
A PLACE AT THE TABLE

It was a time to reflect on the day's events, share experiences, relax and enjoy each other's company, while replenishing our bodies. If someone dropped by during dinner, we'd set another place and invite our visitor to join us; there was always enough food for one more, even if we had to divide our own servings. I've been told that, in some families, if someone arrived during dinner, unexpectedly, they would be asked to return later. There's something parsimonious about that, and it's also a metaphor for how we sometimes treat other villages in the world.

When we're selfish, although it is sometimes necessary in order to preserve our privacy and boundaries, we separate ourselves from others and risk sacrificing moments of attachment that promote affiliation and friendship. Some believe that we're constantly in the company of angels; and for that reason, they welcome unexpected visitors, for to turn an angel away would be sinful, absurd and incongruous. To these people, a chance meeting is serendipitous rather than irksome and awkward.

Our children may choose partners outside the parameters of the model established by our peers and the corporate media stranglehold—with stepchildren or cultural differences, or even a same sex partner. But we, as parents, will either accept their choices as the result of the teachings we've offered, allowing them to be free thinkers—inclusive, mindful and compassionate, or distance ourselves from even our own children because of their choices. It is at these times, especially, that we may need to shift our paradigm and simply set another place at the table.

