

19 B

There is a legend told about Abraham who came from the Middle East. According to the legend, one day a very hungry man came to him and begged for food. Abraham rather cautiously welcomed him and sat him down for a meal. But when Abraham heard him say a pagan blessing over the food, he jumped up, and ordered the man from his table, and from his house. Almost immediately, God spoke to Abraham. 'Abraham, Abraham! I've been supplying that poor man with food every day for the past eighty years and you couldn't allow him eat in peace on one occasion.

Jesus had room at His table for all who sought him. As a result certain people complained about the type of people he fraternised with. For instance when he sought the company of Zacchaeus, who was a tax collector of dubious reputation, the Jewish leaders were quite annoyed. 'He's gone to stay at a 'sinners' house', they said.

The Mass, our love-feast with Jesus, is the place of forging closer friendships not just with Him but also with each other. In the second reading today St Paul advises us to be friends with one another, kind and forgiving and to never hold grudges. Is that true of each of us as we sit round the one Eucharistic table with Jesus today?

The same could apply to disparities on the world stage which prolongs the day when people from different cultures can sit as equals around the one table let alone the one Eucharistic table. Western democracies are often blind to the merits of other cultures which are not modelled on their own. The last president of America, for instance, disagreed with certain elements of African culture which did not fit in with his own restricted world view.

In the realm of faith the gap between our catholic ethos and the shifting sands of our politically correct culture seems to me to be getting wider and wider and the table we could sit round is getting

smaller and smaller. The Pope talks a lot these days about the new ways of spreading the gospel but perhaps we need to confront the possibility that the secular world may evangelise us first, if we're not careful. But then again the church and the world have rarely seen eye to eye throughout history. Jesus promised his followers that they would have trouble from the secular world.

But Christians are also divided on faith and even moral issues – hence we are some way from sitting round the one table and sharing communion together. Some interpretations of Christianity are more fundamentalist and hard line than others, often dividing people into the 'saved' versus the 'unsaved'. Yes, we Catholics long for the day when everyone can unite round our table and partake of the body and blood of Christ at, but we've never said that the grace of God is reserved for Catholics alone. God wants all people to be saved. The catholic door is always open to people who come to the same faith in the Eucharist as we do.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the answer to all our family, social and global divisions. He will expand our horizons and bring nearer the day when everyone will find a place round His Eucharistic table on Earth in preparation for the banquet of Eternal Life in Heaven.