involved in not returning blow for blow; a cross of the natural human bitterness felt in the experience of hatred and returning love in its place...in being story became lost. Concerned lest the candle totally go out, the faithful remnant gathered anxiously around their ailing priest.

“It is sufficient,” he whispered, “simply to break the bread and share the cup, for that will tell the story.” (Paul Jones, *Remnant Christianity in a Post-Christian World*, preface xi)

Everything we need is here! The Lord’s Supper, in symbol, word, and movement, offers spiritual truth that opens eyes, transforms lives, binds us together, and sends us out as vessels of Christ’s love. It calls us to live cross-shaped lives in Christ-shaped community, embodying Christ’s new covenant of peace. Doctrine and Covenants 164:9b states: “The rise of Zion the beautiful, the peaceful reign of Christ, awaits your wholehearted response to the call to make and steadfastly hold to God’s covenant of peace in Jesus Christ.”

Today, in this Communion service, may we have the courage to see that Jesus, by giving up his life, offers us a new way of being human, a new way of being one with God and others. Through these emblems, Jesus says: “I have opened the way for a new covenant of peace to heal yourselves, your families, your tribes, your societies, and your planet—salvation in all its meaning! I gave my life so that you might have this opportunity.”

Through this sacrament, the Holy Spirit ushers us into the most intimate experience of oneness with Jesus Christ. He is here with us! We are there at the table with him! Past, present, and future become the eternal now in which we are bound spiritually to Christ and each other as sacred community through which Christ lives. That is the mysterious potential of this moment!

Listen to these 2019 words of counsel:

Additional meaning is waiting to be discovered in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Renewing covenant with Jesus Christ includes the call to live as peaceful human beings who personify Christ's peace...Cherish opportunities to be spiritually formed by Christ's sacred meal of remembrance, reconciliation, renewal, and peace.

Then go with conviction into the locations of your discipleship and be the peace of Christ.

Here are two questions as we prepare for Communion:

How will we live Christ's covenant of peace during this World Conference as we interact with people from multiple cultures with diverse perspectives on important topics?

How will we summon the courage to see where God is leading us next and to respond boldly as a worldwide faith community committed to Christ's covenant of peace?

Lord, open our eyes so we may courageously see and act as you guide us forward! merciful and peacemakers in a world which understands neither... there will always stand the paradox of the cross, a cross not for others, but for us." (Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*, page 169)

Jesus said that his disciples should "take up their cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24 NRSV). The good news is that God raised the crucified Jesus and made him the forerunner of a new humanity, an emerging community of oneness and hope that, as theologian Daniel Migliore wrote: "...no longer needs scapegoats, that no longer wills to live at the expense of victims, that no longer imagines or worships a bloodthirsty God...but that follows Jesus in the power of a new Spirit. (Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, page 190)

Remarkably, when we participate together in Communion, spiritual awakening and transformation happen. As I think about that, I recall this story: There once was a priest who regularly took his exiled faithful secretly into the forest, and there lit a candle, told a story, said some prayers, and shared bread and wine. In time, some of the prayers became forgotten. And as he further aged, elements of the story became lost. Concerned lest the candle totally go out, the faithful remnant gathered anxiously around their ailing priest.

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