

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Meals and invitations



Dear Friends,

Meals and invitations to meals: The Bible is full of them!

The most well known meal that springs to mind must be the Last Supper, the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples.



There are many meals in the Old Testament too: the meal to which Abraham invited the three strangers (who turn out to be angels) so beautifully portrayed in Rublev's Icon, Isaiah speaking of a banquet for all the peoples and all the nations, "a feast of rich food and vintage wines", or the table to which Wisdom (in Proverbs) calls the simple; "come eat of

my bread and drink of my wine". Even the last book of the Bible, Revelation, mysteriously refers to a marriage banquet for the lamb, promising us the delights of a heaven beyond our wildest dreams.

At Easter, we remember the supper at Emmaus. Here, two disciples were walking along the road, after the death of Jesus, and as they reach their destination the weary travellers invite the stranger who had joined them to break bread with them. The disciples have been walking with the stranger some way and he has even been talking about understanding the scriptures, yet it is not until he eats with them and breaks the bread that they recognise that the stranger is Jesus Christ!

I have just calculated (so it may well be wrong) that in life we spend over 87,000 hours eating meals - some festive, some simple, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, for a joyful elaborate occasion or in ordinary daily life. As a Christian community we also meet to share a simple yet profound meal. Meals may seem quite ordinary but the simple sharing of food and friendship is central to all those invitations to meals, whether heavenly or otherwise - and vital to the encounter with the risen Christ at Emmaus. It is in the community, in the simple action of sharing, of eating together, sitting around a table, this ordinary act of living, that Jesus is known.

At Emmaus, the disciples realise what Jesus has been talking about on the road, and afterwards they return to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples all about it. It's not until after the sharing of the meal that the disciples understand what he had said to them. Here at the sharing of the meal they can

understand the presence of God. The Brazilian Franciscan Leonardo Boff once said that simple actions, every day objects, can become "signs and symbols of encounter... the human world, even if it be material and technical is never merely material and technical. It is symbolic and fraught with meaning".

Our Eucharist is, or should be, a symbol of our community in the risen Christ.

Churches use different names for the one feast and it may help to reflect on the terms used for this mystery: The Lord's Supper, remembering the Last Supper as we do every time we celebrate together; the Eucharist meaning thanksgiving, expressing our gratitude and joy for God's love and salvation; Holy Communion, which emphasises the close relationship that we have with God and with one another; or the Mass, which comes from the Latin root *mitto*, to send, reminding us that we are sent out to share the good news.

The Eucharist is the place where we too meet and recognise the risen Christ and are sent out to proclaim him, just as on the road to Emmaus, and it may feel, sometimes, that we too are unsure, like those disciples, and yet we can be reassured that it is in the simple encounters of everyday life that we begin to grasp the mystery.

There's a poem by Roy Campbell, *Mass at Dawn*, that speaks of an ordinary fisherman returning, tired, to the shore and how the simple food and drink brought to him by the children felt like communion:

*"My arms were tired and I was heavy-eyed,
But when with food and drink, at morning-light,
The children met me at the water-side,
Never was wine so red or bread so white".*

With the simple elements of food and drink the world becomes more deeply textured and elaborately coloured.

"A sacrament", says Boff, "does not tear human beings away from this world, it ...

(invites) them to look more closely and deeply into the very heart of the world".

It is often by seeing through to the heart of the simple things of ordinary life that we learn more about God, and – like the disciples of old – we may recognise the risen Christ in the breaking of bread. In that encounter, we can be blessed with the realisation that he has always been with us on our journey and know that his presence will always be with us.

Jo

Family Services

*You are invited to come and join us at
our regular Family Services at*

11.30 am on April 6th

and at

11.30am on May 4th

both in

All Saints' Church, Hertford

*A short service with story, hymns, prayers
and special activities:*

April: "Easter Nests"

May: The blessing of pets.

*All people and pets welcome, but those of a
nervous disposition may need special care!*

*Coffee/drinks and cakes
will be served afterwards*

*For more details please ring:
Rev Jo Loveridge on 01992 584899*

Look forward to seeing you there!