

*Bless this food to our use and us to thy loving and faithful service.  
—The Book of Common Prayer, adapted*

When I was a child, I remember my family holding several Low Country boils: a feast of seafood and vegetables, slowly cooked together.

That meal was the work of all our hands—from the seafood caught by my grandfather, to the vegetables chopped by my aunts, to the giant, simmering pot stirred by my cousin and me.

The blessing my father prays at family gatherings always resonated most strongly with me at this particular meal. The “use” of this food was more than the nourishment of our bodies—it was the nourishment of our relationships with one another.

The journey we take together in our faith communities during Lent and beyond reminds me of that day of preparation and cooking. As we try to live as followers of Jesus, we work hard together, we laugh a lot, and we have a little (and sometimes more than a little) tension with one another. And we also anticipate—at the end of that day or season or lifetime—a wonderful celebration of abundance wrought ultimately by love.

—Nicole Seiferth