

Grace Notes in Miniature,

Monday June 22nd, 2020

It was very good to be able to participate in a live Mass this weekend, and to be able to share in the Breaking of the Bread for the first time in several months. Although our parish church was well-spaced out and there were fewer people there than usual, it was wonderful to be together. I was very conscious, however, of the many older parishioners who did not feel comfortable to join the gathering and glad that our pastor will continue to live-stream one of the Masses until more people are able to join us. In the stream-of-consciousness way my mind works, I was thinking of the banquet analogy we associate with Mass <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2tiy2tuJG4>



That got me thinking about all the food and drink items which are associated with religious Orders. I thought first of Benedictine and brandy, Oka cheese, Trappist fruit cake, the chocolates and caramels made by the Trappistine nuns, and of course many wines from monasteries and convents. I did a search and was quite amazed at the number of Orders which do support themselves with the production of fine foodstuffs and imbibables. I found one article in which a Bishop of the Scottish Episcopal Church was excoriating the Benedictine monks of Buckfast Abbey for leading people into sin through their production of Buckfast Tonic Wine –“made by monks, loved by the less devout”, which I gather is enjoyed as a less expensive wine and especially by teenagers. Honey, beer and ales, many wines, bourbon-flavoured fudge, pastries and confectionary, shortbread, cider and cider brandies, pork and beef products,



olives and olive oil: the list is endless. It does point out to us that enjoying life and enjoying food are not considered sinful, presumably as long as we practise moderation. Isaiah 55 begins:

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etWUllcMcT8>

Ecclesiastes 9:7 tells us: “Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has long ago approved what you do.” *Song of Songs 5:1b* says: “Eat, friends, and drink;” and “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46-47)



In many cultures, there are specific foods proper to religious festivals: the Wigilia supper in Poland¹, pancakes on Shrove Tuesday; bacalao and pretzels in Lent; hot cross buns for Good Friday; Simnel cake, Paska, Kulich, Pane de Pasqua or other breads for Easter. What would Passover be without gefilte fish, matzoh ball soup, roast lamb, sweet kosher wine? Or

consider tagine from Morocco, Oruk (baked Icli Kofte) from Turkey, roast lamb popular across all Middle-Eastern countries, biryani from India, Nalli Nihari from India, Maamoul from Lebanon & Jordan or Herbel from Morocco, for our Muslim brothers and sisters at Eid?

For many of us food and drink are the first things we think of when considering hospitality. We offer our very best and as abundantly as we can. In fact, in many cultures, to not accept food and drink is an insult to the household. In the Middle East, many negotiations or conversations about business cannot start until the second cup of tea. Most of us can probably recall occasions when we have eaten far more than we would normally choose so to not disappoint the host or hostess.



And Jesus offers us bread: the Bread of Life. Not once but over and over again.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of8OrllprwU> That Jesus offers Himself to us in the context of food is something we cannot ignore; he understands human physical hunger and is able to relate that to the spiritual hunger for a relationship with him. Why would one want to refuse that offer?



Early Christians certainly understood the relationship between spiritual food and physical nourishment as the Eucharistic celebration was often a precursor to an “agape meal”, what we might call a “pot-luck” supper, common to many faith communities. So much so that St Paul admonished the rich in 1 Corinthians 11 for not sharing their food with the poor.

May we who have been fortunate enough to receive the Eucharist again remember and pray for those who have not yet had that opportunity. Sharing in the Body of Christ makes us one Body in Christ. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_2FZWQwM7U

With every blessing, Gillian

¹ Picture by Przykuta - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1496271>