

Meals Jesus Shared

Meals were important to God,
Looking through history- Passover included family
Our whole notion of family has changed, families and extended families would live together and rooms added to the house. (think when Jesus said, where I am going my father's house has many rooms).
So children would be there and part of meals.
And so then we look at the meals Jesus shared we need to think that children would have been there.
Today we are going to look at 4 meals Jesus had, two exclusive and two for the many (inclusive)
The meal Jesus shared on the road to Emmaus had no children – it was exclusive or was it the case that there were just none about - but it did show hospitality was important to the age and also Jesus revealed to them in the breaking of the bread.

And that's one of the things that we understand is that Jesus is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread, are we holding back Jesus being revealed to children by not allowing them to take communion?

We looked a couple of weeks back at the feeding of the 5000 in our parade service and saw that it was a child that offered what they had and that it was family groups who eat together and were fed.

We also see that it was families who were there listening to Jesus, eat and all were fed – children there with Jesus.

We also need to look at other meals Jesus had, our first reading was of Jesus eating a meal in a family home, where he was anointed and cleaned, by a sinful woman. The conversation was around who was worthy to be with Jesus, it was clear through Jesus' response all are worthy to sit and eat with him. The Pharisees himself was risking danger when he invited Jesus into his home. And for us we may think that it is risky inviting children into taking the bread and the wine. And maybe it is, but as Jesus found it quite natural to be blessed by this person, maybe we should be also seeing it as natural.

I want to look at an alternative view of admitting children to Holy Communion, I was asked last week what are the arguments against, so I actually asked people for their views, from a theological perspective, and I want to bring one of those ideas to you.

Some of the meals Jesus eat, were exclusive, just him and the disciples. In fact the last supper was exclusive to the male disciples, and along with that meal, the meal on the beach we heard in our second reading was also exclusively male and for the few. Jesus on the beach with his disciples, his male disciples and we know that this was where he re-instated Peter.

Now with this meal and the last supper, and mainly the last supper, some people have read into it that, as there were no children, and this was the moment Jesus changed things, that we should not include children in communion. That at that moment the table was exclusive to the few and unlike all the other meals, people were excluded. This has led to the thought that actually children should be excluded. It also opens up the questions of women weren't there either, so should we exclude them as well?

The idea of that table not being open to all, means that communion is something to be aimed for, and counter cultural to the world, where we have to have everything now, and not wait for anything, then not admitting children to holy communion, would make it mean more when they do get confirmed.

My counter to that argument, is to ask how many children may we loose in between?

It has been accepted that women and children were part of meals Jesus eat, but just like a family, there are times when we eat exclusively as a couple or with friends, and then there are times we eat altogether.

There is also a counter argument that there are people from different backgrounds who see baptism – the place where we can take communion, as the bigger write and that may well exclude some children, I think that is something that each family has to address and look at, likewise, there will be some who don't want to receive, and some families who they don't want their children to receive.

One person likened baptism, communion and confirmation like this; Baptism is being born into the family, communion is eating at the family table, and confirmation is taking on the adult responsibilities of the family – we have to be confirmed to do certain things in the church, but only baptized to do others.

If that works as a family analogy, when was it that you brought your child to the table to eat with you?

Amen