



THE HOLY SUPPER ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Sharing a special, family meal, different from all other times of the year, has always been an important part of our Christmas celebration. Today many families look back on and cherish childhood memories of the "Holy Supper". The various foods and customs surrounding this meal differed from village to village, indeed from family to family, and thus became part of each family's heritage. Yet this custom of taking time to gather together in joy as a family and to share a special meal is not only something for fond memories but a vital way of reaffirming today God's love for the world, a vital way of reaffirming the importance of the family where we learn to love and be loved. Beginning our Christmas celebration with "Holy Supper" is just as meaningful today as it was years ago; perhaps it is needed even more now than ever before.

Holy Supper usually begins at twilight when the 'first star' appears. The table is covered with white tablecloth in memory of the swaddling clothes of Christ. Hay or straw is strewn on the table to remind us of the poverty of the cave Jesus was born in. A large loaf of bread is the centerpiece of the table symbolizing Christ the Bread of Life. A candle in the center of this bread recalls the Star of Bethlehem, which led men to worship the true Light of the World. This bread, along with garlic and honey, is shared by all present. Holy Supper begins with prayer in Thanksgiving for all the blessings of the past year and prayer for all good things in the coming year.

Following Holy Supper, the entire family joins in singing Christmas carols.

The following foods maybe used:

1. Lentil soup, pea soup, cabbage soup
2. mushrooms & gravy or carrots & gravy
3. wafer or Christmas bread
4. honey balls (baked bread with honey), soda bread, or bobka
5. mashed potatoes
6. sauerkraut
7. pirohi or cheese ravioli; pasta or rice
8. boiled green vegetables
9. stuffed cabbage, grape leaves or squash
10. boiled rice
11. boiled fish, cod, halibut, bacala, shrimp, etc
12. nut or apricot rolls or pull-apart cake