I am guessing this will not come as a surprise to you given my vocation: I have attended a fair number of wedding receptions. Thinking back over the past few years, I can recall many engaging conversations I have had with the wedding guests seated next to me at dinner. I want to share just three of these conversations with you. The first was with a woman who is the bride’s aunt. I asked her about her family and learned that her husband had died in a tragic accident when he was only in his 30’s – she was widowed with three young children. I believe I am remembering correctly that about six years later, after she had worked through the grieving process and was ready to move on, she developed a relationship with the priest who had presided over her husband’s funeral and they are now happily married. I sensed such joy in her – a gratitude for the gift of new life.

The second of these conversations was at a wedding reception where I was seated next to the bride’s great aunt. We had a wonderful time getting to know each other. She had recently retired from being the Senior Warden at the Episcopal Church she attends in Cold Spring Harbor, New York. She told me about the beautiful setting of their church, right on a pond, with the Rectory accessible by a footpath around the pond. She told me about their successful capital campaign to fund a new organ. And, she talked glowingly about their Rector. Low and behold, it is a small world. This Rector is a good friend of my former clergy colleague at Christ Church in Winnetka. It’s fun making those connections.

The third conversation was at a wedding reception where my dinner companion was a
man who is Mormon. I am always interested in learning about different religions, and so we got into a great conversation about our faith communities. I learned that this gentleman was dedicated to mentoring the youth in his parish. I was so impressed by the amount of time he gave each week to this ministry. The parish had a robust mentoring program for their youth. He met regularly with a group – I believe it was weekly - early in the morning before he went off to work and they went off to school. I was impressed by this community-wide dedication to caring for the youth of the parish. It was an inspiring conversation.

Something quite wonderful can happen over dinner conversations. We meet someone new and share our lives with each other. Through the stories shared, we are reminded of the goodness of life. We are reminded through the small-world-stories that we are connected to one another. We are inspired by new approaches to learning and loving and caring. Perhaps we learn about a hobby we knew little about. Perhaps our dinner partner travels the world and we learn about a country we knew little about. Perhaps we get good book suggestions, or child-rearing tips, or solutions to home projects. Perhaps we share a life experience that offers some healing. Over a meal, we relax and listen – and, so learn and love and experience new life. We draw sustenance.

Think for a moment about how one action can nurture or foster another. To date myself a little bit…any one of us who did not grow up with computers knows that software isn’t always intuitive. I recall early on in my business career having trouble updating some information on the computer. I asked a colleague for help and he said, “It’s easy, just do this, then this, then this, then this.” So, I sat down in front of the computer…and, guess what, it was Greek to me. But, when someone sat with me, and had me go through the process while they were explaining it to me, then it sank in and made sense and I knew I would know how to do it the next time. The same principle applies to a conversation over a meal. When we are relaxing over a meal, drawing
nourishment from the food fosters drawing sustenance from the conversation. Jesus speaks to us through one another.

On the day of Christ’s resurrection, in the afternoon, two of the disciples were walking along the road to Emmaus. Jesus joined them, but they did not recognize him. Even when Jesus interpreted to them what is said about him in the Scripture, they didn’t realize it was him. They did not recognize him until they sat down together for a meal. Jesus blessed the bread, broke it and shared it, and their eyes were opened. Jesus was known through the meal. Jesus loves us and cares for us and inspires us through one another. Conversation over a meal nurtures, sustains and inspires. Perhaps you are familiar with Foyer Groups. I know we’ve had them here at St. Paul’s in the past and I’m hoping to get them started again over the coming program year. Foyer Groups bring adult parishioners together over dinner to get to know one another. One way this program might work is to have people sign-up who are interested, groups of 8-10 are formed, one individual or couple is asked to host the first gathering, prepare the main dish and invite the other members of the group to contribute to the meal. The group gets together and then decides when they will meet again. They rotate among each other’s homes over a year. Food and fellowship are sustenance – Jesus loves us and cares for us and inspires us through one another.

We are about to share a particular meal – the Holy Eucharist. We break the bread, remembering all that Christ has done for us. In remembering, He is known – we are loved and comforted and inspired. We eat the bread and drink the wine desiring to live in His love. We share the bread and wine recognizing that we are meant to live in community loving and caring and inspiring one another. I invite you today as you come up around the table to consider all the people around the world who are sharing the Holy Eucharist today. We are all seeking Christ in our lives. We live in this world together and offer Christ’s love and comfort and inspiration to
one another through one another. Let us share this life-giving meal. Amen.