

Agape, Anyone?

“So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat....” I Corinthians 11.33

Dear Friends,

Did you know the New Testament uses three different Greek words that we translate as “Love”? It does. There is *eros*, which is used for passionate, romantic, and sexual love (from which we get the word “erotic”). Then there is *philia*, which is used to talk about friendship (from which we get Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love). Lastly there is *agape*, which refers to charity or a selfless love, and is used in talking about the kind of love that God has for us.

And did you know, that in the early days of Christianity, believers would gather together in homes (this was before the construction of church buildings) and hold what they called an *Agape* Feast? They did. You might think about it as a kind of “Reverse Coffee Hour”, with all the fellowship before the worship would begin. It was called *Agape* because no matter who one was, once they entered the home they were all on equal footing. Rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave or free. In that time together, all they knew was that they had all come to know the love of God as especially found in Christ Jesus and they were putting into action that same love with one another.

I think this is a great idea. And so did the Liturgy Committee. And so we decided it was time this year to host our own *Agape* Feast, and you are all invited! It is going to be held on Holy Thursday, March 29th, and will be part of our Maundy Thursday Liturgy. ***Everyone*** (and I do mean everyone) is invited to join us at 6:30pm in the Parish House for a potluck meal, with the near-eastern palate (that means humus, rice, falafel, pita, and that sort of thing) that would have been common in those first *agape* gatherings.

At the end of our time of delicious dining and fellowship, a simple Eucharist will be held right there in the Parish Hall; we will have a simple form of communion blessing over bread and wine and we will pass them throughout the tables. And then if you wish, you may go back home, get the kids bathed and slip them into bed (for you see, this is a great time for kids of every age - and friends and neighbors, too!).

For those who can stay: after we share communion, the St. Gregory’s Choir will lead us with a simple song into procession over to the darkened church. As parishioners slip into their pews, the clergy and acolytes will carry out the traditional stripping of the altar. Following this, we will bring the reserved Sacrament over to the Altar of Repose (as we traditionally do) and thus we will begin the night-long watch, as is the custom in our church.

I encourage you to come to this *Agape* Feast and Service. It truly is a demonstration of God’s self-less love for us, as we have come to know it in Christ Jesus, his passion, death, and resurrection. I hope you will find it a refreshing change, one in which you can view Holy Week in a little different light. And may the deep, deep love of Jesus be present with you, as you keep a holy Lent. Peace,

Thursday, March 29th at 6:30pm
Christ Church Parish House
Bring a potluck dish to share

Peace,

Mother Lisa Mitchell+