

Reflection

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Mt 14:13-21

Here again we hear the story of the feeding of the crowd which came to listen to Jesus on the hillside.

The commentaries tell us this story of the feeding of the multitude occurs more frequently than any other story in the 4 gospels: 6 times in all!

So, we take it that this story must be important. Yes, it is connected to the Eucharist. The words we hear: Jesus takes the loaves, blessed them, broke them, gave them... This describes the early Christian rite of the breaking of the bread, celebrated daily. "Do this in Memory of Me." It is seen as an anticipation of the messianic banquet that we often refer to in our funeral prayers of the faithful.

Today we see Jesus in a very human moment, going off to a deserted place by himself to pray and grieve the death of John the Baptist; but the crowds followed him. Despite wishing for solitude, time for himself, Jesus' heart was moved with pity, with compassion for them, and he cured their sick. After that I'm sure he taught them for some time but then it was getting late.

It is interesting when the disciples suggested he dismiss them to nearby towns so they could go buy something to eat. "No need," he said, you "give them some food your selves."//

I have always been struck by Jesus words in this Matthew's version of the feeding of the 5000. He says: "There is no need for the crowd to go away; **give them some food your selves!**"

It seems there is a different emphasis here in Matthew: he is emphasizing the **ROLE** of the disciples. In the actual feeding of the crowd, the role of the disciples is more prominent. They bring the loaves to Jesus. They then, after his blessing, "gave" the bread to the crowd. Matthew seems to be underlining the function of **MINISTRY** as it is developing in the early Church. This different emphasis is the focus on the role of the Church's ministry in providing the food for the banquet. "Give them some food yourselves." We have a role to play. The ministers have an

important role to perform but we know it is Christ who really ACTS in the Meal, giving the Bread of Life through the ministers.

How do we “give” those around us “some food ourselves”? How am I playing the role of a disciple, giving “food” to satisfy a hunger? Can this focus on this text urge me to minister to those I know to satisfy some spiritual hunger?

The people, intent on satisfying the hunger of the stomach, overlooked the food as a SIGN, a sign of God’s loving generosity that a new Moses had come into their midst, to lead them to a new freedom and a new promised land.

Truly it was a sign for them and us, that through hunger they/ we can arrive at a new Life in God.

In our spiritual life we need to pay attention to our hungers. What are they trying to tell us?

I found Fr. Tom Lumpkin’s prayer last Thursday to be very helpful. He said we hunger for intimacy and meaning in our lives. And that is what our relationship with Jesus the Christ can offer us. So, let us recognize what our hungers are telling us, where they might be leading us. To something deeper.

We do not live on bread alone, but on every Word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Let us dwell on this WORD that we hear today.

As my sister used to say of her pastor, after his Sunday homily: He feeds me!!

The Word is meant to “feed” us in a deep way.