

260. What Is a Christian Congregation?

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I In the midst of them. *Matt. 18, 20.*

The Church, properly so called, is the congregation of saints, that is, all Christendom, the whole number of all believers. The Church is one and invisible. And yet the Bible speaks of a church at Rome, at Corinth, and at Ephesus. So, too, we have our local churches. Christians living in one locality organize for the purpose of work and worship. Such churches are visible. However, not all congregations have, teach, and confess the entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity; not all administer the holy Sacraments duly according to Christ's institution.

A truly Lutheran congregation accepts the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible; it observes all things whatsoever Christ has commanded; it expresses in its outward organization the character of the invisible Church; it acknowledges no authority but that of Christ; it avoids all commandments and dreams of men; it preaches the Gospel and administers the Sacraments according to divine institution; it is the mouthpiece of Christ to His own flock and to the world at large; it excludes manifest and impenitent sinners and keeps itself unspotted from the world. God Himself, the glorious and blessed God, dwells in the midst of such a congregation, and be it ever so small, and though there were but two or three true Christians gathered together in Christ's name. He dwells in the midst of them through the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. Where the latter is lacking, the largest congregation, the grandest cathedral, the most magnificent temple is a murderer's den and an institution of Satan. But in a congregation which has the pure Word and the Christ-appointed Sacraments the Lord has set up His throne of grace. There He deigns to come down to spread a table with the Bread of Life for the soul.

Prayer.

O Lord God, who on the Day of Pentecost didst visit and endow the hearts of Thy faithful so graciously and richly, pour this same Spirit of Thine, we beseech Thee, like a fruitful rain upon our dry and famished hearts. Come, O Holy Spirit, and bless us with Thy manifold gifts that we may truly know and extol the great deeds of God done through Christ Jesus, that also we may speak in the congregation and praise Thee with new tongues. Grant us Thy gifts and blessings. Amen.

My Shepherd, now receive me!
My Guardian, own me Thine!
Great blessings Thou didst give me,
O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me
With milk and sweetest food;
Thy Spirit oft has led me
To stores of heavenly good.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries. You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

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