

# Liturgy shares stories, breaks bread

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Diocesan Liturgical Commission

I have just returned from the school cafeteria, where I spend many of my lunch hours roaming around and visiting with students. I can't help but notice how they group together at various tables.

Seniors sit at one table, while juniors congregate at another. Baseball players have gathered at one, and the tech crew for the spring musical can be found at another. Sitting at yet another table are the students from the advanced-placement biology class, while faculty members sit at a table over in the corner.

It is important for these various groups to have lunch together because eating together is one means by which they remember what has drawn them together as a group. It strengthens the bond of friendship they have formed with one another.

The first Christians gathered for much the same reason: to remember Jesus, the one who had drawn them together, and to strengthen themselves in friendship and community. When these Christians gathered, they shared stories of faith and a meal.

The Eucharist is the opportunity we are given to remember Jesus and to strengthen our commitment to one another by sharing stories and a meal — the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist.

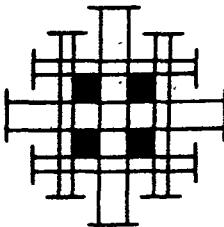
When we gather at the table of the Lord's word and body, we say that we are bound together by our common faith in Jesus. We share that faith as we listen to the stories of God's people throughout history, and we place our personal and communal stories side by side with those stories.

We hear of the challenges faced and the joys shared by God's people, and we are invited to see how God was present to them and how God is present to us in the challenges we face and the joys we share.

As we share our stories with one another — sisters and brothers united by baptism — we enrich each others' stories, and we express our commitment to each other as our stories continue to unfold.

At the table of the Eucharist, we then express in action what we have said in words. The early Christians referred to their gatherings as "the breaking of the bread." They used this name not only to make ref-

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erence to the specific action of Jesus, but also to remember what that action symbolized — the giving of Jesus on our behalf. As we share the eucharistic meal, we are reminded that, like Jesus, we give ourselves on behalf of others.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus shared their stories of Jesus and recognized him in the breaking of the bread. May we journey together as disciples and friends, sharing our stories of faith and learning from the example of Jesus when we break the eucharistic bread with each other.

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