

Every act of eating implies transformation of a kind. Food is transformed into the nutrition that our bodies and minds require to function well. Our bodies can be strengthened or weakened by eating or abstaining from certain substances. Eating transforms our physicality and our experience of embodiment. It can transform our state of mind, heart and spiritual life in the experience of gathering around a table, the experience of immersing ourselves into the time and place together, the experience of communal sharing and belonging, the presence of Christ. As you eat this evening take time to:

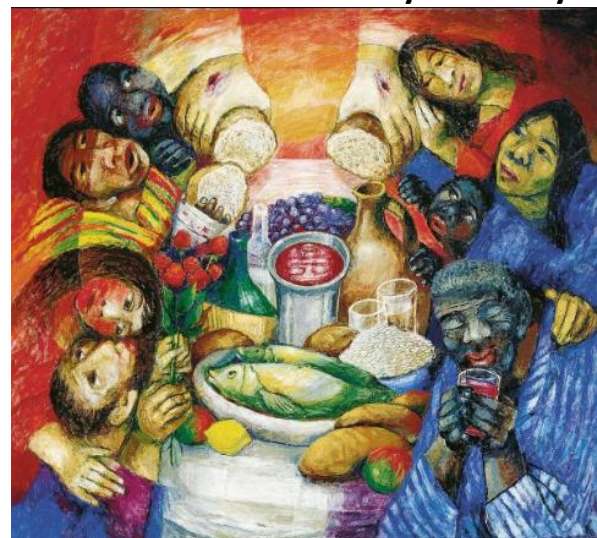
- Remember shared meals that have been important
- Reflect on how we can be more just as a community of believers in sharing God's transformational hospitality
- Remember the hospitality we share with one another in our conversations by phone, post and electronic mail and in our prayer for one another
- Reflect on how we are sharing by shopping and delivering food to one another or embracing the hospitality that others are showing us in delivering food to us
- Revisit the promise that Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' (John 6:35)

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

(after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester.)

Picture on front cover- Table community with the marginalised by Sieger Koder.

Reflections for Maundy Thursday



**"A new commandment I give unto you,
That you love one another;
as I have loved you" John 13:34**

You call us to live your life,
follow where you have trod,
be your presence in these streets,
show compassion to the poor,
support the weak,
embrace the outcast,
bring lives into your kingdom.
Yet our hearts are troubled,
we are fearful of the task,
deafened to your promise
to be with us
wherever we might go.
Forgive our timidity,
grant us peace for the journey,
and strength for the day,
that we might demonstrate our love
in the life we live and share. Amen.

This Maundy Thursday, we celebrate the gift of the first Eucharist- the gathering of Jesus' followers around the table of transformative love. I am aware that we cannot gather this evening. We cannot share bread and wine. But we can still open our lives to God's presence in Christ, in our own homes and reconsider the hospitality of our loving God.

In the early church the Eucharist was the epitome of the transformed community of Christians that involved a radical sharing in prayer and in serving the daily needs of the community.

'All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.' (Acts 2 v 43-47)

I know that some of you are struggling with receiving food delivery slots from the supermarkets and others are able to have food delivered by neighbours and friends. We have perhaps, become more aware that our farmers, delivery drivers, supermarket and food factory workers are an essential part of our national community. We have questioned their low pay. We have become more aware of the need for Foodbanks, such as the Trussell Trust. As a Parish, we have relied on the local Food Pantry to deliver food to those who are most vulnerable.

Jesus delighted in eating and feasting with others. He shared many parables regarding food and food-ways. He included many stories of agricultural images that relate to an intimate connection with the earth, with all creation and with God's delightful creativity. He performed miracles that showed a communal banquet as a symbol of God's infinitely hospitable Kingdom.

Jesus rejoiced in dining with sinners and people that were excluded and so shared the transformative caring love of God.

In the climax of his life Jesus chooses to celebrate the Passover meal; an act of remembrance recalling the flight from Egypt, God's rescue from oppression. It was so vividly remembered that the community experienced again God who intervenes, the God who transforms.

In the climax of his life Jesus uses the words *'This is my body broken for you.'* (Luke 22 v 19). He offers himself as a sacrificial offering of transformational love and forgiveness.

Through the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup, Christians are offered transformation from sin to love; from division to community; from separation to unity with God. Communion is a visible sign of what is happening inwardly for each of us- a living participation in the transforming death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's extraordinary hospitable love is at work. As we physically eat God's food we participate in the mystery of intimacy with Jesus Christ.

'When we receive Christ physically in bread and wine it doesn't matter what we are feeling or thinking. It does not depend on me. I reach out with empty hands and Christ comes to me, God gives to me and I receive.' (David Runcorn).

As a result of the generous hospitality of God we are transformed in our hospitality to all others. Our focus has to extend beyond ourselves; we are invited to be transformed into nourishment for one another, particularly for those who are most physically and spiritually hungry- those who long for freedom and the transformation of society into a more just and inclusive community.

The national church states, *'The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. In making our communion spiritually, we are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.*