



There is a lot of heresy going around about sacred meals. No, not from me, but from the brocaded nobility of institutional religion.

Tonight we recall what we sometimes call the "Last Supper." There were no Christians at that meal. They were all Jews because this was the Passover Meal — the Haggadah. But they weren't all the same kind of Jews. One of them had even cut a deal with the police to help arrest Jesus! Around that table were people with many different beliefs and doubts and lifestyles. That was the point, as Jesus gathered together his extended family in preparation for his saying farewell.

He is reported to have said, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Then they all went to supper. He didn't say, "All of you who share my religious or political views come to supper." He gathered everyone.

We hear tales today of church dignitaries who bar from Communion those who do not share the official's views on how to vote or live. Our normally gentle Sister Marti recently said, with great strength and fire, in response to one such banning, "No one has a right to stand between a person and their God!" She was echoing a statement from the late first century found in *The Didache*,

As different grains have been gathered from the hills and baked into one bread so may your people be gathered from the ends of the earth ...

Our good friend and part-time neighbor Christiane Brusselmans (1930–1991) was one of the world's leading authorities on Eucharistic gatherings. She put it bluntly — it must begin with everyone feeling that they belong at the table. So if your religious community does not share that attitude then bring your friends together and have your own holy meal. The more this is an inter-faith, inter-path group the better it is for touching the sacred experience.

That suggestion is a bit too complicated for your taste? OK. How about a small circle of close family and friends. Is there anything we have taken from that similar moment in Jerusalem centuries ago? Or, is there anything those we have loved have left us? I will never forget Tammy, a 9-year-old girl, saying to those of us in her hospital room on the last day of her life, "Remember me at the

parties!” I can’t help but believe that was partly what was in Jesus’ heart that night as his companions sang and danced to celebrate the Passover. Some year it is going to be our time to leave something to those we love. What will it be?

Pausing for a quiet moment near the beginning of any meal is a good idea. If we then break and pass the bread and share a drink we are participating in a simple ritual followed by many of the world’s people over the centuries. Let it be something we do somewhere, somehow on this day.

And if it feels right for you to join with others in a faith community that still is or once was your spiritual home — then do it! Remember you have a right to be there in the pew, around the altar. You are invited by the guy who started the whole thing. You belong!

Brother Toby