

Homily May 7th 2017 - Combined service with Christ Church Grammar School

Easter 4

Once, Jesus said “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to children”.

Jesus our Shepherd, spoke of our need to become child-like in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Particular attitudes of heart and mind have brought a group of children to ask for a place at our family table. We can learn from them? They demonstrate innocence, trust, a need for friendship and an ability to use imagination. The adult need for order and logic and observance of rules, actually works against the capacity for deep-engagement with excitement. What we will see and hear at this celebration today invites us all to reflect on **why** we are here.

The first communicants have been working through a book called *Welcome to The Lord's Table*. We will soon sing *The candles are lit and the table is laid*. All will be in readiness for our feast.

What are some of the things that we do at the family table? The youngest are introduced to foods that are enjoyed by adults. So a place at the table can be about experimentation and the question; What does it taste like?

There may be wine at the table. Some cultures see the introduction of wine to children as a deliberate and staged process, paying attention to relationships and the environment.

What else happens around our tables? Anyone of us might ask another; how was your day, or how are things going? A meal might also be a place where we iron out our differences.

The table is a place of sharing. We may see and taste foods that captivate us, and we want more and more in order to be satisfied.

The table can be a place of delight for our senses. Smell is our most evocative sense, so as we approach food, we can be flooded with memories.

How do these things that we know about tables, connect with this, the Shepherd's table? Firstly, he is here as both guest and host. We can't see our shepherd, but many will feel his presence as he comes among us. Jesus' promise was that he will be with us at the feast we are about to share. So as

we make our preparations, we invite him here as guest. He is the host; we share this meal because he told his disciples that he wanted them to eat the bread and drink the wine to remember him.

Children will take their First Communion because of a whisper in the heart. Hospitality at the table is not about having sufficient information in order to be able to eat. Everyone who eats at this table is nourished in a different way. This table provides unique food. It feeds our soul, which is a combination of body and mind and much more as well. Our soul, the huge and expansive inner self, is fed by poetry, music and image. As you come to the table to eat or be blessed today, I urge you to think about the soul-food spread before us.

At this table, we reach out our hands to receive. When we cup our hands, we make a place for the shepherd to come and rest. This is probably the only time we lift food to our mouth with our hands. There is something rather earthy and primal about the way that we do that.

It is my privilege to stand in the sanctuary and place bread in outstretched hands. When we reach out, there is a silent request; an unspoken please. I see old hands, and young hands, hands that do every kind of work. God has no other hands in this world, except the ones the ones extended toward him. When I think on outstretched hands, I am reminded of the woman who said “if I but touch the hem of his clothing I will be healed”. All who come to this table today know that there is in each of us, need for food that will heal and nourish.

The psalm we sang earlier tells us that the Shepherd’s table is spread before us in the face of those that trouble us, and that when we come to eat our cup will be full. Even children know times of stress and difficulty. That is why they should be sharing this family meal with us.

Sometimes we take food to share when there is feasting. Today we don’t bring containers holding a contribution, we bring exactly what God wants us to bring to his table. We bring ourselves. The children who share with us this morning are the living image of desire, and we bless them for all that they teach through who they are.

AMEN

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