

Faith and Learning Scholars Dialogue Dinner #2

*Babette's Feast* by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen)

Leading Questions:

1. Go around the table and introduce yourself to all your table companions and share one special Thanksgiving tradition you are looking forward to on Thanksgiving Day...weekend.
2. Go around again and share your reaction to the reading and share: What impacts you most from the story of Babette's Feast?
3. Share the connections and challenges of faith and learning in the themes of the story.
4. Why do you think the faith of the two sisters (and their fellow church members) caused them to believe anything but the plainest food was sinful and extravagant? How did Babette respond to this?
5. Why do you think Babette decided to stay in the village and blow her lottery winnings on an extravagant meal – when she knew this might go unappreciated as well as resulting in her having to stay?
6. The small sect was ridden with old grievances and resentments. Why might a meal such as Babette's feast have caused the healing of such relational divisions? Do you think this was part of Babette's hope for the feast, or was it merely a way for her to express her gratitude for their hospitality?
7. How does this story impact your life when thinking of immigration, community, food insecurity and privilege and in discussing this you may consider this excerpt from the end of Blixen's story:

“Dear Babette,” she said softly, “you ought not to have given away all you had for our sake.”

Babette gave her mistress a deep glance, a strange glance. Was there not pity, even scorn, at the bottom of it?

“For your sake?” she replied. “No. For my own.”

She rose from the chopping block and stood up before the two sisters.

“I am a great artist!” she said.

She waited a moment and then repeated: “I am a great artist, Mesdames.”

Again, for a long time there was deep silence in the kitchen.

Then Martine said: “So you will be poor now all your life, Babette?”

“Poor?” said Babette. She smiled as if to herself. “No, I shall never be poor. I told you that I am a great artist. A great artist, Mesdames, is never poor. We have something, Mesdames, of which other people know nothing”

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