

*Lord, your Word Is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path* (Psalm 119:105)

Have you ever dreamed of buying things without money? Have you ever dreamed of being fully satisfied, deeply and spiritually satisfied?

We know that almost nothing is free in our modern world. There is even a saying that states that you get what you paid for; meaning if it was cheap it was probably not worth it and will not last very long. People and companies are very good at finding new trends, creating new needs, and asking us to pay for things we don't need. Some are even able to convince you of buying things that are available for free. For instance, the other day I watched a show with my family where someone was looking for investors in order to sell cans of oxygen. It was not oxygen for people needing medical assistance, but oxygen for pleasure, because one needs to breathe better air. I thought to myself, why in the world should someone pay to breathe oxygen in a can? We don't have to pay for breathing. We don't even have to think about breathing when we are in good health. We live in a world, especially in our Western world, where we think we need to buy so many things to be happy. On the other hand, we know very well that many families in our country are living from paycheck to paycheck, when many others can't put bread on the table, can't pay their rent, or can't pay their medical bills. Money is so important in our modern society. Especially when you don't have what you need.

But Isaiah today puts these strange and beautiful words in God's message to the exiled people of Israel: "*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*" To buy without money, isn't this a very strange concept? We found the same idea in the book of Wisdom, in Proverbs, and in the book of Ecclesiastes. Of course, it is not about physical beverage and food. It's about spiritual beverage and spiritual food. Isaiah is telling the people of Israel, and is telling us today, that we need more than physical food if we want to be fully satisfied, spiritually satisfied. "*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*" The question is, what is Isaiah talking about? We have the answer in the following verses (2b and 3 a) "*Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.*"

*Listen carefully to me. Eat what is good. Incline your ear. Come to me. Listen to me that you may live.* Isaiah is inviting us to look for God's word, God's wisdom, God's presence, because only God can satisfy the needs of our soul. Only God can fulfill the longing of our heart. But we first need to recognize these spiritual needs. We need to realize that we need more than bread and wine, more than all the stuff we can buy, to be deeply and spiritually happy and satisfied. Sometimes it can take a full life to realize that we were looking for something more, something different: the presence of God. This is the experience of the great saint Augustine who spent years looking for God and God's presence, before he eventually came to realize that the God he was looking for in so many places and traditions was already there, present in his heart, so close. He wrote these beautiful words: You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.

I love these words! Our heart is restless until it rests in you. I don't know if you ever experienced this spiritual need of your heart. It might come to you as a total surprise. It can be an overwhelming experience when one suddenly realizes that they had been longing for something they were not aware of. I know, because I had this kind of experience. If you had met me when I was a young sergeant in the French army, I would have told you that I was happy. I had my dream job. I was proud of what I was doing. By all means I thought I was where I was supposed to be. True, there was also this annoying voice deep in my heart calling me to serve the Lord. But I was very good at disregarding it, because, as I said, I was happy. However, the night I had my aha moment, the night I said yes to the Lord, my heart was filled with such deep spiritual joy and peace, that I was completely overwhelmed. Suddenly my heart was really content. I suddenly realized that something was missing before in my life. With Augustine then I could truly say to the Lord my heart is restless until it rests in you.

*Listen carefully to me. Eat what is good. Incline your ear. Come to me. Listen to me that you may live..* These sentences are an invitation to listen to the Word of God, and for us Christians, to listen to the One who is

truly the Word of God: Jesus. For me this is an invitation to take seriously the message of peace, love and reconciliation of Jesus. In this time of turmoil in our country, this is an invitation to listen anew to what Jesus taught us: to love God and to love our neighbor as Jesus loves us. And we know what that means: to love absolutely, to love unconditionally. That might seem like an utopia. That might seem impossible. But this is the ideal we are called to. This is the new commandment that Christ gave us, and it is the perfect way to fulfill all the Law and the prophets according to Jesus' own teaching.

*Listen carefully to me. Eat what is good. Incline your ear. Come to me. Listen to me that you may live..* Is not that a compelling invitation to listen to the Word of God and to pray? In this time of Pandemic where so many feel that the days are too long. we are invited to open our Bible, to read the word of God, to digest it. We are invited to pray with it, in order to be fed by the Lord; in order to feel His loving and transforming presence in our hearts; in order to discern God's will for us. The Word of God is food and beverage. It gives us access to what is not perishable. It gives us access to the Lord's presence, who is the only One able to give us a peace which surpasses understanding, the only one who can really satisfy our deepest heart's desire.

This is not a new idea, already in Deuteronomy Chapter 8, the Lord said through the words of Moses to the Israelites that, "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Deut 8:3). Maybe it's a good thing for us to have these readings today about the power of the Word of God, a Word that is freely offered to us, a Word that is nourishment and refreshment if only we take the time to sit down, open our Bible, read it, study it, or just pray with it. In the written Word of God, the Eternal Word of God becomes present to us, really present to us. and opens our hearts to His unconditional love. The written Word of God is spiritual food, as the sacramental bread and wine are spiritual foods, Many of you have not been able to physically receive the Body and Blood of Christ these last months. But week after week we have been praying together for the graces coming from spiritual communion. Christ is always present to us, always inviting us to feed on Him in either in the sacrament of the Eucharist or in His Word read, preached, prayed.

In the Gospel, when the disciples pointed out to Jesus that it was already late and that the crowd needed to go back to buy some food, it never occurred to them that they could have done something. Too many people. Not enough food. No money. However, Jesus was able to use the few loaves and fish they had to feed the huge crowd. Yes, this is an Eucharistic story. Jesus took the bread and fish, blessed them, and gave them to the disciples who, in turn, were able to feed the 5000 men, and countless women and children. What amazes me always in this story is that Jesus allowed the disciples to feed the people using the few they had. Think about us as a church; think about us as Christians; think about our various and great ministries at St Luke's. Isn't it the same story that is repeating itself again and again? But If we think we are doing amazing ministries in helping others just because of our great merits and smart minds, we are mistaken!

The truth is that all we do, we do it because of the power of Jesus. All we do, we do it because of His presence in our lives and our congregation. He is the one using the few we have to transform them in amazing things and ministries. He is the One using our lives to bring His love to those around us. Without Him, nothing would happen! He is the One in charge, we are only his followers and his disciples, we are his beloved children. He feeds us with his spiritual presence in his word and sacraments, to give us what we need, to satisfy our hearts, and to share His love with those around us.

*Listen carefully to me. Eat what is good. Incline your ear. Come to me. Listen to me that you may live.* This food is free, offered to all, if we just but listen to our Lord. Lord, You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. Amen