

A while ago I tallied up all the different places I had lived since leaving school. Including the ten different ships I worked on, I figured I'd moved 27 times in 40 years. When we look around we can observe a lot of transience in our society. Just go to any large gathering and ask where people are from and we'll find that we're mixing with people not born in Perth.

The West Australian economy is increasingly built on workers who fly in and fly out. A couple of weeks in remote mine sites followed by a week with family back in Perth. People have also been very dislocated by Covid, with Australians not being able to return from overseas or even to return to their homes within Australia.

This has given rise to huge levels of anxiety. Where and how do we find our centre when everything is in flux and much is outside our control? At the end of the first world war, and the Russian Revolution, the Irish poet William Yeats could sense some of this sense of a society with no centre:

**TURNING and turning in the widening gyre [vortex/cyclone]**

**The falcon cannot hear the falconer;**

**Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;**

**Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,**

**The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere**

**The ceremony of innocence is drowned;**

**The best lack all conviction, while the worst**

**Are full of passionate intensity.**

Where do our souls find a centre, a home, a place of stability from which place all our places take their bearings? This question just goes to show that in matters of spirituality the more things change the more they remain the same, because the theme of where we rest – the theme of our spiritual home is a key theme in John's Gospel.

When Jesus first appears at the beginning of John's Gospel (1:38), Jesus is walking along when he turns around and sees two disciples following him. Jesus says to them, 'what are you looking for?'. They say to him, 'Teacher, where are you abiding?'. It's a double meaning....that is, 'where are you staying', but also 'where is your place of abiding – where is your deepest spiritual location', and the answer for John's Gospel is, 'Jesus abides IN God the Father', and he invites his followers to the same place. This can be a helpful reframing of where to find our centre when so many people are on the move and therefore physically dislocated.

If we were to ask, 'yes, but HOW do we do this – how do we abide in God', an answer is provided in today's gospel, 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them'. That is, the Eucharist actually becomes a physical and tangible connectivity to God. For the disciple of Jesus, Spirituality is not about having the right ideas or the right words, or even nice warm fuzzy feelings, but is highly embodied. EAT MY BODY. In other words, 'take me into yourself'. It's a very physical image.

So while 'Atheist vs Christian' debates might be intellectually stimulating and therefore useful as far as they go, we must not forget that Jesus really does bring things to a very grounded level in his teaching. He doesn't ever say, 'have the right ideas about me'. He does say, 'gather together, forgive one another and EAT MY BODY'. Our home is where we break bread.

This is good news of course for the poor, the illiterate, the mentally disabled and even for little children before they can make any conscious decision of faith. Babies are FED from their mother's body. I wonder if this is one reason why women resonate with the gospel more quickly than men? Feeding is an act of grace. We do nothing to deserve it even if we men like to think we work for it, in the end the vine will grow out of the ground regardless of our best efforts.

By God's grace we are given the means of abiding in God, freely and graciously, FROM GOD'S SIDE.

Just a bit later in his same section in John's gospel, Jesus says, '*Abide in me, as I abide in you....I am the vine, you are the branches....those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing*'. As well as feeding us with himself as the bread of life, Jesus gives us his Spirit which is joy and peace, as we abide in him like a branch in a vine.

Meditation is also a form of abiding – of resting in God – not running around being busy but just receiving God in prayer. In these acts of breaking bread, and praying, week in and week out, we remember *whose* we are and therefore *who* we are. In the midst of our transient communities, and in the midst of your own fragmented lives, remember our centre – alive in the Body of Christ.