

Nineth Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 13

August 2, 2020

Year A RCL

Isaiah 55:1-5; Psalm 145: 8-9, 15-22; Matthew 14:13-21

“You give them something to eat”

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Across the different cultures one of the realities we human beings have in common is our dependency on food. Each person needs to nourish the body to have the energy to be alive and function correctly. The involuntary or forced deprivation of food for long time periods produces in the human body, organ failure which can eventually lead to death.

In Sacred Scripture, food is an expression of the creation that God makes available for the sustenance of all mankind. Food is also an expression of God's generosity and abundance provided for all, a reward and a gift that offers delight and enjoyment for the human taste. When God intervenes to deliver the people of Israel from the slavery, He promises to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8).

Food is so important that the story of the human fall narrates for us how our first fathers, Adam and Eve, disregarded God's request for them not to eat from the forbidden tree. They chose instead to obey the tempter serpent by eating

the very fruit God told them not to eat. One of the consequences of this disobedience for all men, is to work to eat: “By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread until you return to the ground” (Genesis 3:19).

For us Christians, the story of redemption also includes food, Jesus willingly and obediently offers his life on the cross for all humanity. On the night before He died, a dinner, a banquet, the paschal feast, was celebrated with the disciples. It is there at the Last Supper where Jesus at the table with his friends, offers His Body and Blood as food (bread) and drink (wine) for the life of the world.

Since this Last Supper, each time we are together to “break bread”, we understand that in repeating the action and words spoken by Jesus, we make present His very Body and Blood. To celebrate the Eucharist, we give thanks to God and to eat the new lamb that forgives our sins, nourishes our spirit and gives us the strength to persevere and live with faith all the circumstances of our life.

The Eucharistic Feast, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Communion, the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Mass, is a foretaste of the last realities in which a celestial banquet is prepared for us in heaven. “On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of meats and the finest of wines” (Isaiah 25:6).

One of the most important qualities of the food that God offers is that it is free and accessible to all. The perfection of God's creation guarantees that the land produces food that nourishes all beings. "You open wide your hand and satisfy the needs of every living creature." (Psalm 145:17)

It is in the spirit of serenity that we can read the first lesson of today that invites the people to enjoy water, wine, milk, and food without payment. The prophet Isaiah invited the people of exile to, "Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food" (Isaiah 55:2). The food is free and delicious because God provides it.

In a similar way, Jesus in today's gospel shows his disciples how even what appears as little food to them, in the hands of God it is enough to fill twelve baskets of leftovers after feeding a multitude of five thousand men. While the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowds away, Jesus' compassion is evident in caring for the minimal human needs. After curing the sick, Jesus feeds the people showing that the physical needs are as important as the spiritual needs.

In the same way God provides for all living creatures, Jesus' answer to the disciples becomes a principle for the Christian communities that are also responsible for the human needs following the example of Jesus. Today millions

of people around the world suffer hunger and are in a disadvantage to receive the most basic human needs of food and clean water.

The access to food and proper nutrition is not a privilege to the elite class, it is rather a human right designed by God for all creation. We, like the disciples receive the same command from Jesus and have the responsibility of caring for others “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” Mathew 14:16

In these pandemic times we can see how many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from lack of bread. It is impossible for us to be Christians if we do not work to alleviate the suffering needs of others. We do not need to feed the crowds; we only need to offer and share with generosity the bread and fish we have. Amen.