



July 3, 2022

## Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

### The Eucharist (“the Lord’s Supper”) in the Early Church



*“As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours in the glory and the power through Jesus Christ unto ages of ages. (From the Didache, see below)*

The Didache ... (pronounced “di-duh-kay”) written late in the 1<sup>st</sup> century / early 2<sup>nd</sup> century attempted to organize and codify the beliefs of the early Christian movement into a teaching device when forming and visiting new churches. In some ways, the Didache is like a catechism and in other ways an order of service. There is one section on communion which gives us insight into how communion was practiced in the early generations of Christians. (You can read the Didache online at <https://legacyicons.com/content/didache.pdf>. Or I can email the pdf to you – let me know!)

Fellowship at the table between Jews and Gentiles: In the early church several important decisions were made about commensality (the act of eating together) between Jews and Gentiles due to dietary restrictions and customs. The norm was Jews ought not to share meals with Gentiles or eat food prepared by them. While Peter urged Jews to not participate in meals with Gentiles, Paul insisted that membership in the church is open to Jews and Gentiles without distinction. Paul tolerated continued observance of other Jewish food practices (see Rom 14), but he insisted that all Christ-believers, Jewish and Gentile, could and should eat together as equals.

Food restrictions and the “Apostolic Decree”: Disagreements among the apostles about food restrictions and other Jewish traditions (such as, do Gentiles have to undergo circumcision to become a member of the Christ followers?) continued until finally an agreement was reached in what became known as the “Apostolic Decree” (Acts 15:23-29), which exempted Gentile Christ-believers from most Jewish dietary laws but required them to observe several fundamental Jewish food taboos: for example, do not eat meat sacrificed to idols. We can see Paul’s comment of this in 1 Cor 8:4-13.

The early “Lord’s Supper”: In those days the “Lord’s Supper” resembled Roman feasts. Communion was a meal along with worship. In his letter 1 Cor, Paul addressed many, MANY questions that had come up in the church. It’s no surprise that a faith community consisting of Jews and Gentiles together would have some disagreements and conflicts. Paul’s teaching, (esp. in 1 Cor 8 and Romans 14) states clearly that there is room for diversity in the Church, but it comes with a large dose of individual responsibility: the health of the faith community comes first. Period.

**Let us keep in our prayers**: Jeff who is waiting for a hopeful medical diagnosis; for comfort for the family whose 19-year-old son died unexpectedly; for comfort for Diane and Phil whose son died this week; for an end to war in Ukraine; for those suffering from famine and hopelessness.

*We are reminded that God is with us during our troubles, and that He is not constrained by our troubles. His limits are never challenged. There is never a moment when there is nothing more we can do. God works beyond the possibilities we can imagine. God’s peace to all of us!*