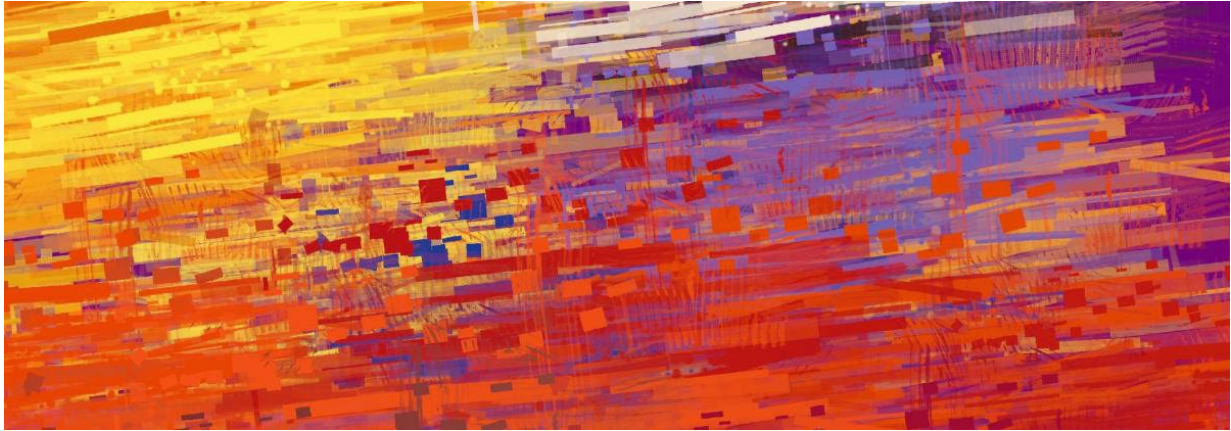




Precious Blood

SPIRITUALITY INSTITUTE



**Sharing the gifts of
Precious Blood Spirituality with the world.**



Stay at The Table

Reconciliation as a Spirituality of Relationship

In February 2025, Timothy White published a deeply personal essay in *The New York Times* titled, “My Father Was a Conservative Evangelical Pastor. Then I Came Out.”

White grew up in a deeply religious family. His father was an evangelical pastor who loved his son but also held strong convictions about homosexuality. When Timothy came out as gay, those realities collided. Father and son struggled, and so did their relationship.

Years later, after his father had died, Timothy read his father's journals and discovered just how profound that struggle had been. His father had wrestled with Scripture, his faith, what he had preached and taught, and his love for his son.

But father and son remained in relationship.

Over time, something changed. Eventually his father was able to pray, "Father, thank you that you created our son gay."

It did not happen overnight.

They stayed at the table.

That image has stayed with me because I believe it says something important about our spirituality as a Precious Blood community.

We speak often about reconciliation. It is at the heart of the spirituality we have inherited and the mission we claim. But reconciliation can easily become an abstraction—a beautiful word we use to describe our ministries, our community, or our hopes for the Church and the world.

Real reconciliation is much messier.

It happens between people who disagree. It happens when someone has been wounded. It happens when trust has been damaged. It happens when people who love one another discover that they see the world very differently.

And sometimes reconciliation begins simply because two people are willing to **stay at the table**.

Matthew 18:15–20 (the gospel reading for Mass on Sunday, September 5, 2026) gives the Christian community a remarkably practical process for dealing with broken relationships. Go first to the person. Speak honestly. Listen. If that does not work, bring others into the conversation. If necessary, involve the larger community.

Jesus seems to be saying: **Do not give up on one another too quickly.**

That is not easy.

When someone hurts us, our instinct is often to talk to somebody else about the person rather than talk to the person. We gather allies. We rehearse the injury. We decide who is right and who is wrong. Sometimes we simply walk away.

Reconciliation asks something more of us.

It asks us to speak truthfully about the wound while remaining open to relationship. It asks us to listen. And perhaps most difficult of all, it asks us to remain at the table long enough to consider that the person who needs to change might not only be the person sitting across from us.

Timothy White's father stayed long enough to listen, struggle and question. He stayed long enough to wonder whether he might need to change. He stayed long enough for love to stretch him.

That seems to me profoundly connected to Precious Blood spirituality.

Reconciliation is not something we manufacture. It is ultimately God's work. We cannot force another person to forgive. We cannot demand that another person change. We cannot make reconciliation happen according to our timetable.

What we can do is create space for grace.

We can remain open enough, patient enough and loving enough that when grace begins to move, there is somewhere for it to go.

There is, however, another challenging moment in Matthew's teaching. Jesus says that if every attempt at reconciliation fails, we should treat the person "as you would a Gentile or a tax collector."

Matthew seems to acknowledge something we know from experience: sometimes reconciliation does not happen. Sometimes a relationship has to change. Sometimes boundaries are necessary. There are even circumstances when remaining in a relationship is neither healthy nor safe.

But as disciples of Jesus, we cannot hear the words "Gentile and tax collector" without remembering how Jesus himself treated Gentiles, tax collectors and sinners.

He spoke with them. He healed them. He called them. He forgave them.

And, much to the consternation of respectable religious people, **Jesus ate with them.**

Jesus kept returning to the table.

Perhaps, then, even when communion is broken, love is not cancelled.

There may be moments when we have to leave the table. There may be relationships that cannot presently be restored. Forgiveness can be offered by one person; reconciliation requires the participation of both.

But perhaps we do not have to throw the table away.

We can leave a chair open.

This is where I hear differently Jesus' familiar promise at the conclusion of Matthew's teaching: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We often use those words as a reassurance about prayer. But notice their context. Jesus speaks them in the middle of a teaching about conflict, forgiveness, accountability, binding and loosing, and the difficult work of restoring relationship.

Christ is not simply the destination of reconciliation.

Christ accompanies us through the process of reconciliation.

When two people struggle to forgive, Christ is there.

When a family tries to heal, Christ is there.

When a community struggles with disagreement and change, Christ is there.

When two people finally sit across from one another and say what needs to be said, Christ is sitting at the table too.

That has something important to say to us as a Precious Blood community.

We live in a Church and a society increasingly tempted to walk away from the table. We sort ourselves into camps. We label one another. We decide who belongs and who does not. Sometimes we bind people so tightly to their worst decision, their political position, their theology, their generation, their sexuality, their history, or their disagreement with us that we leave little possibility for anything new to emerge.

The spirituality of the Blood calls us to another way.

The Blood of Christ is the sign of a God who refuses to abandon relationship with humanity. Even when humanity rejects God, God continues to seek communion. The Blood poured out is the cost of that love and the promise that brokenness does not have to have the final word.

Every time we gather around the Eucharistic table, we remember this.

We do not gather because we have everything figured out. We do not gather because we have never wounded one another. We certainly do not gather because we all agree.

We gather because Christ gathers us.

We come to a table where sinners are welcomed, broken people become one Body, and the Blood of Christ is poured out for reconciliation.

Perhaps this is one of the gifts our Precious Blood spirituality can offer our fractured Church and world today:

Stay at the table.

Stay long enough to listen.

Stay long enough to be challenged.

Stay long enough to wonder whether I, too, might need to change.

Stay long enough for grace to surprise us.

And when staying is not yet possible, when the wound is still too deep or the other person is not ready, **leave a chair open.**

Because Christ has not walked away.

Christ stays at the table.

And perhaps that is why we keep returning to the table ourselves: because we believe in a God who keeps returning to us.

Fr. Dave Matz, C.P.P.S.