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Abstract

Society in the 21st century has become increasingly fragile. An incessant focus upon the rights of the individual alongside a growing commitment-phobic, carefree culture has resulted in society's refusal to either acknowledge or take responsibility for the many social and familial issues that are so prevalent today. This, coupled with a decline in church attendance, has resulted in an augmented sense of isolation and anonymity, the side effects of which are evident in increasing incidences of poor mental health, and wider social issues.

This dissertation seeks to address some of these problems by asking the question, 'How does table fellowship break down barriers and build up communities of faith?'. Through an assessment of table fellowship and meal practices within both the Old and New Testaments, it is my intention to examine Biblical teaching and its impact, both contemporaneously and currently. An assessment of table fellowship as a method of tackling social issues including loneliness, depression and reconciliation will also be performed. I will analyse the benefits of employing table fellowship as a discipleship tool, as we seek to reach out to those within our communities in order to enliven their faith through this act of love. The final chapter will address the sacrament of Holy Communion, its centrality to our worship, and its outworking within our parishes and communities.

A meal will be conducted within the parish that I currently serve in to ascertain the impact of table fellowship within the parish and the local community. A further questionnaire will be sent to clergy within my current diocese to gauge their perspectives and experience of this topic. The data collected will be analysed and reviewed.

It is my hope that, based upon the research carried out and the data collected, to offer recommendations to clergy regarding the benefits, or indeed challenges, of holding regular meal events within their parishes.

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