
Freddy From Germany and a Mighty Good Meal

I don't know about you, but I am loving the World Cup. It's not so much the sport that's got me hooked, it's the fans. It's Scotland's "Tartan Army" drinking Boston bars dry one day and raising money for a children's hospital the next. It's Japanese tourists staying behind for hours following each game, cleaning up stadiums as a sign of respect. It's people from Cape Verde pouring into the streets of Atlanta after witnessing their tiny nation, in its first World Cup match ever, hold the mighty Spanish team at bay.

It's also this German guy named Freddy. Freddy has been traveling across the U.S. for the past couple of weeks watching soccer, yes, but also eating a lot and writing restaurant reviews. His social media posts have attracted a huge following after his visits to Waffle House (10/10, we will be coming back!) and various establishments in New Orleans (Jambalaya and drinks are fantastic, but why does everyone throw plastic beads?). Clearly, Freddy has been impressed by his culinary road trip. Most of all, though, he seems delighted by the community he's found along the way. This is the real gift of his posts, to my mind: their reminder of the value of sitting down with our fellow human beings and breaking bread, especially during these acrimonious times in which we live. It's hard to think the worst of someone with whom you're sharing world's best Philly cheesesteak. It's tough to cling to biases when a complete stranger has just introduced you to the wonder of fries dipped in a thick chocolate shake.

This will come as no surprise to anyone who's ever supped at the table of Jesus. The context may be different, but the vibes are much the same. Across the globe each week, people of varying nationalities, races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and political persuasion come together to break bread with God. To stretch out our hands in a mixture of hope, longing, joy, despair, faith, doubt, cynicism, and awe—to stretch out our hands to receive what at first may not look like much of a spread but one that serves up all the love and healing and nourishment this broken and troubled world will ever need. We come to stretch out our hands to Jesus; we come to stretch out our hands to each other, too. To walk up the chancel steps with someone we envy. To kneel shoulder to shoulder with a spouse, sibling, or friend with whom we've been at odds. To receive the Bread of Life from a priest who has disappointed us. To drink from the cup of a chalice bearer we argued bitterly with last week. To glance down the altar rail and see the face of someone who, growing up, we were taught to distrust simply because of the color of their skin. We come to stretch out our hands to Jesus but also to each other, and in doing so, not only to "taste and see that the Lord is good" but to taste and see that we are good as well. That's right, we are good! Our community is good—not perfect, but good. Each of us has been created in the image of God and bears that image in this world. There is room in the Body of Christ for all, even, and perhaps especially, for people we might be tempted to revile—our adversaries, those who have hurt us, those whom we perceive as the Other, and those parts of ourselves from which we have become estranged but which are loved and held tenderly by God.

This is the miracle of the table of our Lord. In the bread and in the wine, in communion with our friends and with our foes, we are knit together into a mystical fellowship that transcends boundaries of space, time, affinity, and affection. Which makes for a mighty good meal.