

## GLIMPSE

### Ratatouille

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

One definition of a human is "Homo ludens", that is "beings who are playing". Chaucer wrote about a group of pilgrims who while walking along had to play by competitively telling funny or serious stories about each other. In taking long cartrips, before the age of private entertainment devices, families would pass the miles-hours by counting out-of-state license plates or yellow cars.

Another definition is "homo faciense" which is "Beings who are doing or making things". This "*making*" takes many forms, such as art, construction, even cooking. My Jesuit companion and I would cook together for our community once a week. One time we found a cookbook's offering of "ratatouille" which sounded tasty and healthy. We were quadrupling the recipe. Four cloves of garlic then were added. We did not know that a clove was not the whole garlic ball. Well that made for quite a spicy dinner which was endured by all except a young Jesuit from Korea who thought he was back home. He had three helpings along with quantities of water and much mopping of his face. We were beings who did something, made something all right.

When we make things, like a dinner, a poem, some kind of project, we would hope that those for whom or to whom we offer the work would come to appreciate all we put into it. We would hope they can enjoy the hiddenness of our creativity. We did not have to explain much about the overly-reinforced ratatouille. We often ask hosts or hostesses about different tastes of soups or desserts. The person usually delights in relating just how much of this and that to put in. When I was in Korea we gave a retreat to a group of Australian sisters who made their own ginger ale. When I asked one woman how much ginger to put into the brew, she answered, "Just the right amount."

I love to cook, but often, in Jesuit communities I wonder often if the men are even tasting what they're eating or if they really know what they are taking in. I want to tell them all the ingredients, the quality of the meat and vegetables, how much

chopping and shopping I had to do and how long it took me to prepare the whole meal. It seems often they're more interested in whether or not there is enough for a second helping and what's for dessert. Ah, community, family, life.

While sitting at our community dinner table the other evening, my mind left my plate for a few moments and landed on the table of creation which has been laid out with many delights and wonders. If this mysterious God is the Chef and Main Cook, if this Divine Player, this Transcendent Poet, this Deus Faciens, has been playing and doing and making this cosmic meal then it follows that this Doer of All Good would desire us to see, touch taste and receive each course, each poetic image, every "right amount" that is offered. In the second chapter of I Corinthians Paul writes, "we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that God has given us." It is the same kind of spirit which would move me to tell everybody at table what things are and all I could remember. The creative spirit is hovering over the meal, poem, statue, building we made and that love for it extends to our loving its being shared and known. We need somebody who knows Dante to explain all the features of the Divine Comedy, because the author is long gone, except in his work. We need a good cook to tell us how he/she put in just the right amount of garlic in the ratatouille. We need the Spirit of the loving Laborer Who does not let us to ourselves to figure everything out. Our work is to pick up our spoons and forks so as to taste more appreciatively what's being served. It's just a glimpse, so keep chewing.