

DAY THREE THE KITCHEN



Today we make the Kitchen special for a day by placing a symbol here as we bless its place in the life of a family. This could be a candle (careful if there are children in the house), a family photo, a significant ornament or statue, a cross, a vase of flowers etc... This will help to bring your attention to that place each time you pass or enter.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food. (Isaiah 25: 6))

We give thanks for the gift that is home,
We bless the one who gave us life that we might experience love
We bless the ones with whom we live and share that love.
We bless this day at watch for the blessings it holds in wait.
We bless those we know and love now in their own homes.
May we always be truly grateful and ever-loving good Lord. Amen.

I am not the only priest who asked his family to bring forward the chalice and patten (cup and plate) at the Mass of ordination; and on this occasion it was my Mum and one of my aunties. Looking back and specifically looking at the William Scott painting *Still Life on a Black Table*, the appropriateness of this gesture becomes more meaningful and transparent. These two women both fed me. One daily as she developed her culinary repertoire, the other when we went to visit our cousins for “Sunday Tea”, invariably a ham salad.

Abstract painting is not to everyone’s taste and while it is not entirely abstract Scott’s painting is getting there. For me abstraction permits us to see deeper than the surface. In this picture everyday kitchen utensils are arranged on a table as might be the chalice and cup I received all those years ago are now placed on the altar.

Jesus is a master of abstraction. He chose a commonplace food and commonplace drink to focus our attention on what they become; a real presence of God’s banquet. Of course, we associate banquets with rich, expensive and exotic food and drink in plentiful supply. A banquet often separates the servers from the served. Jesus reverses this expectation, expands the guest list, chooses not to be served but to serve and in doing so fulfils Isaiah’s prophecy in a manner Isaiah may not even himself have envisioned. That said it would be wrong to take away the subversive element in Isaiah of a God who takes it upon them to prepare food for us.

So it’s hats off to those who undertake the role of preparing and presenting our food and the kitchen is the shrine in which their devotions are performed.

Let us build a house where
Where love is found
In water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground,
Where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus
Is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that feeds us.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome, in this place.
(Marty Haugen © GIA Publications)

Here we acknowledge the hidden love
That blesses every day
The love that needs hands
which sometimes pay the price
That comes with toil
and exposure to abrasive substances.

Here we recognise and bless too
Those who farm, grow, harvest,
Process and transport the food; here transformed
To provide nourishment in this home. Amen

Praise to the one who dwells with us! Amen

Crafty Kids: It is not surprising that we sometimes think that the way people show us that they love us is by giving us presents. At special times like Christmas and Birthdays people give presents to the people they love. But love is not only shown on two days a year. Real love is shown to us every day but we don't always realise it straight away. Real love is when people do lots of very ordinary things but things that make our lives healthy and happy. One of the most important things is food. So, the people who feed us are very special. Lots of loving happens in kitchens but even the people doing the loving don't always realise it. They just get on with things and often it is just another chore like tidying up, shopping and washing clothes. So, it is a good idea every so often to let those who do these things of us know that we appreciate it. How about taking over in the kitchen sometimes, helping a little with some of the jobs that need to be done. Once you get started you sometimes find out that it isn't all that bad, especially when we share the chores with the people we love.

Another suggestion would be to make some biscuits in the shape of a heart or decorate them to look like hearts so we can give them to the other people in our family. This might be something we have to let the grown-ups join in. We will call them *Agape Biscuits*. *Agape* is a word from the Greek language it is a word used to talk about this kind of love, the love that really cares and shares things.

The idea is to use the recipe is on the BBC Good Food Website and to either shape the biscuits into hearts or decorate them afterwards with heart shaped icing.

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/easiest-ever-biscuits>

When the biscuits are ready get everyone together and talk about the helpful things we do for each other and say thank you, then share the biscuits.

Notes on Artworks

Diego Velazquez (1599-1660) interprets the *Kitchen Scene with Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* as many of us would. Martha is preparing food in the kitchen while her sister Mary sits attentively at the feet of Jesus. But what are the other characters doing? Well Martha's companion is perhaps easier to read. The give away is a finger pointing accusatively in the direction of Mary. So, both women in the kitchen are stirring. Martha has the laudable intention of providing food for her friend and houseguest but perhaps she paid too much heed to her companion provoking Jesus to invite her to set aside worry and fretting. He is not so unappreciative of her care to imply that her efforts in the kitchen will pass without appreciation but for now he is impressed by Mary's ability to focus her attention on their guest, another valued act of hospitality.

In many a household the kitchen also performs the task of a laundry, so it's appropriate to consider the *Woman Ironing* in Edward Degas' painting. She comes across as someone who might be discovering that such mundane tasks can be commandeered as opportunities to reflect contemplatively on other things, or completed as a silent gesture of love.

William Scott's *Still Life on a Black Table II* (1956) and the accompanying photograph of my chalice and patten have already been commented on.

