



March 20, 2023

### The Presence of Christ

I went to the gym this afternoon. Most weeks I go there two or three times just to keep my body in shape. Reading keeps my mind in shape... and sometimes I wish I could just read a book to keep my body in shape as well. But going to the gym has benefits beyond just toning up my body. There are people in the building. And people provide me an opportunity I desperately need. In the locker room today, there was a young man I had met on an earlier occasion... not at the gym but at the bakery downtown. He works there and he often serves me when I come in. Last week, after he put my rustic rolls in a bag, I asked him his name. He told me and then I took a chance... that he might actually be interested in knowing my name as well. Taking that chance began a conversation... and he shared with me what he hoped to be doing with his life in the years ahead. I walked out of the bakery a better person... not just because I had four rustic rolls to put in the freezer... but because I had risked being the presence of Christ and had been richly rewarded for doing so.

How do you seek to be the presence of Christ in your life? For so many years in my own, I have had the privilege of preaching every Sunday... and through my words have had opportunity to present a way of life that models that of Christ. That part of my life is behind me now... but new doors do open, and even though I miss that weekly opportunity, there is not a day goes by when a chance to be the presence of Christ does not arise. A warm smile... a kindly word... a simple question: what is your name?

We have a routine in our house: my wife, Carol, makes the salad and I do the rest of the meal. Sometimes she feels guilty about that arrangement, but I tell her that she is giving me a great gift... because I love to cook. I should add that she does the baking as well... and there would be no cookies in our house if it were not for her. Yesterday she told me she needed some lettuce... so I went to the grocery store. In the middle of the winter, it is hard to find fresh lettuce and every head I picked up was wilted. So I looked instead at the plastic boxes of spinach. Now I am a fanatic about freshness... so I rooted through nearly every box that was there... are the leaves firm or are they wilted? In doing so, I left the whole section a bit of a mess. One thing I didn't realize: the produce manager was nearby watching me root through everything. When finally I had chosen my box, he came over... looked at me very sternly... and then angrily straightened up the whole section. Irritation was seething out of him. Now I could have just left with my lettuce...

which is what I really wanted to do... but somewhere inside was a presence calling me to do something else.

I went over to the man to apologize. He did not want to hear my apology. He walked away. I followed him and told him how inappropriate was my behavior. He seemed not to listen to my words but really I know he was listening. I paid for the lettuce and walked out of the store. Being the presence of Christ is sometimes easy... and sometimes not so easy at all. But eating Carol's salad that night, I know I had done the right thing.

~Written by Rev. Fred Edmonds



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