

Now Thank We All Our God.....

At the beginning of the meeting, I was asked to offer the blessing for the meal. The blessing would be prayed at the end of the meeting. This gave my mind time to wander regarding an appropriate blessing. And wander it did!

My mother was raised in a very devout family of good Episcopalians. My remembrances of the meal blessings were of very stoic and sober prayers. The blessing was usually a variation of one of the following:

*For these and all Thy gifts, God's holy name be praised. Amen.
Bless this food to our use, and us to Thy service; and keep us ever mindful of the
needs of others. Amen.*

My father's family was decidedly lower church – Congregational to be exact. My grandfather's blessing was short and to the point:

May the Blessed One bless. Amen.

For some reason, I can't forget the prayer, learned in adolescence, taught to us by some trouble-maker whom our parents did not appreciate:

Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub. Yea, God!

I was also influenced by prayers offered at church camps. The Doxology was used before meals and sung to a variety of melodies, like the Mary Poppins tune, "Chim Chim Cheree." Is this still the case? Please let me know, campers!

With the advent of children in our family life, Eileen and I resorted to the time honored prayer that is simple for children to memorize:

God is great, God is good, and we thank God for our food. Amen.

This prayer was offered at every meal that the four of us ate together. I thought that when Eileen and I became empty-nesters we would develop a more "adult" prayer when at table. However, we are creatures of habit and mealtime still has us ascribing to God greatness and goodness as we give thanks for the food.

I have found that people love to sing a blessing, and this one is often sung in a round before church suppers:

For health and strength and daily food, we praise thy name, O God.

My extended family sings two blessings when we gather. The first is only on Thanksgiving, the second is before all the other meals when we are together:

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

(Johnny Appleseed Song)

*Oh, the Lord is good to me; and so I thank the Lord
For giving me the things I need: the sun and the rain and the apple seed.
The Lord is good to me.
(Hallelujah! Amen!)*

When it came time for me to pray, I didn't know where to start! I had too many blessings ricocheting around in my head. So I simply gave thanks for the food and fellowship and faith that had brought us together, and for the nourishment that would send us forth for deeds of justice and loving-kindness. I suppose that is what all the blessings are really about at their core – whether spoken, sung or signed. May your mealtimes continue to be opportunities for blessing and being blessed.

With you on the Journey,

Campbell Lovett