

## **Easter 7: CCSY & CCGS, 16 May 2010**

Rev 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

### *Celebrating First Communion*

I spent last weekend with my two brothers and my sister – no partners; just the four of us ... all weekend. I'm not sure whether it was therapy, or whether I need therapy as a result! But we gathered from north and south of the Murray River in Albury, for take away pizza and red wine, for browsing in old wares shops, for puzzling at rival football codes, playing ping pong, doing the crossword, and, of course, for trading memories.

Through tears of laughter we recalled childhood experiences, houses we lived and played and argued in, pets we overfed, records – remember those? – records we overplayed. Time and time again conversation returned to the kitchen. Having cooked up a storm in the form of a vegetarian curry – a dish far too exotic to have made an appearance at the family dinner table when we were growing up – we ruminated over the culinary delights of our formative years: fish fingers and frozen peas, meat and three veg, the Sunday roast, and – Dad's Saturday lunch time specialty – “Rice a Riso” with tuna!

By all accounts I was a very fussy eater. It would be a failure of Christian charity to suggest that my unwillingness to try new foods was inversely proportional to our dear mother's cooking skills, but apparently I only used to eat food that was the colour white, like potatoes, carefully peeled pears, and ice cream! My memory of all that is conveniently sketchy, but one story my sister related did dredge up a vivid recollection. One evening as a six- or seven-year old I interrupted the conversation over the evening meal with an exasperated cry: ‘can we please talk about something that I can understand?’ (I should perhaps explain that there are 13 years between my sister, the eldest, and me, the youngest!)

It's an instructive memory on a day when we celebrate rites of passage, because it says something about my desire to have a place at that table – to feel connected with the mysteries of adult conversation that it held for a small boy. I did have a place, of course – a space just for me – but what I didn't seem to grasp at that moment was that having a place had nothing whatsoever to do with my ability to understand everything that was happening there; having a place did not depend on my being the same as my brothers and sisters; I didn't have to speak or behave in a particular way in order to belong. I had a place at that table for no other reason than I was loved; and that's a gift – a given – that, like many of us, I imagine, I'm still learning to receive.

One of the places where I learn to receive it is at this table – the table from which nine children from our Christ Church community will shortly be fed for the first time. And they have shown a real hunger, a real desire, to connect with the mysteries it holds. Will they fully understand all the talk around this table today? I doubt it. Will our adult candidates for baptism and confirmation and reception next Sunday? I doubt it. I certainly don't. But this table fully understands me, and these nine, and each of us who would draw near for its food and drink, or for blessing. Because at this table, God's desire for us meets our desire for that which we so name; at this table God's unconditional love and regard for me, meets my exasperated plea to know myself so loved and understood; at this table there is always a place set for me, and for you, and

for the other, the welcome stranger. For the host of this table is not nearly as fussy as we can be as guests; and here there is always enough, and to spare.

So come [names of the nine candidates], come everyone who is thirsty for this life-giving gift. Come simply out of your hunger, trusting the goodness of the Giver, whose Christ desires our presence at the table of the One he called Father, and whose Holy Spirit binds us together as brothers and sisters in those waters of baptism that are thick-as-blood.

May our place at this table inform and reflect all of our table fellowship, this day and always.

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