

Taste, and See

By Rev. Dr. Norbert Haukenfrers

Anglicans for Renewal Canada, Fall 2016

When I was growing up, my family never ate fish. Only after my Opa died did I learn why we never ate fish. Shortly after Oma and Opa were married, Opa was drafted into the Wehrmacht. While serving on the Russian front, his company was captured and sent to Siberia as prisoners of war. Their prison diet consisted largely of discarded fish bones. So, when Opa finally made it back home to Oma, they resumed their life together without fish on the table. The smell of fish brought back too many memories for Opa. Because Opa couldn't eat fish, we never ate fish.

A few weeks ago, I went to the doctor and he noticed my good cholesterol numbers were low. He recommended I incorporate more fish in my diet. This made me think about why my diet includes so little fish: growing up, we just never ate fish. Although Oma grew up by the seaside enjoying fish, Oma's love for Opa shaped the diet and tastes of several generations.

In reading the stories of God in the Bible, I find the same kind of thing happening. We are the spiritual offspring of the New Testament generations. Their sacrifices are still shaping our lives today. Finding my place in God's story helps me see the identity I am invited to live out.

And occasionally I find myself at the table with God and the unexpected happens. Kind of like when, years after Opa had passed, I went out for supper with Oma and she ordered fish. After the waitress left the table, I said to Oma, "You ordered fish!"

"Oh Norbert," Oma replied, "I love fish. I didn't eat fish because Opa couldn't eat fish."

"But I thought..."

I thought I had it all figured out, but my Oma still surprises me. Unseen sacrifices helped me understand why my diet was insufficient. Likewise, when we read the Bible we see how our attitudes and actions are lacking. And sometimes God surprises us when we think we have it all figured out. We come to the table with our tastes and experiences, we leave with our expectations and understandings transformed.



We have inherited a rich banquet from our spiritual ancestors. But we need to continually refine our palate to the flavour of God's truth, goodness, and beauty. Where our tastes have been shaped by conformity instead of the transforming power of God, we need to taste something fresh.

I'm taking my doctor's advice and eating more fish. Turns out, I even like it. Taste and see that God is love.

Rev. Dr. Norbert Haukenfrers is the rector of St. David's Anglican Church in Prince Albert, SK.