

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

We all have an image or two of what the scene of today's Gospel reading looked like. The story has the dimensions of a major movie shot. More than five thousand people are gathered on a hillside far away from local towns and villages. It's getting late in the day. People have been listening to Jesus all day long. Perhaps we imagine small discussions breaking out in the crowd about his wonderful, yet challenging words. No one seems interested in leaving. Time passes. The feelings of hunger in the crowd are evident. What will they do?

Hunger is always the issue, isn't it? We are not just hungry for food, but we also hunger in our minds for truth, hunger in our hearts for love, hunger in our lives for something more. Ironically, we might recall that the same Jesus who tells the disciples to get the people something to eat has also said, "One does not live by bread alone (Matthew 4:4)." We also need God's word. The crowd received a rich portion of God's word as they listened to Jesus, but there came a time for another kind of bread. We can be hungry at different levels. It's okay to feel hunger. In fact, it's good that we do. God made us for "more" than what we are at any given moment. We are always in this life a bit hungry—not just for physical food, but also for God.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 14: 13-21

A great deal has been said and written about this Sunday's Gospel reading. For instance we might ask, With Jesus blessing and breaking the bread, which is then shared, are we really witnessing a kind of Eucharist? Or, Is this a story about Jesus performing a rather astonishing miracle in full view of perhaps his largest audience ever? Or, Is this about Jesus' concern for everyone, and his need to provide them with food for both their minds and bodies? Or, Is this a sign of the great bequest, said to be part of messianic times? Or, Is it all of the above?

For families, any mention of hunger and feeling hungry should hit home. Much of family life is wrapped around eating together with all the needed preparation and clean up. It's all about working so that our meals nourish us physically and spiritually. So for starters, this Gospel reading underscores the importance of taking care of the hungry. This includes both those in our immediate family, and those everywhere. It also shows that feeding is part of the mission of Jesus. He came to enrich all aspects of our lives. Jesus is abundantly concerned about each of us. He is concerned about our hungers, whatever they may be. Jesus could be heard saying that we should take good care of ourselves and of others too. An essential part of the Gospel is that we share the food of our lives with others. Families do this every day.

Parent Survival

Are you as a parent concerned about your own nourishment, taking into consideration all the meanings of that word? Stories are told of parents, especially moms, who deprive themselves of food so that their children will have enough to eat. The same can be said about precious time in a parent's life. Is it all given over to satisfy the insatiable hungers of children? These are not easy questions to answer. Sometimes the needs of children outweigh those of parents.

But there comes a time when parents need to honestly and carefully examine their own lives and assess whether they have too much unsatisfied hunger. This is not selfish thinking. The better we are as parents (that implies being healthy of body, mind, and spirit), the better we can be for our children. When this is managed, everyone is a winner. The Lord wants us to be well nourished. The work of expanding God's kingdom, especially at home, is never easy. We need to be at our best.

by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Car or Meal Talk

Talk about what besides food is served at our family meals. Make a list of all that surfaces in the conversation besides meat and vegetables.

One-Line Prayer

Caring God,
Nourish us with your presence and word,
and let us give thanks for all the ways you
feed us.
Amen.