

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

New Life through Water and Bread

Bread and water. Sounds like a really minimal diet – one just enough to keep someone alive. And it also sounds *ordinary*. No special culinary touches. A diet one might have many, many different places. And yet also so basic: we need water, clean water to drink – our bodies are, in fact, mostly water – and clean water to wash any wounds we might get, and more water to help us clean our bodies. And bread – it's so basic a food in so many countries that it's even used as a slang term for another essential, money.

But water and bread are essential in a whole additional and more profound way.

God chose water, this simple and essential ingredient of our lives as biological entities, to be an essential part of our lives as spiritual entities. As the baptismal liturgy puts it, “We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.”

Water. So simple, so essential, so powerful as part of God's plan. Through water, in a few minutes Lily Rebecca Ipe will be reborn by the Holy Spirit and join in the fellowship of Christian believers, and begin a spiritual journey with Christ, which, we hope and pray, will last forever.

Bread. The basic stuff of life in the Middle East of Jesus' day and, with various ingredients, in many other times and places. Not to have even bread to offer guests like the thousands who crowded around Jesus in today's Gospel would be to have nothing to offer guests, an occasion of shame in a culture which valued – and values – hospitality very highly.

This is the *only* one of Jesus' miracles which is recounted in *all four* Gospels. But only John's Gospel tells who it was who gave the bread which Jesus multiplied, who it was who spared the apostles the shame of having nothing to offer guests, who it was who was the first to learn “Christian math”: “Generosity plus Jesus equals more than enough.”

It was a child. A boy, to be precise, who brought forward a few loaves and fishes and gave them to Jesus to share. The apostles were spared the shame of having nothing to share by the spontaneous, extravagant generosity of a child. John's Gospel also adds the detail that the child gave barley bread – the bread bought by those who couldn't afford wheat bread: the bread of the poor.

So it was a child, and an economically poor but spiritually rich child at that, whose extravagant generosity enabled Jesus to feed thousands.

As we partake of bread this afternoon in this sacred meal, the Holy Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, let's think about that glorious picnic by the shores of the Sea of Galilee described in today's Gospel passage. Let's think about the importance of children as part of the Christian fellowship, a fellowship that is open to all people of all background and of all economic levels, and let's think about Christ-inspired generosity and all that it makes possible and could yet make possible.

Bread and water: what an abundant, glorious diet to be on, if it's *this* water and *this* bread! Amen.

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