



SESSION E

Reflections on Food

RATIONAL/PURPOSE:

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. Also involved with food issues in community is how your grocery shopping habits and food choices reflect your commitment to living simply and justly. The purpose of this session is to discuss the different traditions and habits surrounding food which each volunteer brings to community, as well as to discuss how the community approaches food from the perspective of the 4 values.

OPENING PRAYER:

Let us begin by recalling the words of Cesar Chavez: "Every time we sit at a table at night or in the morning to enjoy the fruits and grain and vegetables from our good earth, remember that they come from the work of men and women and children who have been exploited for generations." Jesus, too often we don't pay attention, we don't stop to think that, even in this day and age, injustice remains an invisible ingredient in much of the food that we eat. Open our eyes to see our power and obligation as consumers to help put things right. Make us ever grateful for the gifts of your creation which nourish us and for the sacrifices of all who participate in bringing it to our table. We ask this through Jesus, our Companion and Lord. Amen

PROCESS:

These questions can provide a framework for reflecting and sharing. Please be aware of respecting and honoring each other's comments; this topic can be sensitive and may incite the discussion of such issues 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 my community this year? How often should we share our meals together? How should they be prepared (taking turns, sharing the work, doing dishes, 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? What can we do as a community to acknowledge and remember those who endure famine?

7. Where do we do our grocery shopping? What do we know about where our food comes from? Do we purchase any organic foods?
8. In what ways do we eat simply? What do I consider “staples” and what do I consider “luxuries” among what we generally buy?

This may be a good time to discuss preparation of and regularity of communal meals, as well as any issues related to sharing food staples, name brands, grocery shopping habits, etc. which have created tension in the community. Use this time to create a plan for grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning in the kitchen.

CLOSING PRAYER:

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love each other we must know each other. We know God in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day