

THE ALTAR- Part 1

It is amazing that two of the most common daily activities that human share are eating and drinking. Eating and Drinking are also the way Catholic Christians mark their most important encounter with the sacred. Yet, even though we often find ourselves “grabbing a bite” on the way to something more important or pressing, we can all remember times in our lives when a meal meant more than fast food. As a child of the 60’s and 70’s, Sunday dinner always took place in the “Dining room” of the house, usually with relatives present, or at a relatives’ house. The Italian side of my family, Sunday Dinner would include several courses of food starting at noon and ending in the early evening. Our courses always include pasta, turkey, ham, desserts, antipasto, fruits and ending with assortment of nuts to crack open and coffee.



Think back to the most important meals in your life. It would be

hard to image a wedding celebration without some sort of reception following. Funerals too, are often concluded with a meal shared by family and friends as well as our Baptismal, First Holy Communion and Confirmation families.

Jesus, who began his public ministry at the wedding feast at Cana and raised eyebrows by eating with notorious sinners also chose to gather his closest companions to celebrate a special meal on the night before he died. Within the context of the Jewish Passover, he marked his own Passover as the sacrificial lamb, by taking, blessing, breaking and sharing the most common of Mediterranean food staples: Bread and Wine. Now we do the same in His memory, and recognize His presence among us.

In many ancient cultures, altars were erected as stone slabs to offer crops or animals or even human victims as a sacrifice to the deity. In our buildings for worship, we also call the table of the Eucharist an altar on which a ritual, sacrificial meal marks present the paschal mystery: Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. We join our lives with Christ in this offering to the Father.