



Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house....
The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

— Luke 5:29-32

When I was a kid, growing up in a small apartment in New York City, the kitchen table was the center of our home. It served as study space, family room and, of course, eating space.

Several years ago I was invited to a friend’s home for lunch, and it brought back the memories of so many other tables. We enjoyed tomato soup (a nice chunky one with bits of carrots and topped with shredded purple basil), a baguette and cheeses, ravioli coated lightly in butter and Parmesan, a mix of figs, good dark chocolate, and these wonderful slim cookies that are a cross between shortbread and biscotti. Over this simple yet extravagant meal, we joined two friends and laughed, dreamed, wrestled with the issues of the day, and listened deeply to each other.

Jesus didn’t have a kitchen table to call his own, but I imagine the meals he shared with his friends and followers had a similar flavor.

This is what the altar is like for me. It is central and essential—holding the memories and recalling the memories we make around the “dining tables” in our parish halls, in our homes, in restaurants, in parks. Dining tables and Christ’s altar have as much to teach us about radical hospitality as they do about feeding spiritual and physical hungers.

— Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows