

Being Food for Others Though Meager
July 25, 2021, Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of John 6:1-15
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In our Gospel, Jesus challenges the people to feed themselves. This may have prompted all those who had something, to share it with those around them who did not have enough. Subsequently, this gesture of generosity may have been contagious and everyone then eventually entered the spirit of sharing on that day and behold, it was discovered to not only be enough but to be much more than enough.

However, there is no evidence in any of the four Gospels that this episode was meant to be understood in this way. Whatever happened on that occasion was clearly presented as a miracle - - by all four evangelists. John calls it **a sign**, not a strategy for sharing.

The **focus is on who Jesus is** and what he does for those who follow Him. Over and above our need for food, we need a way to live. Because satisfaction gives rise only to more cravings when we don't move beyond ourselves in love. Our needs are met in order that we may be freed up to meet the needs of others, not stockpile riches around ourselves. Our conversion to the needs of our neighbour is the greater goal here. When accomplished, we become vessels of God's miraculous work in the world.

Subsequent to this passage in our Gospel today, John reveals Jesus to **be** the Bread of Life, not just an agent of physical sustenance and the distributor of it but **nourishment for all aspects of our lives**. He **is** the holy of holies in our very midst.

A strong message here is for us to recognize within ourselves His invitation to trust Him with our very selves. That means, as the disciples handed over the 5 loaves and 2 fish to Jesus, we hand ourselves over (however inadequate we see ourselves to be) that He may fulfill within us His life which in turn is the fulfilment we have hungered for from the beginning.

We can begin by admitting that we can't do it all - - and because we can't, we must not allow ourselves to be duped into thinking we have no part to play.

So what is our part?

Lets start with physical hunger of the world. How do we feed the hungry? How do we tackle such a mammoth task of hunger in the world?

It is personal - - we can reach out concretely and touch someone who is in need. It could be by **concretely giving out food** or assisting in an organization that does.

Another approach is to work at **changing the social, political, and economic structures** that are responsible for people being hungry in the first place by involving ourselves in social groups dedicated to changing the system in order to reduce and eliminate poverty.

Another approach is to **consume less**. Reducing our standard of living is not a bad thing, though the world will tell you otherwise especially our North American consumer culture. Fasting, living simply puts us in greater solidarity with the poor.

Remember too, there are **many forms of hunger** beyond physical hunger, although this is a fundamentally important need to be addressed. Hunger for: company, encouragement, education, shelter, opportunity, acceptance, to name a few.

Feeding the hungry also means prayer. We all have bad habits and thinking patterns that need to be pruned out of our lives that not only are useless and distracting but have the effect of complicating our lives unnecessarily. We need the input of God through prayer to help us recognize and remove from our own lives those bad habits.

Finally **people hunger for good leadership - leadership** they can trust. The 5,000 who were fed exemplify this hunger. They had followed him to where this gathering took place. They desired to be fed not just physically. Jesus would help them understand who they are. After the miracle, given the opportunity, they would have swept Him up and made him their King but Jesus had to duck out and find solitude up the mountain. Once the crowd was fed, they sought to consume Jesus for their needs. The world wants to commercialize what was possible with Jesus.

We can also learn about our part in being food for others from our second reading from St. Paul to the Ephesians here.

Live with humility; accept all that we are and all that we are not. (It is God's love that feeds us, not the love or adoration of the world). We don't need to be perfect in order to be God's beloved.

Live with gentleness: the world may have a hardening effect on us. We must nurture the gentleness of Jesus in spite of this.

Live with patience: God gives us ourselves one minute at a time, one hour at a time, not sooner.

It is so easy to get ahead of ourselves and want to "have it all and have it now." - - or we can catastrophize the future.

Live in the bond of peace: which preserves the unity of the Spirit. If we can transcend our differences and see the child of God within each of us, we have come closer to who God intend for us from the beginning.

Don't be afraid to acknowledge your own meager resources and utilize them. We don't have to do all the heavy lifting. We just need to do our part. Whatever we give back....however little it seems to be, He will use it and use it to the fullest.

God has a way of making our seemingly puny efforts grow into something impactful when done with love.