

November 1, 2018
This I Believe
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Someone once told me that the reason shared meals are such an important part of our culture, is because sitting at a table brings people closer to each other physically than we are normally “allowed” by the rules of polite personal space. I believe this to be true.

It’s really a bizarre thing to do with people – to sit across from them, or next to them, and chew food. Especially when we’re doing it with strangers in order to “get to know each other.” Whoever thought spaghetti and a first date would go together well had an evil sense of humor!

But there’s something about that proximity, or perhaps there’s an intimacy of sharing the same food. When you run into someone on the street, or in the grocery store, or even in the Parrot Gallery, you ask and are asked “how are you?” – you’re never quite sure how much time you have to answer, or whether anything more than a smile and an “I’m fine!” is even desired. You both stand poised, literally, to leave the conversation at any point. There’s no assumed understanding about how long the exchange should take.

When you’re at a dinner table with someone, you can pretty much guess that the person next to you is going to be there for awhile if for no other reason than they just made a verbal contract with a server when they ordered the fish tacos. Sitting at a table gives permission to ask a different set of questions than the kinds you ask in passing.

I believe in going out for dinner. In getting the same old thing you always get, because life is short and it’s so darn good. In trying something new, because ... why not? I believe in tipping really well.

I believe in having meals in your own home. In being the host. In making the meal, and pondering what each person can and can’t eat, in the prayer-of-a-sort that you engage in when you think of the people who will be eating the food as you wait for the water to boil, or stir the soup, or check to see if the pie crust is golden brown yet. In the joy of knowing how much your daughter will feel known and loved when you tell her it’s butter chicken tonight.

I believe in going over for dinner. In being the guest. In eating what’s put before you. In getting new inspirations from someone else’s spaghetti sauce. In the pleasure of having been invited into someone’s home, and the aroma of food you didn’t cook when you walk in the door. In letting yourself enjoy a meal whether or not you contributed to it. There’s amazing grace in that.

I believe people are most beautiful by candlelight, and a table is the place we’re most often lit by it.

I believe in communion. It reminds me that that we are all guests, we are all the welcomed. It reminds me that we are human, we are embodied, and that the nourishing and cherishing of our bodies is divine and sacred work. It reminds me that we can and should come before God with our physical needs and hungers, and advocate for the physical needs of all creation. It reminds me that we are still part baby, often only beginning to grasp the concept of a thing when we taste it or touch

it or smell it. I believe it is no accident that communion is how we're invited to remember Jesus.

This I believe.