



October 23, 2011

The Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time
The Liturgy III—new English translation Nov. 27

“Happy is the one who eats bread in the Kingdom of God.”—Luke 14: 15

Dear Friends;

EUCHARIST—DINING WITH JESUS

Jesus came on a Sabbath to eat a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees...He said to the one who invited him, ‘When you give a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or relatives or wealthy neighbors. They might invite you in return and thus repay you. No when you have a reception, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.’ At these words someone in the party said to him, ‘Happy is the one who eats bread in the Kingdom of God!’ Lk 14: 1, 12-15.

Scripture Scholar, Eugene LaVerdiere SSS in a wonderful book, *Dining in the Kingdom of God, the Origins of the Eucharist according to Luke*, states,

“A meal is not so much about food as it is about people. In all meals it is the guest list, not the menu that matters. Blessings and prayers, liturgical and non-liturgical, have to do with people who have come together to share the meal. That is what we hear in the words of Jesus and that is what we hear from the participant who exclaimed, “Blessed is the one who will dine in the Kingdom of God.”

There is only one Gospel that Christians proclaim. It is the Good News of Jesus the Christ. We tell of his coming to share our life, his death and resurrection. As a living memorial of his dying and rising and as the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist is at the heart of that Gospel. Sometimes Christians and even Catholics forget that Eucharist is a Gospel event.

As LaVerdiere says the Eucharist is “a gospel event, the high point of Jesus’ life, and a *compendium of the whole Gospel*.” To think of the Eucharist as something separate from the Gospel is to the detriment of both the Gospel and the Eucharist. Gospel that does not find its expression in the Eucharistic sharing is greatly impoverished. Eucharist that is cut off from the Gospel is ineffective.

Jesus’ life is a great journey where meals and simple family hospitality play a significant role for him and his followers. Jesus, his followers and later the Church “are a people on a journey; a people of hospitality, both offered and received. The Eucharist is the supreme expression of that hospitality, sustaining them on their journey to the kingdom of God.”—*Dining in the Kingdom of God*

For Jesus meals are prophetic signs. They are moments of gathering in the “Lost sheep of the house of Israel” and therefore are moments of reconciliation. They establish a bond between the banqueters and are communion of radical equality. They are important moments for the bread of his teaching where we discover that Jesus is our nourishment. They are also the source of much of the conflict that Jesus has with the religious authorities and will point to his passion.

The Last meal Jesus shares is a recapitulation of all the other meals he has shared through his life and ministry. At the Last Supper he announces and anticipates the day of fulfillment when he will ‘eat and drink again in the Kingdom of God.’ And in many resurrection accounts he shares food again with his disciples where they recognize the Risen One who lives forever in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:13-35)

In the Eucharist we are at the table of Jesus the Christ. The Eucharist continues the presence of Christ through time among his disciples. We are called to solidarity with each other in offering our lives that others might live. We do this in imitation of the example and command of Jesus. The Last Supper challenges us when we fall short of our baptismal covenant to live it in our mission, relationships and ministry. And the Eucharist brings us the reconciling peace of whose blood in the New Covenant brings us the forgiveness of sins.

Our celebration of Eucharist should enrich all our meals. Every meal can be a sign of the Kingdom, each diner is the Christ. Our kindness and hospitality, like Jesus, is our self-gift of life and our offering of thanks to the source of all blessings. Really if we are going to fully understand the Eucharist we need to learn again the importance of eating together. If we learn to take the time our meals enrich our understanding of Jesus and Eucharist. And Eucharist teaches us the importance of our family meals.

If we are going to give witness to the Risen Lord in the Eucharist those who share at the table must not only welcome all but bring the message of conversion and forgiveness to all. We must not only see Jesus in the face of the stranger but also see him in the flesh and blood of the Eucharistic assembly. As Fr. LaVerdiere summarizes, *The Gospel is about the Kingdom of God, and Eucharist is the heart of the Gospel. Blessed is the one who dines in the Kingdom of God!*

Peace,

Fr Ron