



Creation Season

Proper 23, Year A, October 12, 2008

*Special Recognition of the Place of Food in our Lives
Food as Community*

Information and Reflections for Homilists, Liturgists, and Clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota

Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

Exodus 32: 1-14
Isaiah 25: 1-9

Psalms 106: 1-6, 19-23
Psalm 23

Philippians 4: 1-9

Matthew 22: 1-14

How often our traditions center around a common table! A family regularly gathers with each member taking his/her own place in the arrangement. The meal is served, perhaps with an adult carving the meat and fixing the plates, or perhaps someone prepares the plates and serves from the kitchen, or yet again, the serving may be family style with dishes passed for each to serve his own portions. The community gathers, according to its traditions, around the business of eating a meal.

Scout groups have been known to stir up a "friendship soup". Each member contributes one can of soup, any variety, to be added to the pot. It is heated, stirred and served to everyone. It has a new flavor every time as chicken noodle, ham and pea and cream of celery add their flavors to produce yet a new flavor, blended in friendship and community.

The parish potluck supper provides the same opportunity for offerings to be blended as a meal comes together consisting of whatever members have contributed: pasta with sauce, three bean salad, and "lime Jell-o marshmallow cottage cheese surprise!" New members have been heard to say they started to feel more a part of the local Christian community when they contributed a casserole to the mix, and members all sat down to eat together at a church supper.

The importance of food offered, received and consumed is used as metaphor in numerous Scripture passages including some read today. The wedding feast described in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels tells of 'a host who originally invited guests who were unable to attend, and then opened the feast and the whole celebration to all who chose to attend.' The realm of God offers such a feast to those who hear and respond. (Note: the account in Luke's Gospel makes it a little clearer that everyone including those who might be overlooked, is included).

Finally, of course, the Eucharist itself is the community gathered around a common table, receiving the gifts made of ordinary food (also God's gift to us) consecrated to become sacraments which strengthen both our bodies and spiritual selves, taken in remembrance of Jesus' gathering with his friends as they a meal in community.

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