

Come to the Table

By: Angela Anno

My twin grandsons make their First Communion May 1, which would have been their great-grandmother's 103th birthday. Though she'd been dead for seven years I can picture her rejoicing with them as they come for the first time to the table that nourished her so often in her life. I remember how excited she was when I made my own First Communion. Her mother, my Nona, who had to wait until she was 12 to receive Communion, reminded me of the privilege I had. I'm not sure I understood all that meant but I did realize it was a step in joining the adults at the sacred table for the first time. It was special, it was holy, and I could join them and experience God's presence in a new and deeper way.

As a parent I shared that experience with my own three children as they came to the Eucharistic table for the first time. Though they were still immature in many ways, their First Communion marked a change in them. Now I'm the grandma and I listen to my grandsons as they tell me how they'll be receiving the body and blood of Jesus in communion and I remember my Nona's words so long ago.

Coming to the Eucharistic table is always a cause for celebration but when children come for the first time the whole community rejoices. In a way as we watch them, we all become children again accepting that great gift as if for the first time. God who made the universe and all its beauty, who fashioned each one of us as unique persons, loves us so much that God enters the host and comes to us as food. God's love is overflowing.

The Eucharist brings us together in a way we could never do by ourselves. At St. Leo's, we determined that if we could pray Eucharist together, we could do anything together—quite a goal for a diverse group of people from many nations and cultures seeking a way to become family. There have been blips and mis-steps along the way but somehow our prayer together helped us work through them and move ahead.

We discovered that languages and cultures were not a stumbling block, but a gift. We included readings and music in Spanish and African languages as well as English. If we didn't know the words, we could join in by humming or clapping. The Our Father and sign of peace were encouraged in native tongues, Children joined in singing in multiple languages, Liturgical ministers represented our diversity. Though we didn't speak the same languages, we were becoming family.

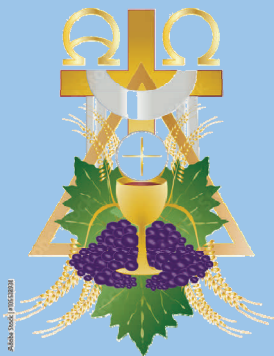
When Ben, a young man from Kenya was ordained a deacon, we decided to have a cookies and punch reception. One of the African women reminded us that "he is African and needs African food." She orga-

nized African cooks to prepare favorite dishes and the whole community sampled African cuisine. When thanked for doing this her response was "It is our privilege. After all we are all brothers and sisters of Jesus."

And so we are—true family in Jesus. Baptisms, Confirmations, and marriages reflect this as godparents, sponsors, and witnesses are often chosen across cultures. Coming together like this opens us to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is Pentecost every Sunday at St. Leo's

We may not look alike and speak different languages but when we come to the Eucharistic table, we are one family sharing the greatest meal of all.

What a cause for celebration and rejoicing!!



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Thank you very much for your generous support of the Freestore Foodbank Hunger Walk and St. Leo's Food Pantry over the years. Your gift is multiplied many times over when St. Leo's purchases the wide variety of reduced priced items, and goods offered by the FreeStore FoodBank. We had so much success last year virtually and we are looking forward to this year, hopefully in person! Join us on Monday, May 30, 2022 for the 19th Annual Hunger Walk & 5K Run presented by Delta Air Lines!

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