



**April 23, 2023**

**Third Sunday of Easter**

*Then the two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread. Luke 24:35*



Dear Friends,

The rich practice of common meals has been vastly diluted in the age of television, smartphones, and fast food. The average American family eats together less often than they did 25 years ago. The sharp decline in sharing meals coincides with an increasingly fractured and divided society. We need to rediscover eating together.

In the New Testament it appears that the historical Jesus starts out as a follower of John the Baptist. John was the fiery preacher whose baptisms were a condemnation of the status quo. The son of a rural priest John rejects the Temple system as corrupt. He baptizes at the place where tradition held that Israel crossed the river into the Promised Land. With the harsh denouncement of sin, the place where he baptizes says “we need to start over.”

When John is arrested Jesus picks up the mantel. Rather than fiery preaching and baptizing Jesus moves in a new direction. (We only have one reference in the Gospel of John that Jesus baptized anyone.) Meals become the central prophetic action in the ministry of Jesus. He is rather careless with whom he eats and drinks. All are welcomed to the table of Jesus. Because of the openness of his meals, he is accused of being a glutton, a drunkard, and a sinner.

But Jesus saw these fellowship meals as signs of God’s Kingdom breaking into our world. Because at the table with Jesus: sins were forgiven, people were healed, bonds were formed with Jesus and the Father, they become the fellowship of those who know the mercy of God. As the most important sign of his ministry Jesus desired to share in a meal on the night before he dies. It will be his legacy and abiding presence.

The meal that Jesus blessed that evening, and claimed as his memorial, was the ordinary partaking together of food for the body. Meals are an opportunity for us to know one another on a deeper level. Jesus knew this. He also knows that the meal is also an expression of sacrificial giving, remembering, and sharing. Jesus instructs his disciples to follow his practice.

Any ordinary meal is a way to celebrate together God’s care for us and to extend that care to our neighbor. The food we share is ultimately a gift from God. We share not only in Christ’s sacrifice but also share in the sacrifice of Christ’s creation—the death of the plants, and animals, and the sweat of those who labored to grow, process, and prepare our food. Shared meals connect us to the planet and one another.

In the sacrificial meal of the Eucharist, we praise God for all the sacrifices made on our behalf. In the Eucharist we are called to follow Jesus in offering ourselves as a sacrifice for others, even our enemies. Eating Jesus and being eaten by him changes us so that we can become food that nurtures and celebrates a new world. Around the table of the Lord, we live our common identity as sisters and brothers in Christ.

When the two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, invite the stranger to join them for a meal they were following the habit of Jesus. And when he breaks the bread of course they recognize him. He is there at every meal. In the Eucharistic meal the risen Christ greets us in our neighbors, speaks to us in the Scriptures, and he breaks the bread. Then we are sent together to nourish a hungry world.

Christ is risen!

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*