



YEAR OF FAITH
HABIT 1: PRAYER AT MEALTIME
OCTOBER 2012

Pope Benedict XVI has declared October 2012 to November 2013 a Year of Faith. To celebrate the year, we will take the next seven months to look at **7 Faith Habits** based on the Year of Faith magnet that was made available in our religious education programs and in our parish churches. If we each adopt at least one of these habits for the Year of Faith, our parishes may reflect a renewal of Christian Faith.

The first habit we will highlight (in no particular order) is **offer a prayer at mealtime**. Do we take time to say a prayer at mealtime? The mealtime prayer is both a blessing on the meal we are to receive and a thanksgiving prayer to God – plus those who grew the food – cooked the meal – served the meal, etc.

I am not sure as a child if I prayed the meal prayer with great sincerity when we were eating liver, maybe I prayed the liver would turn into pizza or something. But I do remember how important praying was at our family table and to this day I feel a bond with my family and God at meal time. Like many of our homes, it was not easy to have all of the family around for the meal. Yet my parents tried to save that meal time, as best we could.

The traditional mealtime prayer is: “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord Amen.” Some people may include the saint of the day or a Hail Mary with their prayers. Others may use their own words for the prayer and maybe include a prayer of petition, remembering someone who needs their prayer at the time. A concluding prayer at the end of the meal – formal or informal – is also worthwhile.

The prayer can be said at home, in a restaurant or wherever we eat, to remind ourselves that we are in the Lord's presence before we eat. Maybe at a restaurant a bowing of one's head for a silent prayer would be more comfortable for us. Either way we take time to build a habit of offering a meal time prayer to make our meal "a sacred time."

Jesus learned to pray at his family meals with Joseph and Mary. He learned prayers from his mom and step-dad, just like my family learned from my mother and father. The **United States Catechism for Adults** states clearly, "Parents are the first teachers of prayer. Family prayer, practiced on a daily basis, in which the children witness the prayer of adults closest to them, is an excellent school of prayer." (p. 472) Meals are daily and to create a simple habit of offering a prayer – individually, as a couple, or as a family – is a great habit to be a part of this Year of Faith for each one of us.

It is not surprising that the Lord would take bread at the Last Supper and say, "This is my body," and take the chalice with wine and say, "This is my blood" and invite us to share the meal together. He knew meals were not only important, but frequent. He wants to be part of our daily life. The Mass certainly has a few "mealtime" prayers doesn't it?

So give the mealtime prayer a try – it won't turn liver to pizza, but it will make the meal very special.

Fr. Bob

"Fridge" Material:

Grace Before Meals: Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grace After Meals: We give thee thanks, for all thy benefits, Almighty God, who live and reign forever. Amen.