



Community and Social Justice Support Nights Reflections on Food

When considering the challenges we might come across while living in community, it is easy to trivialize the issues surrounding food. Many of us were raised with different values and attitudes toward food and meals.

For some, family meals may have been an integral and sacred part of sharing the day's stories and one another's presence; others may have been raised with the practice of eating only when time permitted in their busy schedules. We each bring experiences of the roles that meals/food played in our lives to community; we may also make assumptions of our community's attitude toward meals/food based on these experiences.

The purpose of this session is to discuss the different traditions and habits surrounding food which each volunteer brings to community.

Process:

These questions can provide a framework for reflecting and sharing. Please be aware of respecting and honoring each others' comments; this topic can be sensitive and may incite the discussion of issues such as anorexia/bulimia/compulsive overeating.

- 1) What role did meals play in my family during childhood? How often did we, as a family, dine together? Did we eat at home or go out to eat?
- 2) What purpose did food serve (was it used for nourishment? enjoyment?) in my childhood? Who did most of the cooking? Was I included in the preparation of food/meals at home?
- 3) What is the purpose of food for me today? Has it changed since I left home?
- 4) How do I envision the role of food in community this year? How often should we share our meals? How should they be prepared (taking turns, sharing the work, etc.)?
- 5) Have I ever experienced an unhealthy attitude toward food or eating? If so, how did I work through it? Or, how can I be supported by community as I try to deal with it now?
- 6) How does the widespread hunger of millions of people in our world affect my attitude toward food and eating? Can we do something as a community to acknowledge and remember those who endure famine?

This may be a good time to discuss preparation of and intervals of community meals. If issues related to sharing food staples, name brands, grocery shopping have created tension in the community, use this time to create a plan for grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning the kitchen.

Closing Prayer:

*I made bread today.
In the silence of the rising sun, I made bread.
It reminded me of my becoming
of everyone's becoming
and all that is a part of that becoming.
The patience needed
and the waiting –
as some of the ingredients cooled –
the smell of the y
and the different stages in the making of bread,
all so important,
yet very different from the finished product.
As I began to feel
and knead the bread with my hands,
I thought of the hands of those who helped knead me.
They are many hands,
yet all are the hands of God.
I identified with the incomplete, gooey-dough stage
that part that sometimes doesn't look so good
but you know is coming.
I was aware of the commonness among all people
created by God,
all from the same basic recipe and ingredients
yet each so different –
each loaf, each taste, each texture.
We are of the earth
made with the loving hands of a Mother, Father God.
One bread, one body, one Lord.*

- Geriann Fedorowicz, Former Jesuit Volunteer