

## **Eighteenth Sunday – August 2, 2015**

“What’s for lunch this time, Jesus? Do what you did before when you fed 5,000 of us with five barley loaves and two fish. But how about spicing up the menu this time? Could you grill the fish in a nice lemon sauce? And fresh sourdough bread would be nice.” Yes, it’s easy to understand a hungry crowd like these folks who chase after Jesus from shore to shore. They are driven by the most basic of human needs. Would they be grateful for something even more basic? Would we? Let’s see.

Jesus was not just providing a picnic lunch for the crowd. He was giving his very self to them. He wanted to whet their appetite for the true bread from heaven that gives life to the world. He desired them most ardently to look beyond their stomachs to their hearts. He wanted them to be hungry of spirit so that they would be open to the truth of his teaching and be open to the gift of himself as the Son of God. So what was Jesus trying to do here? It’s hard to explain, but a story might help.

At a women’s retreat some years ago, one lady stood up and quickly stated her problem: “I’m tired of being an apple giver.” She had three children under the age of 6. They were always on her. “Mommy, get me an apple.” “Mommy tie my shoes.” “Mommy put on my coat.” Never ending. She was sick of it.

The rest of the group was instantly supportive. Many had been there, and there was no shortage of advice: day care; part-time employment; more husband-father involvement, etc. Then another voice was suddenly heard. An older woman spoke up, “Honey, you gotta learn to sing.” She went on to explain that the “apple giver” had to change her whole attitude. None of the group’s suggestions were going to provide lasting help. Tinkering with the outer world was not a substitute for inner change. She had to make “apple giving” an event where she and her child met. Although this older woman was eloquent, I’m not sure an adjustment was ever made.

Spiritual teachers like Jesus value helping people identify their true hungers and pointing them in new ways. In today’s gospel there’s Jesus dialoguing with the crowd. Can you hear him speaking to you and me? Maybe we can hear him saying something like this: “Don’t keep hungering after wonders, thinking that the next miracle will solve your problems. Notice there is a deeper hunger in you, not for what perishes in time but for what lasts into eternity. “Don’t ask, ‘How will I know this is true?’ Ask, ‘Am I in communion with God and receiving divine life?’” “Manna every morning will not solve the whole problem. Connect with me and be forever satisfied.”

These are not easy adjustments to be made. It may take a lifetime to see how Jesus satisfies every hunger. And when we finally do see, perhaps we can say what the crowd said, who said more than they knew: “Sir, give us this bread always.”

There is a deeper level in us where love elevates our efforts, and things are easier. Anyone who does not need this, please raise your hand.